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**Transnational Mexican-origin Families: Ways of Knowing and
Implications for Schooling**

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**Transnational Mexican-origin Families: Ways of Knowing and
Implications for Schooling**

by

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Dedication

For John McCamant,

for believing in your students, for sharing your quiet strength.

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Transnational Mexican-origin Families: Ways of Knowing and Implications for Schooling

Gail Sue Kasun, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Supervisor: Luis Urrieta

Transnational Mexican-origin Families is a qualitative study of four working class, Mexican-origin families who resided in the metropolitan Washington, D.C. region and who also made return visits to Mexico at least every two years. Through critical ethnographic case studies, the researcher worked with the families for over two years in multi-sited ethnography, with locations in the U.S. and Mexico. The dissertation examines the following question: What are the ways of knowing of Mexican-origin transnational students and their families in the Washington, D.C. area, and how do these transnational families experience their ways of knowing regarding education in formal schooling contexts?

Using transnational theory and Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of *conocimiento*, or knowing, this study shows how transnational families' ways of knowing are situated in three mutually-constituted domains. They are: 1) chained knowing, including the ways participants are chained to the Mexican-U.S. border and to their communities in Mexico

and the U.S., 2) *sobrevivencia* or survivalist knowing, in terms of how the families both survive and thrive, highlighting what I call their “underdog mentality” as well as the matters of life and death on both sides of the border, and 3) *Nepantlera* knowing, or an in-between knowing, which allows for attempts at bridge buildings and creation of Third Spaces. In regards to schooling, the transnational aspects of these families’ lives remained hidden, despite the students’ eagerness to share about their transnationalism. Schools tended to respond to their transnational families along the “continuum of the comfortable,” or a line where schools increased their outreach to these families only moderately and only along their terms.

The intention of this research is to disrupt assimilationist discourses about immigrants, particularly in light of the need to be able to navigate an increasingly globalized world. Preliminary findings suggest the need to begin to reframe immigrants as transnational, value their language heritages, disrupt the comfort of educators in their outreach to transnational families, and for educators, in particular, to learn to do the work of border crossing in their outreach to transnational families.

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Chapter One: Introduction

As a high school English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher in the Washington, D.C. suburbs, I listened to my students tell stories about their lives. My students often referred to the countries where they were born, including the sometimes multiple countries they and their families had come from before their arrival to the U.S. I quickly understood that my students and their families had stories, ways of knowing and being—sometimes from their lives in the previous countries, sometimes from media and communication with people in other countries—that were fundamental to who they were and distinct from hegemonic ways of knowing and being privileged by U.S. schools. In this study, ways of knowing are the perceptions of and actions upon reality, as they are understood through feeling, thought and/or intuition. To provide examples in this study, families draw upon their ways of knowing to determine where to live based on factors such as politics, economics, and family dynamics; they decide which social norms to follow at different moments (e.g. how to dress in school, at church, for return visits to the home country, often mixing performance among norms at different times). Decisions, actions, and dispositions all make up the ways of knowing I examine in this study.

After a few years, I included what I called an identity unit in my curriculum. My students' knowledges were often unrecognized in their U.S. schooling contexts, especially because these students were from what are commonly called "less-developed" countries, and because they were almost all phenotypically read as black, brown, or yellow in the U.S.'s racial hierarchy. When asked if their teachers had ever commended them for their bi-, and sometimes multi-, lingualism, the students time and again

responded with emphatic and even incredulous “No’s.” That their teachers would draw upon their cultural heritages beyond nods toward their food and “traditional” forms of dress was usually anathema to them.

For my class’s identity unit, students drew from their linguistic and resistant forms of capital—respectively, their counter-hegemonic skills in using languages other than English and their ability to assert cultural pride in a public schooling system which would otherwise deny it—(Yosso, 2005). With these understandings, they created and performed multi-genred texts (Romano, 2003). Here are some examples of themes explored: Surafel invoked royal lineages in Ethiopia’s histories; Raheel defied the stereotype of being a terrorist from Pakistan; Jenny reflected on the communities and festivals she left behind in San Miguel, El Salvador. Students drew upon lived experiences which required adult maturity—they included making sense of their parents’ flight from political persecution prior to immigration, understanding desperate desert journeys to cross the Río Bravo, as well as more joyful memories of what were often more communal forms of living in their home countries. During these presentations, my classroom was converted into a transnational space.

I define transnationalism as the inherently unbordered social practices, occurring across countries, and their situatedness among the structures which have governing power over those practices. As an example, people can simultaneously and collectively celebrate the same holiday in different countries and use multiple forms of technology to connect across borders—via video chat, cell phones, and other technologies. Nonetheless, they are limited by both scarce economic resources and perhaps the construction of borders and legal papers (or lack thereof), inhibiting the ability to conduct

visits and communications. Were my students' writings really unbounded, or was I reproducing nationalist discourses, or some mix of both? In my final year as a classroom teacher, I helped revise a student's college entrance essay. In Gloria's essay, I was struck by her recollection of multiple trips back-and-forth from Mexico and the U.S., something she recognized as being critical for her sense of being and the reason she wanted to pursue higher education in the U.S.

Why was it novel to me? In previous years, I had discussed some students' pictures of return visits "home" (from El Salvador to Pakistan, for instance), but I was finally struck by what I now consider the deeply transnational nature of many of my former students' existences. The *trans* nature of students' ability to shift back-and-forth and simultaneously hold in tension their ways of knowing was something I had not identified as their teacher, something that would have helped me teach them better. Students could shift easily between a home language, complete with appropriate gestures and intonation into school-appropriate performances in English; they could shift among registers and experiment in various communicative forms. According to Ong, "transnationality also alludes to the transversal, the transactional, the translocal, and the transgressive aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination" (1999) in an increasingly global era (M. M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007). My students were exhibiting skills as they shifted, calibrated, gauged, engaged, and disengaged among cultural modes, or, ways of knowing and being. They transgressed cultural norms at school and home. Some young Muslim women wore veils more regularly at school despite the pressures to conform to standards of femininity while defying gender expectations at home; several students (male and female) wore bracelets, necklaces, and

armbands indicating which countries they had come from while learning to further consume U.S. pop music alongside (or sometimes in place of) the regional music they already knew. In this increasingly global era, the students' skillfulness should have merited recognition for the potentials of what they might do to employ those ways of knowing in the future.

In a parallel sense, as a transnational, I struggled as a US-based ESOL teacher to adapt to the U.S. after nine years of living back-and-forth in Mexico and the U.S. I had lived nearly all my adulthood, and my coming-into-adulthood, either being in, or wanting to be in, Guadalajara, Mexico. I became fluent in Spanish and took on ways of knowing which I developed out of my experiences in Guadalajara, ways which were not native to how I was raised in West Virginia. Upon return to the U.S. as a teacher, I felt isolation, pain, pride, pleasure, and discomfort. I could no longer use variations of Spanish I had adopted in Mexico—language uses that had become part of who I was—among my non-Mexican-origin Latina/o colleagues and friends, let alone my monolingual friends and family. I could relate, for instance, to the nostalgia for the Basilica of the Virgen de Zapopan, Jalisco, where several of my students were from, and which I had visited admiringly several times.

I used white cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2008) to achieve components of my activist agenda, such as opening honors-track classes to increasing numbers of my students and putting them on the agendas of the guidance staff, framing them positively for their cultural and linguistic skills. I spoke with Spanish-speaking parents about their children, the community and how to better understand a U.S. educational system which was mystifying to anyone who had not already succeeded in it (by the system's own

measures). I maneuvered myself into a PhD program with the same white cultural capital despite its feeling foreign to me as a working-class white from West Virginia. After my return from Guadalajara, I had in some ways unwittingly learned to be what Anzaldúa refers to as a shapeshifter, one who takes on multiple roles with fluidity of meaning, though not with the intentionality and full spiritual dimension Anzaldúa discusses, (J. Allen, 2000; Keating, 2000). Unfortunately, I had little guidance in the U.S. to make sense of this shapeshifting and suffered it with little language to describe everything I missed about Mexico and the new skills I had acquired there. These ways guided my own thinking and being, and yet they were often invisible to most who knew me in the U.S.

In some ways, I identified with my ESOL students who struggled through their multiple ways of knowing. What was one to think my first year back to the U.S. about the D.C.-area sniper who was terrorizing all of us, just one year after the September 11, 2001 attacks (also directed at Washington, D.C.)? Was this still *my* country? It felt so newly foreign, with my new ways of knowing as well as the new sociopolitical context. In other ways, I identified heavily with teachers, fretting about allowing students to make return visits to their home countries in the middle of the school year because of everything they would “miss” while they were gone (as if they didn’t have much to gain by making a return trip). In some ways, this research is a continued back-and-forth of my own thinking, reaching across borders and timescapes in efforts to describe phenomena particular to people who have similar experiences.

I’m struck by data I collected from Gloria, the same student whose college entrance exam I revised four and a half years ago, and her sister, who I also worked with

when I was a high school teacher. I was also struck by conversations I had with the Medrano family from the town of San Gabriel, Michoacán, Mexico, who I first met when visiting the pueblo in December 2009. Both families shared a sense of, “Maybe I’ll go back to Mexico, forever,” something that permeated our discussions, but which contained hints of, “but, then again, maybe I’d come back.” I also sensed a tension about where families resided physically, shifting between a heaviness in deciding whether or not to return to Mexico and something that felt like ambivalence about where one lived. I explored how these shifting senses of knowing the world and how the possibilities in it impact the ways transnationals, or people who live and act with primary ways of knowing from more than one national context, make choices about how they live as well as how their formal schooling experiences are constellated in their transnational lives. This brings me to my research question: **What are the ways of knowing of Mexican-origin transnational students and their families in the Washington, D.C. area?** How do these transnational families experience their ways of knowing regarding education in formal schooling contexts?

The field of education stands to gain from using the interpretive optic of transnationalism (Khagram & Levitt, 2008), a “conceptual acid” (Briggs, McCormack, & Way, 2008) or a tool to reconceive the ways we think about people who engage in transnational practices. Transnationalism helps to rethink social phenomena, to disrupt the embedding of nationalism and its influence on the ways the social sciences have been constructed through nationalist discourses. Educational researchers can move beyond national limits to their studies, recognizing that many students and families operate in

several social worlds across national borders. At the same time, educational researchers can recognize and investigate multinational practices within what are conventionally considered national boundaries, such as students' choices to affiliate with more than one country in terms of their individual and group identity formation. Transnationalism allows us to move beyond assuming the boundaries of nation-states are fixed and impermeable, and allows us to engage more holistic, global studies, as well as situated studies beyond the traditional nation-state borders which often limit research. Khagram and Levitt explain:

By transnationalism, we propose an optic or gaze that begins with a world without borders, empirically examines the boundaries and borders that emerge at particular historical moments, and explores their relationship to unbounded arenas and processes. (p. 5)

I contend that transnational people have unique ways of knowing the world which would be beneficial to the field of education. How can educators aim to teach their students, if, in fact, they do not have a good sense of the ways of knowing of many of their students? No doubt all people have unique ways of knowing (Vygotsky, 1978); families who engage in transnational practices—or those activities and processes of thinking, such as returning to countries of origin for visits and maintaining relationships with people in those countries, related to lives lived across borders—have sets of experiences which imbue their ways of knowing differently than those who do not. Transnational students' and families' meaningful inclusion in education can help facilitate a “pedagogy in common,” toward a more democratized global society (De Lissovoy, 2010).

Because of the profound impact of the navigation and transgression of borders, transnational students' and families' ways of knowing are constellated differently than those who lack these experiences. I would have been a more effective ESOL teacher if I had an understanding of what appears in retrospect, to be the transnational ways of knowing of many of my former ESOL students. Educators who work with students with transnational ways of knowing, or the simultaneous understandings of the world rooted in transnational experiences and perspectives, could benefit from better addressing their students' transnational identities. Transnational identities are the sometimes shifting senses of how students recognize themselves as participants in social practices that transgress national boundaries—and perhaps ways they do not recognize. Aside from simply better understanding their students, teachers can create learning spaces which “officially recognize” what Patricia Sánchez calls a “type of knowledge... essential in today's global order” (2007, p. 513).

With the increase in technology which facilitates cross-border practices as well as increased migration, students are becoming increasingly transnational in the U.S. Educators must address these changing demographics if they hope to be successful in educating them. Approximately one in five young people has immigrant parents, and that number will shift to one in three by 2040 (C. Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008, p. 1). Mexicans immigrate to the U.S. at greater rates than any other group; they account for approximately 60% of the share of immigrants in the U.S. (C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008, p. 5). Research demonstrates that there are fairly high amounts of circular migration between Mexico and the U.S., based in part on historic trends of guest worker programs and economic cycles as well as technological

innovations in communications and transportation. Undoubtedly, the migrants who fit that pattern are also transnational. Even though some may not return to sending countries, they often have emotional ties to the sending country which makes them “emotional transnationals” (Wolf, 2002), people who despite not having made visits to sending countries are still linked to them through kinship ties, media, and digital communications.

Aside from a demographic imperative, however, we should also bear in mind the rapid changes in the postmodern moment in which we live (Jameson, 1991)—as well is what is also described as globalization—and their impact on education. Jameson describes the postmodern moment as it hinges upon the changes of late capitalism. Late capitalism is determined by the movement of multinational capital, which has brought about a “flatness or depthlessness” in the increasing fragmentation of social phenomena and how individuals experience them (Jameson, 1991). At the present moment, the U.S. is in a tenuous global predicament as our economy teeters and we scramble to fit into an increasingly globalized world where jobs are outsourced (Krugman, 2009, 2012), and where telecommunications bring us closer to the rest of the world each day (Friedman, 2005). Transnationals already have skills for navigating several cultural worlds at once and can also help U.S.-based individuals who have never left the country understand the global political and economic forces which create massive migration shifts. These shifts will increasingly affect all who live within the U.S.’s borders, whether it be understanding the nanny who is taking care of one’s child (Parrenas, 2005), the man washing the dishes at the back of a restaurant, or the increasingly difficult problem of how to continually fit one’s skills in a globalized economy (Krugman, 2009). If

education is really about preparing youth for the future, then we must consider how dramatically the present has changed/fragmented and how much more quickly the future will likely shift. Suárez-Orozco explains that “difference and complexity” are central to this global era (M. M. Suárez-Orozco, 2005). The flows of goods, people, information, capital, and communications have been highlighted by other researchers (Appadurai, 2008; Giddens, 1990; Harvey, 1992; Inda & Rosaldo, 2008) as key parts of this global moment as well. Transnational people, those who have engaged in transnational practices, have developed ways of knowing at navigating these differences and flows. Educational researchers should investigate these ways of knowing to incorporate them in attempts to help all students navigate the increasing complexity of globalization and postmodernity.

A final reason to work toward understanding transnational students’ and their families’ ways of knowing is to provide an education where their knowledges are valued just as much as the knowledges of Whitestream students, or those students who both take advantage of and simultaneously reproduce white privilege, thus perpetuating white supremacy (Urrieta, 2009, p. 181). Historically, the U.S. has under-served students of color, including immigrant students (Orfield, 2001; Urrieta, 2009), and by extension, transnational students, a label I argue that can be used synonymously with immigrant students. Transnational students’ global experience remains almost entirely invisible in U.S. schools, when, in fact, it’s a resource, that, if understood, could be a tool for instruction as well as their enhanced life chances in both the U.S. and their families’ home countries (Sánchez, 2007; Sánchez & Kasun, In press). Transnational forms of knowing could be demystified for both their teachers and, more importantly, for the

students themselves, who are often made to feel culturally deficient because their often subaltern ways of knowing, are not consistent with typically monocultural, Whiteman ways of knowing. By subaltern, I use Bhabha's borrowing of Gramsci, or groups whose existence is necessary for the construction of the hegemonic group's identification and who may thrive by subverting the majority (Whiteman) group (Bhabha, 1996, p. 210). Hegemony is the process of the majoritarian group's control over subordinated groups (Crehan, 2002); in education it is the perpetuation of Whiteman dominance through texts and cultural practices. I intend my work to support the counter-hegemonic disruptions of oppressive narratives about whose knowledge counts (Freire, 2008; Wong, 2006).

Generally speaking, formal schooling has not been highly responsive to the increasingly globalized trends of social practices (M. M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007). Students continue to sit in rows in classrooms with out-of-date textbooks, often listening to teachers lecture in classrooms where they do little of the communicating in instruction. The technologies to which they have daily (sometimes nearly constant) access, including Internet and smartphone applications, are even banned from instruction. Classes are often organized around curricular areas which are less-than-effective at preparing them for meaningful lives, let alone economically productive ones. Effectively engaging the shifts and changes in our daily lives, increasingly influenced by globalization, requires the kind of flexibility of knowing transnationals have. Again, I remember the students I taught in the Washington, D.C. area and how quickly they shifted among global telecommunications with family in several continents to their skillfulness in engaging multiple languages, written and verbal. If by 2040, one out of three U.S. students will be

the child of at least one immigrant, why are educators not engaging these students for the transnational ways of knowing they already bring?

The purpose of this study is to examine unique ways of knowing of transnational students and their families in the Washington, D.C. area in regards to education. Very little qualitative research has been conducted in the Washington, D.C. area about Mexican-origin students; this region is particularly interesting in light of its relative newness as an immigrant-receiving community as well as contested experiences of both publicly welcoming and discouraging immigrants. I demonstrate ways of knowing that are currently overlooked in most K-12 settings through multi-sited ethnographic case studies of transnational students and their families, including various interview and data gathering techniques, such as written participant reflections, interviews, and the use of participants' photo documentation. I worked with families who engaged in what I later call intentional transnational participation, which I define as those who return—with the desire to do so—to and from the sending country to the host country with some regularity. I supplemented my work by attending community and school events and interviewing students' teachers in the U.S. I provide curricular recommendations as well as ways for educators to better connect with transnational students.

I investigated through the use of transnational theory and specifically its emphasis on social networks, simultaneity, and hybridity of identity (Khagram & Levitt, 2008; Vertovec, 2004) as well as *conocimiento*, building upon Anzaldúa's theory which recognizes the thinking, emotional, spiritual and intuitive realms of knowing. Both these frameworks allow for simultaneity of cultural practices, particularly as they occur across and through borders, (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004) and multiplicity of understandings

(G. E. Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002). I found both funds of knowledge (N. González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) which imbue transnationals' ways of knowing. While funds of knowledge and cultural wealth are incredibly helpful and necessary analytic tools, I believe ways of knowing includes both these concepts while engaging a more holistic interpretation specific to transnational students and their families. I recommend ways these additive approaches to understanding students' backgrounds can be integrated into educational practices.

Using critical ethnographic methods (D. Foley, 2002) in focused family case studies, I had the opportunity to convivir with four transnational families. I use the Spanish word convivir to demonstrate my familial connotation of literally "being with," a word which does not exist as a verb in English. I value the relational aspect of the work I did with my participants. I established relationships with four families from different pueblos, or small towns, in the states of Michoacán and Jalisco who resided in the Washington, D.C. area and who traveled back-and-forth regularly to Mexico, at least every two years.

Specifically, I wanted to learn about transnational families' experiences of migration and return trips to Mexico. How did these journeys impact in the grander scale of how transnational families understood their education, and how did that translate into other everyday activities? I also wanted to make sense of how these families understood their multiple/simultaneous communities, understanding at the same time the varying degrees of simultaneity they experienced. How did these affect transnational families' senses of identity and agency in education? I connected generative themes which would be of use for educators about the ways of knowing of transnational students. I also

accompanied families in their return visits to Mexico. I observed the flexibility of knowing/being and provide an under-reported view of transnational students.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

In this chapter, I show how transnationalism's recent emergence in education literature is an important lens for understanding and reframing the experiences of immigrant youth, particularly Mexican-origin children, who make up the majority of immigrant and second generation youth in U.S. schools. I begin with a historic discussion of Mexican-origin children in U.S. schools and show how they have been under-served since the U.S. appropriated Mexican territory in 1848 as part of its imperialist project of "Manifest Destiny" (Gibler, 2009). I also describe how they have survived and achieved *sobrevivencia* (Galván, 2005), or a state of survival and overcoming institutionalized obstacles in schooling. I situate this in the larger context of Mexico-U.S. relations and immigration and then turn toward the larger phenomenon of modern global migration, of which Mexican immigration is one part in a larger imperialist global economic system.

Next, I describe how transnational theory facilitates an expanded understanding of immigration. I examine its relation to global migration, including the doubled population of migrants between 1960 and 2005 from rural to urban areas as well as from materially poorer to wealthier countries, resulting largely from the forces of globalization (Spring, 2009a). I borrow Spring's definition of globalization as the political, economic, and cultural changes that "affect in common ways large segments of the world's people" (Spring, 2009b, p. 2). Globalization's phenomena can occur rapidly and instantaneously with dramatic if not tragic consequences on the subaltern; I discuss how transnational researchers theorize the agency of subaltern populations. By agency, I mean people's

ability to act upon the world in tension with how their actions may be acted upon by others (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 2001, p. 42) as well as their “active subjectivity” to create meaning outside of dominant, often oppressive, ways of knowing (Lugones, 2005, p. 86). This is important for my study because the populations I work with can be considered subaltern. I then show trends in transnational research to date as well as education and transnationalism, specifically. I demonstrate that there is still a great deal of work remaining for the field of education as well as the need to continue theorizing within transnationalism more broadly.

Next I turn to the research on Mexican-origin populations and families in education research and how it generally portrays students as either immigrant or bicultural. Despite their important, meaningful analyses, I show that researchers have generally under-theorized transnational students’ specific ways of knowing, and I then enter the larger question of what ways of knowing are. I explore various non-Western paradigms which support my definition of ways of knowing, which are the perceptions of and actions upon reality, as they are understood through feeling, thought and/or intuition. I conclude with a discussion of my theoretical framework, in which I draw upon both transnational theory and Anzaldúa’s theory of *conocimiento*.

Mexican-origin Youth in U.S. Schools

Prevalent nativist sentiment in the U.S. toward Mexico largely shaped the formal schooling (or lack thereof) of Mexican-origin youth, starting from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 through the present (Menchaca, 1997). Mexican-origin communities would continue to resist and work to protect their communities, cultures, and language. This struggle continues to play out today. San Miguel and Valencia refer

to these actors in the education of Mexican communities in the U.S. as experiencing a “plight” through consequent and persistent “struggle” (1998).

Schools existed in Mexico prior to its partial annexation to the U.S. In the northern territory which later became part of the U.S., much of the schooling of Mexican-origin children was provided by church-based institutions, including Catholic and Protestant schools, each denomination with its own religious conversion agendas. After the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), U.S. public agencies began to provide schools for Mexican-origin children, though they were segregated schools, and their first priority was in providing schools for white children (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998).

Due to dominant racist ideologies, deficit thinking continued to pervade the official policies toward nonwhites in the U.S. throughout the 1800s. Menchaca describes the attitudes of the second half of the 18th century: “In essence, racial minorities were denied basic politics rights and the economic opportunities enjoyed by whites” (1997, p. 32). The white public generally engaged in discourses surrounding people of color on a racist continuum, with the scientific “proof” of craniology on one end (which purportedly “proved” nonwhites’ and poor whites’ genetic deficiencies) and “moderate” racism (p. 34) on the other. Hence, there was neither good, common-sense reason, nor public obligation for providing the same kinds of education to Mexican-origin youth. Resources would be wasted on what was constructed as a racially inferior population. Instead, most of the schools which were publically established for Mexican-origin children were largely segregated. Many of these schools in the late 1800s were run with an “additive Americanization” approach wherein children used Spanish in schools and learned of Mexican heritage. This occurred because the schools were largely run by local

community members. This, however, would appear alarming to nativists who supported and implemented a “subtractive Americanization” approach to Mexican-origin youth’s schooling, one where they would need to lose their Spanish and cultural traditions in order to “Americanize” (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998):

Backward cultural beliefs could be eliminated, it was claimed, once the core of the belief system, the Spanish language, was replaced by the heart of the superior culture, English. Thus, in district after district, English instruction via immersion and the forced removal of Spanish (and any traces of bilingualism) occupied the first two years of instruction in segregated schools. The first and second grades were generally known as the “Americanization” rooms, the locus of cultural change and guided entrance into American society. (G. G. González, 1999, p. 58)

Thus, English-only rules took root, and children were punished through various means for speaking their mother tongues. By the end of the 19th century, most Mexican Americans and Catholic Church officials (many of the latter had been helping run schools) had been removed from the leadership of public schools. While most Mexican Americans opposed these policies, a national campaign against “diversity”—whose ultimate goal was promoting the “purity” of Anglo-American culture—would end the use of native languages other than English in U.S. schools (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The history of Mexican-origin people would be largely erased from formal school texts or told from the perspective of a white, hegemonic point of view. This interpretation of history in U.S. texts has shifted little, at all, since that time.

In the first half of the 20th century, Mexican Americans enrolled at greater rates in schools, due to compulsory education laws, urbanization, and economic trends of stability

and worker exploitation. State authorities continued to under-serve and neglect Mexican American students, providing less-adequate facilities and teachers than what their white counterparts received. Their school-going rates were lower than those of whites, due in part because agricultural interests sought cheap labor from Mexicans, including youth, to work in the fields (Donato, 1997). Education researchers began to circulate “scientific” theories about the intelligence levels of people from different races—that in fact, people “naturally” filled roles in society based on their genetic intelligence. This intelligence was passed through generations, and there was a racial component that worked out to keep society well-stratified by these theories. This appropriation of scientific discourse helped cement white supremacy and white social domination in the U.S. Through the 1920s, the culturally-normed IQ test, for instance, served to “demonstrate” that Mexican-origin children needed special education classes, and that, disproportionately to white students, they were more likely to be “mentally retarded” (G. G. González, 1999; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). During this period, Mexican-origin children throughout the Southwest were gender-tracked into vocational or “industrial” schools. Boys would learn agriculture, body shop, and animal husbandry while girls would learn domestic skills, gearing them toward work as domestic servants.

Despite the tracking, segregation by proxy (Mexican-origin youth were segregated by language), and low expectations of Mexican-origin students, some students overcame the external pressures set up for them to fail and did finish high school and continued to successfully complete university education (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Mexican-American community members throughout various parts of the Southwest organized to protest the unequal treatment their children received. Several cases were

brought to court by the Mexican American community, representing the collective organization efforts of families in various parts of the Southwest as early as the 1930s, including the *Alvarez v. Lemon Grove* (1931) case, considered the country's first anti-segregation victory in the U.S. (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). A landmark verdict was made in the *Mendez v. Westminster* (1946, 1947) case in California as the first federal desegregation ruling in the U.S. (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Mexican-origin youth and community members would become yet more vocal in their struggles in the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s, claiming the identity of "Chicana/o," rejecting an "American" identity which was never fully available to Mexican-origin individuals due to the structural and institutional racism and nativism in the U.S. This would start the struggle for Chicana/o students to have access to ethnic studies programs, better facilities, and better teachers (Muñoz, 1989).

Nativist sentiment would continue to pervade U.S. educational practices, and desegregation efforts would be met with resistance. Though the U.S. no longer has *de jure* segregation in U.S. schools, it continues to have *de facto* segregation. While schools were forced to desegregate in the 1960s and 1970s due to protracted legal battles, white families who did not want to see integration often moved their families to districts where they could limit the contact their children would have with integration, creating a phenomenon referred to as "white flight" to the suburbs (Orfield, 2001). Civil rights-oriented policy makers attempted to institute busing programs which would force integration, but eventually racial integration efforts were reversed by court rulings in the 1980s, leading to a reverse in the integration gains accumulated in the 1960s and 1970s. Because of the tax structure from which schools are funded in the U.S., the neighborhood

district schools where Latina/o (and other students of color) attend were grossly underfunded relative to their generally white suburban counterparts (Kozol, 2005; Orfield, 2001).

Mexican-origin youth have performed academically below white students, as a group, ever since the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Structural inequalities are reproduced through racist, nativist foundations of Whiteman society, played out every day with Mexican-origin youth in U.S. schools. Following, I offer some of the more recent research regarding Mexican-origin students' achievement and insights into more contemporary data.

Most educational researchers used their investigations to “solve” the “Mexican Problem” in the early 20th century (G. G. González, 2001). Their works ranged from texts about (but not by) Mexican-Americans and education whose authors “disparaged all things Mexican” or offered “paternalistic and romanticized” research (G. G. González, 1999). George I. Sánchez became a notable exception, conducting research to demonstrate the systemic, inferior education of Mexican American students as well as the inherent biases in IQ testing (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). He was an activist for civil rights and helped pave the way for continued groundbreaking work in education by Chicana/o scholars (San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). Contemporary researchers have depicted more thoughtful and insightful works at both the micro and macro level of analysis since the late 1980s. The research is so thorough and penetrating, I wonder why we have not seen a greater change in the education of Mexican-origin students (and other historically under-served youth). Much, probably most, of this work has been completed by Chicana/o scholars who have used their own schooling experiences to help determine

their research approaches. Following, I highlight research which focuses directly on Latina/o youth in the U.S.

Ethnographic portrayals have highlighted the daily experiences of Mexican-origin youth in U.S. schools and the multiple barriers to their success. Angela Valenzuela's (1999) *Subtractive schooling* stands out as a foundational work highlighting the everyday occurrences in the (mis)education of U.S.-Mexican youth in a *de facto* segregated Houston high school in the late 1990s, where classes of 1200 freshmen continually only graduated a third of its entering freshmen classes, or 400 out of the original 1200 students. She draws upon Nel Noddings's (1984) caring theory to contrast the aesthetic caring of most teachers (with their worries about students' attendance and grades) with authentic caring, where teachers develop meaningful relationships with their students, fostering them into adulthood while being teachers the students respect. She also highlights the kinds of pressures students feel in navigating their Mexican-origin identities in schools while U.S. schools work to subtract those identities. Conflicts play out in terms of collective and individual forms of resistance, as well as community notions of *educación* (Valenzuela, 1999).

Valenzuela's ethnography is foundational to understanding the different/conflicting ways of knowing between Whitestream teachers at Seguin High School and the Mexican-origin students. The Whitestream teachers are clearly more invested in Western ways of knowing, where the Mexican-origin students engage subaltern ways of knowing. Valenzuela also demonstrates differences between second-generation Mexican Americans and first-generation immigrant youth. Transnational theory would help further demonstrate the differences between these youth, particularly

in their distinct ways of knowing the world. Transnational theory could help connect these youth better, too, if they were provided the language to engage this discourse.

Other works have highlighted the connection to reclaiming and maintaining language and bilingual education as key for educating Mexican American (and Latina/o) students. Guadalupe Valdés demonstrates the ways U.S. schools are failing to teach English to Latina/o youth in *Learning and not learning English* (2001). Eugene García's (E. E. García, 1991, 2001) work also argues for the need to support the native language skills of Latina/o students while offering reform-oriented solutions to meet the needs of the Latina/o community. In fact, the field of bilingual education's research is largely oriented toward working within Mexican-origin and/or Latina/o youth (see, for instance, Fránquiz & Reyes, 1998; O. García & Baker, 2007; Hornberger, 2003). With transnational theory's focus on the simultaneous ways of knowing and being, bilingual education research could expand its analysis with one further argument of the importance of allowing students to maintain multiple language habilidades, or the Spanish word for abilities or skills, connoting, unlike the English translation, a connectedness of skills.

Some researchers (N. González, et al., 2005; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992; Yosso, 2005, 2006) have reframed the approaches educators take to learn about the strengths Latina/o communities have outside of school to work toward recognition as well as community survival and sobrevivencia (Galván, 2005; Villenas, 2005). This body of research highlights the incongruence between Whitestream schooling and ways of knowing of Latina/o communities, demonstrating that the latter is valid and needs further understanding. Rather than drawing upon culture of poverty discourses which have "blamed the victim" and constructed the poor as unable to "save themselves" from

their material conditions (D. A. Foley, 1997), several more recent researchers have attempted to highlight the persistent (and unrecognized in the Whitestream) strengths of Latina/o communities. Rooted in critical race theory, Tara Yosso's work has highlighted the organization of Latina/o communities in advocating for their youth as well as their counterstories of experience and ways of knowing, counter to white, middle class knowledges about Latina/o communities (Yosso, 2006) in addition to communities' of colors various forms of cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). For over twenty years, Moll, González, and others have developed the funds of knowledge approach to show how educators can use the lenses of anthropological research to work more effectively with Latina/o communities (N. González, et al., 2005; Moll, et al., 1992). They show that by investigating the community's forms of cultural activity, educators find spaces of opportunity to be used in teaching Latina/o youth (N. González, et al., 2005; Moll, et al., 1992). Their work deeply informed my sense of transnationalism and ways of knowing. Their studies of the richness of cultural experience and vitality of the communities helped me better recognize counter-hegemonic ways of knowing, that is, the ways which are often not privileged by Western, Enlightenment-oriented ways of knowing, which I describe later.

While these researchers have been highly effective in demonstrating the experiences Mexican-origin youth have in U.S. schools, they have not specifically highlighted the cases of transnational youth (with the exception of a small body of research I highlight in a subsequent section about transnationalism and education). Traditionally, however, education research related to the broader category of Latinas/os in U.S. schools has focused on more static identity categories with an underpinning

question of how Latina/o children integrate into U.S. culture, often with an emphasis on language. Researchers tend not to frame their research questions about the ways of knowing Latina/o students have and if and how they are compatible with U.S. ways of knowing. I argue that studies highlighting ways of knowing of transnational, Mexican-origin students supports the research showing the cultural incongruencies existing between formal schooling and transnational families. By focusing on ways of knowing, my research helps educators to begin rethinking the very foundations of their approaches to working with Mexican-origin, transnational students.

Mexican-origin Families in the Washington, D.C. Region

Washington, D.C. is a relatively new receiving city of mass waves of migration. Historically, cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and Houston have received large groups of immigrants, particularly Mexicans. Washington, D.C. first began receiving large numbers of Latina/o immigrants with the wave of Salvadorans who left their home country, largely due to a brutal civil war in the 1980s. Since the 1980s, the Washington, D.C. area has consistently been one of the top 10 immigrant receiving cities in the U.S. (Jones-Correa, 2007), due in part to its robust economy. Its population grew 16 percent in the previous decade to 5.4 million people, and 90 percent of the area's people live in the suburbs, outside Washington, D.C. proper (Jones-Correa, 2007).

Latinas/os made up 13.8% of the population of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. area in 2010, up from 9.0% in 2000 (CRA, 2011). Most recent demographic data show Salvadorans are the largest national immigrant group at about 10.5% of the immigrant population (Jones-Correa, 2007), or 145,000 (Leon et al, 2009). There are about 50,300 Mexicans in the Washington, D.C. area (Leon et al, 2009). Other

immigrant groups include Indians (63,000), Koreans (59,300), Vietnamese (46,200), and Chinese (42,000), (Leon et al, 2009) and a sizable population of Ethiopians (69,350) ("U.S. Census 2010: Ethiopians be counted," 2010). Like many other eastern seaboard metropolitan areas, there is a diverse representation of immigrants from multiple regions of the world. It is also similar to southeastern regions of the U.S. in terms of navigating the relatively new phenomenon of arriving immigrants. My research should be useful to regions who are receiving more recent immigrant populations, particularly Mexican-origin immigrant populations.

Currently, approximately one in five Washington, D.C. area residents was born outside the U.S. The population growth in the Washington, D.C. area is fueled by non-white populations and is projected to continue with that trend. In fact, six of the 25 highest-Hispanic growth U.S. area jurisdictions are in the Virginia suburbs (The Washington Post, 2007). At the same time, several local jurisdictions outside Washington, D.C. have implemented anti-immigrant programs, and the state of Virginia's police authorities may now check the legal status of individuals at any routine stop, not only of those who are arrested, as required prior to an August, 2010 ruling (Kumar & Helderman, 2010). The local political climate is one I refer to in my research with transnational families, particularly as it intersects with national questions surrounding immigration.

Educational achievement of Latinas/os in the Washington, D.C. area is reportedly mixed, relative to other parts of the country. In the city of Washington, D.C., Latina/o students fare worse, on average, on several indicators of academic performance (Bahrapour, 2010). However, Virginia and Maryland Latinas'/os' on-time graduate

rates are higher than the national average of 55% for Latinas/os, at 56.5% and 65%, respectively (Bahrapour, 2010).

To date, I have found very little academic research regarding Mexican-origin families in the Washington, D.C. area. Most of the transnational research regarding Latina/o immigrants in the Washington, D.C. area is about Salvadorans (Landolt, Autler, & Bares, 1999; Pessar, 1995; Portes, Haller, & Guarnizo, 2002). Little of that research directly addresses the education of Mexicans. My research will help fill this regional gap in regards to Mexican-origin transnational families by examining their ways of knowing.

To better understand the transnational aspects of Mexican-origin transnationals, I provide a deeper historic understanding. I look specifically at the formal political and economic relations between the two countries and the inextricably linked patterns of Mexican-origin people's migration between the two countries.

Mexico-U.S. Relations and Immigration

The story of Mexico and the U.S. is every other story of relations between neighboring countries. An artificial line was drawn by those who had the power to draw it during the rise of the modern nation-state, due in part to the invention of maps and the creation of modern "citizens." One aspect that makes this story's beginnings more unique is the current discourse about Mexicans' crossing the border to gain entry to the U.S. More accurately, the border crossed them (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999; Bigler, 2003). That is, Mexico lost in the war of the U.S.'s conquest, and subsequently lost all of its share of the states of Texas, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and most of Arizona, or half its geographic territory and most of its important rivers (Acuña, 2010). Mexican-origin people remained on the lands that were formerly Mexican national

territory. Though they were initially granted U.S. citizenship, racial bigotry—one of the historical foundations of U.S. nationhood—would win out against the equal rights promised by the U.S. in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), established at the end of the war. White supremacy, or the global regime of white racial privilege supported through economic, social, and political structures (R. L. Allen, 2001; Leonardo, 2009) would be further cemented through a history of immigration and citizenship policies which have treated Mexican-origin people as lower than European origin whites. And still today, the Mexican-origin community (and the greater pan-ethnic group of Latinas/os) struggles toward equality in a country which maintains a “possessive investment in whiteness,” or a vested and yet often seemingly invisible interest in maintaining white supremacy for those who benefit from it (Lipsitz, 2006). Following, I explore how race, U.S. law, economic interests, and global capitalism have played out in the story of migration of Mexicans to the U.S.

Once the land that belonged to Mexico officially became part of the United States, Mexican origin people remained on the lands they inhabited. They would be defrauded 33 million acres of land they owned within a few years of the end of the Mexican-American War (Takaki, 1993). One of the key factors in such defrauding was a racially-motivated sense of “Manifest Destiny” wherein whites moved west to “Christianize the savage Mexican heathens” who had been characterized as “simple-minded” and “halfway between savagism and civilization,” a reflection of the perception of their “mixed-race” background, an inheritance of being “lazy” Indians and “indolent” Spaniards (Menchaca & Valencia, 1990, p. 228). The “rancho-pastoral economy [in California and throughout the Southwest] was destroyed,” for instance, with the help of the California judicial

system by refusing to allow Mexicans to testify against whites (p. 229). How could Mexicans make claims to their land if they were not allowed to testify in court? This system also created a segregation throughout the Southwest which would be maintained through public and even private institutions, including schooling, and these racialized discourses of white superiority continue through the current historical period.

Despite the racialized prejudices against Mexicans, those from south of what became the new Mexico-U.S. border largely had freedom of movement back-and-forth over the border, as did nearly all nationalities, with the exception of Chinese (Ngai, 2004) until the early 20th century. For many Mexicans prior to World War I, northern movement meant fleeing a dangerous civil war (1910-1920). Up to ten percent of the Mexican population fled to the U.S. The U.S. had little investment in discouraging such migration, as the expanding capital industrial complex swept up the cheap labor for continued growth in production (Ngai, 2004). Mexican origin workers contributed greatly to the expansion of U.S. capitalism into the Southwest as farmers, ranchers, miners, and in the construction of railroads. Their labor, like those of other people of color, would go largely unrecognized by whites who generally continued to consider themselves racially superior.

After the Mexican Revolution ended in 1920, however, and US industrial interests had been expropriated, the U.S. used its immigration policy in efforts to successfully exert control over Mexico to support its own industrial interests, including those in Mexico's petroleum (Ngai, 2004). At the same time, the U.S. industrial system was making greater gains in improved technology for production and no longer needed the same stream of immigrant labor, so it began tightening migration restrictions from

Mexico and many countries. Nativist sentiment in the U.S. grew, and the Immigration Act of 1924 provided for the deportation of any “undocumented immigrant” who entered the U.S. without a “valid visa or without inspection, ” precipitating a dramatic increase in deportations (pp. 60-61). Ngai explains that it was once unconscionable to expel immigrants who had established themselves and their families in the U.S., but once the 1924 Immigration Act took effect, it gave rise to what we understand today as the “undocumented immigrant.” She thus explains, “The illegal alien that is abstractly defined is something of a specter, a body stripped of individual personage. The mere idea that persons without formal legal status resided in the nation engendered images of great danger” (p. 61). New agencies reported negatively on “foreigners” who lived in the U.S., suggesting they had “no right to be here,” portraying them as “bootleggers, gangsters, and racketeers of large cities” (p. 62). It seems the nativist sentiment created at that time yet remains a part of U.S. discourse today.

In the increasingly nativist climate described above, it should come as no surprise that there have been mass deportations of Mexicans, though these tend not to be taught often in official U.S. history curricula in K-12 schools. An initial repatriation of 100,000 Mexicans between 1920 and 1923 (with the support and assistance of the welcoming Mexican government) (Acuña, 2010) was dwarfed by a repatriation of around 400,000 Mexicans during the Great Depression, an estimated 60 percent of whom were U.S. citizens. The Mexicans who left during the first waves were reported to leave willingly, recognizing the “racial animus,” that they were not welcome in the U.S. and hoping to leave before “things got worse” (p. 73). At this point, nearly 20 percent of the Mexican

population had been repatriated to Mexico, exceeded in scale only by the Native American Indian removals of the 19th century (Ngai, 2004).

However, Mexicans, or rather the labor they could provide, were welcomed again with the onset of World War II and increased demand for industrial and agricultural production. The U.S. negotiated the Bracero Program with the Mexican government wherein Mexican nationals could go to the U.S. and have certain rights protected. These rights would often be ignored (Bigler, 2003) by their employers, and the workers lived in “deplorable conditions for substandard wages” (p. 212). From 1942 to 1964, about 200,000 Mexicans per year went to work in the U.S. under the program, arriving in 26 states. Large industrial farms took advantage of the lack of recourse Mexican laborers had, paying them lower wages than other industries, and this cycle created a decreased rate of payment relative to what those working in the manufacturing sector earned in the U.S. (or 36.1 percent in 1955, down from 47.9 percent in 1945) (Ngai, 2004, p. 139).

Despite the invitation that was extended to workers, another mass deportation of Mexicans would occur—Operation Wetback, initiated in 1954 by the U.S. federal government. Nearly 3.8 million people were repatriated to Mexico during this period, often without the option of any legal recourse (Bigler, 2003, p. 213). Accompanying the repatriation were the same nativist discourses which had whipped up the frenzy surrounding the previous rounds of repatriation, perhaps fore-echoes of the anti-Mexican, anti-immigrant sentiment in today’s current immigration debates, which are largely proxies for discrimination against Mexicans.

The Hart-Cellar Act was celebrated as a grand achievement in 1965 for ending racial discrimination through formal U.S. immigration policy, ending decades of racially-

coded national origins quotas. However, it would serve to “reproduce the problem of illegal immigration, especially from Mexico, to the present day” (Ngai, 2004, p. 227). Ngai adds further analysis about the exacerbation of the “othering” of nonwhite immigrants in the U.S.: “... in some respects immigration reform only hardened the distinction between citizen and alien” (Ngai, 2004, p. 229). An unfortunate bargain was struck during this period: Civil Rights were legally coded in U.S. law while the construction of the “alien” further ossified with the immigration law. At the same time, many Mexican-origin people in the U.S. began to organize and identify as Chicanas/os, making public claims to their linguistic and cultural origins—origins which to that point had been dismissed under the pressures of assimilationist discourses from the mainstream. Migrant farm workers organized and achieved marked gains in their collective bargaining, especially with the thoughtful leadership of César Chávez and Dolores Huerta in the United Farm Workers union.

Discursively, the civil rights/alien discourse which prevailed makes it even more difficult for those who are not U.S. citizens to appeal for recognition of basic human rights. These human rights would point analysis in the direction of necessarily addressing an inequitable global economic system which precipitates the very immigration nativist discourses are so angered by, a displaced anger, I suggest. Yet this analysis, applicable to the 1960s, will hold to our present context. I show how this displaced discourse would continue to stymie solving the “immigration problem” even through the resolutions taken in the 80s and 90s, which I turn to now.

Mexicans continued to arrive to the U.S. during the 80s and 90s without the legal documents required by U.S. immigration law to work, and many continue to fill

agricultural jobs. U.S. capitalists—with the support of the government—created an industrial development model whose economic growth was more robust than the one created in Mexico. Although the Mexican government and capitalists achieved several decades of inward-oriented “development” in Mexico from the 1930s through the 1970s, successfully creating an industrial complex and a middle class, it remained difficult to catch up with its northern neighbor’s economy (Durand, Massey, & Parrado, 1999). In the U.S., as the wage differential continued to grow between agricultural work and other forms of labor, native-born citizens grew increasingly reluctant to take agricultural jobs (though approximately 20 percent of agricultural jobs are still held by native-born workers, many of whom are of Latina/o origin) (Rothenberg, 2000). Despite the low wages paid in the U.S., the wage potential in the U.S.’s agricultural fields is still greater than what many can earn in Mexico. Thus, the U.S. maintains a continued stream of undocumented labor.

Once again there was a dramatic U.S. federal immigration policy shift in 1986. The Immigration and Reform Control Act (IRCA) was passed in efforts to stop illegal immigration through strict border enforcement and punishment of the employers of undocumented immigrants. Approximately 2.8 million immigrants were granted amnesty, those who arrived to the U.S. prior to 1982 (Rothenberg, 2000). By legalizing these workers, the agricultural sector assured itself a continued supply of cheap labor, approximately one generation after the end of the Bracero program. Large agribusinesses, who control the majority of food production in the U.S., have advocated for their interests in reducing food production costs—at whatever cost—including the denial of just wages (Schlosser, 2001). IRCA created a stabilized group of primarily

Mexican-origin people who, instead of following circular migration patterns, located permanently in the U.S. (Durand, et al., 1999). Mexico's internal economic conditions were also declining at the end of their experiment with internal development and the implementation of neoliberal economic policies, forcing privatization of state-owned businesses as well as a decrease in social spending (Durand, et al., 1999). This precipitated additional migration to the U.S. after IRCA, particularly because there were legal citizens who could receive family members through the family reunification component of U.S. immigration law. Beginning in 2005, there were renewed efforts to provide blanket amnesties for undocumented workers. One wonders about the seemingly generationally cyclical nature of these immigration reforms—the latest one likely interrupted by a global economic crisis which suddenly provided an additional source of cheap labor from the increasing unemployment rates south of the U.S.'s border.

Between these generational “immigration reforms,” there has been a great deal of nativist rhetoric regarding immigrants in the U.S., especially since the passage of IRCA. In the mid-1990s, anti-immigrant initiatives in the state of California led the way in promoting the end of services available to undocumented workers and their families in the U.S. with Proposition 187 (1994) and later Proposition 227 (1998), which outlawed bilingual education. Each of these foregrounded immigrants (often a proxy for Mexicans) as the cause of social problems and drains on people “native” to California (K. S. Anderson, 2009). The former bill was explicitly anti-immigrant, but the latter publicly used a discourse about “caring” for immigrants and expressing it by making sure students learned English through English-only policies, despite the outcries of language acquisition researchers (Anderson, 2009). Proposition 227 allowed for immigrants to

remain as a central political discourse while being less explicitly racist, though the attempted erasure of home languages clearly supports white supremacy (Anderson, 2009).

Both laws were passed by popular vote in California, ending bilingual education (unless opted into by families) and services for many immigrant families. Other states including Massachusetts and Arizona followed with similar laws, ending bilingual education programs and the symbolic message bilingual education sent—that students' home languages were unworthy of taking space in U.S. schools (even if such programs were merely transitional to far greater English proficiency). Federally, there were changes in immigration and welfare laws which limited the provisions of certain social services, including medical access, food stamps, and federal housing benefits in 1996 and 1997 (Rothenberg, 2000). It is lamentable that the people who voted to pass these laws were not more aware of the U.S.'s impact on the causality of much of these migratory flows, including, for instance, the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which ended many of Mexico's agricultural subsidies, quickly displacing agricultural workers who sought their families' survival north of the border (Polaski, 2004). At the same time NAFTA passed in 1994, a devastating economic crisis occurred between the change in presidential regimes in Mexico, which precipitated even more migration to the U.S.

The Al Qaeda attacks on U.S. targets of September 11, 2001, brought further limits on immigrants' movement in the U.S. and attitudes toward them; the consequent reactions to these attacks have had a dramatic impact on Mexican immigrants. It became much more difficult for the undocumented to secure driver's licenses and formal forms of

identification. Mexico has responded through its embassies and consulates by issuing official Mexican identification cards for use within the U.S., though these are not accepted throughout the U.S. as forms of official identification. This makes it more difficult for Mexican-origin people without documentation; it drives people further into the shadows of informal sectors of the economy. With a greater security/militarized apparatus in the U.S., undocumented people feel greater pressure to remain undetected to maintain their uninterrupted physical presence in the U.S. Despite these shadowy existences of approximately 11 million undocumented people in the U.S. (Hoefer, Rytina, & Baker, 2010; Department of Homeland Security, 2010), the majority of whom are of Mexican origin, hundreds of thousands defended both their U.S. Constitutional rights (rights afforded to all individuals who are physically in U.S. territory) and their desires to be permitted to come out of the shadows into formal legal recognition, in protests throughout the U.S. in 2006 (K. R. Johnson & Ong Hing, 2007). These undocumented people and their supporters responded to draconian measures proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives and ultimately a bill which passed in both houses to build the border fence along the U.S.-Mexico border, about 700 miles of which were completed (Department of Homeland Security, 2010). These protests represent the agentic, public voice of the subaltern. A series of factors supported this public voicing, including transnational influences of the media, the memory of more commonly practiced forms of public protest in Mexico, and technological advances in communication which supported these large forms of public organizing.

The U.S. border state of Arizona passed a law in 2010, State Bill 1070, which makes law enforcement officials check the immigration status of individuals when they

have a suspicion that individuals may be in the country illegally (Riccardi, 2010). Officials who are suspected of not checking, according to the law, may be sued for not doing so. Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, Indiana, and Utah followed suit with similar anti-immigrant laws; Alabama's criminalized the aiding of undocumented persons and forced schools to check students' immigration status (though Utah also included a guest worker program) (Baksh, 2011). These states' laws created protests throughout the country, largely emanating from the immigrant community who refuses to stand by while their community is targeted by what the U.S. Department of Justice considers unconstitutional legislation (DOJ, 2010). It is likely that alongside the U.S. economic recession and a "jobless recovery" (Peck, 2010), nativist sentiment will continue to circulate in public discourse.

While the economic decline in the U.S. has reportedly precipitated the return migration of some Mexicans to Mexico, there are also internal factors in Mexico which are reported to be causing migration to the U.S. at the same time. These factors include the negative impact on the Mexican economy of the global economic forces as well as internal political problems related to President Felipe Calderon's internal war on drug cartels, which, to date, has resulted in at least 47,515 deaths in Mexico, though many suggest that number released by the Mexican government is a gross underestimate (Cave, 2012).

As of 2010, there were 31.8 million Mexican-origin people living in the U.S., or 63 percent of the total of U.S. Census designated "Hispanics" living in the U.S. (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, & Albert, 2011). Hispanics comprise 16% of the U.S. population (Ennis et al, 2011). Of the Mexican-origin Hispanics, 38.4 percent were not born in the U.S.

("U.S. Hispanic Population: 2006," 2006). Approximately 30.9 percent of the foreign born Mexican-origin Hispanics were not U.S. citizens (*The American community--Hispanics: 2004*, 2007). Migration to the U.S. is expected to fuel population growth, and Hispanics, by 2050, will comprise between 20 to 31 percent of the total U.S. population (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009). In U.S. schools, one out of five students is either an immigrant's or second-generation student, and that ratio is likely to increase to one in three (C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). Mexican-origin children make up about half of second-generation youth, and one in ten of these children will return to Mexico to live some of their childhood in Mexico (Rendall & Torr, 2008). In my conclusion, I argue that these first and second generation children and their families engage in transnational practices. Following, I show how transnationalism is a phenomenon which helps researchers extend their understandings of immigration and immigrant practices.

Transnationalism's Connections to and Distinctions from Immigration

Transnationalism is a term used apart from immigration or immigrants, though these concepts are necessarily related to globalization, and immigrants are among the primary actors in transnationalism. Transnationalism works in distinction from the theorizing strictly about immigration, which offers interpretive frameworks around immigrant experiences ranging from assimilation theory (Gordon, 1964), to segmented assimilation (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001), to circular migration (Aranda, 2006). Those concepts, particularly the latter, can be used in concert with transnationalism to interpret the adaptive behaviors of transnationals, or people who live and act with primary ways of knowing from more than one national context, to their host environments. Most of the research related to transnational children and education has been under the framework of

immigration, not that of transnationalism (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). The unfortunate result, I argue, is that the focus on how immigrants assimilate misses interpreting (and misinterprets) a larger set of accompanying phenomena alongside the immigration act itself. With transnationalism, researchers can explore how people adjust, shift their sense of identity, and employ agency, among others.

In the field of education, the discourses surrounding students whose families (or students themselves) have moved from one country to reside in the U.S. often circulate around the assimilationist project. The work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1920) helped define the classic sense of linear assimilation, wherein immigrants, in theory, take on characteristics and values of the host country and discard the sending countries' traditions and ideas. The goals of assimilation would persist and be further developed by influential sociologist Milton Gordon (1964). Gordon describes seven variables of assimilation and checked the levels of assimilation of several groups in the U.S., including, "Jews, Negroes... and Puerto Ricans" and their "adaptation to core [Anglo-Saxon] society and culture" (1964, p. 75). Assimilation is so durable that in my own training and indoctrination into U.S. ESOL teaching, school and district leaders frequently invoked the term. I seldom, if ever, heard district-endorsed leaders discuss anything resembling families' rich social networks (Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001; Yosso, 2005) or hybrid identity formation (Wolf, 2002), key issues highlighted by transnational theory. Transnational literature shows students' lives are less linear and more complicated than what the concept of assimilation suggests. This point is still largely missing from both the theoretical and trade literature for K-12 educators. The

“optic” of transnationalism shifts dramatically from the typical examination of immigrants arriving to sending countries and the various associated phenomena.

Transnationalism complicates the assumptions and discourses surrounding immigration. Transnationalism allows for people to maintain cultural values and practices from sending countries; in fact, those values and practices are essential for many people’s survival, particularly if they participate in circular migration. In the following section, I briefly outline three theoretical positionings regarding global political/economic regimes and their impact on global immigration. I conclude the section by showing how these frameworks undergird transnationalism.

Modern Global Migration

Because my research looks specifically at Mexican transnational families who have migrated to the U.S., I examine recent theorizing trends in immigration. Several researchers have attempted to demonstrate the most important factors influencing modern global migration, or the doubled population of migrants between 1960 and 2005 from rural to urban areas as well as from materially poorer to wealthier countries, resultant largely from the forces of globalization (Spring, 2009a). Some of the most salient frameworks include postcolonial perspectives, a globalization “flows” perspective, and a Foucauldian lens upon neoliberalism. I draw heavily upon the work of Robert Blauner (1994), Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (2008), and Aihwa Ong (1996, 2007), respectively to compare these analyses of global migration. First, I present these three sets of frameworks as well as supporting theorists. Then I demonstrate differences among the arguments and how, taken together, they may be helpful in my research about transnational families.

I focus specifically on how these theorists describe agency of global migrants, or those who create the movements among global masses. By agency, I refer to people's ability to act upon the world in tension with how their actions may be acted upon by others (Holland, et al., 2001, p. 42) as well as their "active subjectivity" to create meaning outside of dominant, often oppressive, ways of knowing (Lugones, 2005, p. 86). By focusing on agency, I inform my understanding of how the families in my study act and their ways of knowing, recognizing that while such agency is often under-recognized by the officials in schooling contexts, transnational families are both effective actors outside these contexts and within them, whether through direct effects of their thoughts and behaviors or through acts of resistance with unpredictable effects.

Postcolonial Migration

Blauner makes a Marxist, postcolonial argument that draws itself in contrast to the common-sense, conventional narrative that tells a story of global migration as the free and willing movement of immigrants acting on their own volition (1994). He debunks the myth of America as "the land of the free," and the metanarrative that the U.S. is a "land of immigrants," situating its people among all the world's people in terms of migration and colonization. The historic lens is paramount to his argument. He describes colonialism as the overarching historical phenomenon through which people of color all over the world share a connection in terms of lived experience, echoing similar arguments by heterodox economists (DeMartino, 2000; Sen, 2009) and other postcolonial theorists (Glissant, 1999).

Blauner delineates three historical moments of colonialism and their impacts on people of color. First, there is an imposition of the new, colonizing, society on the

colonized. The colonizers either take people to a new land by force or enforce a new organization of society upon the native peoples. Second, the colonizers subjugate the colonized into the practice of “unfree labor,” which restricts and even prohibits social mobility and political action. Third, the colonizers implement a policy of destruction of the culture and ways of life of the colonized. The colonialism he depicts can possibly be undermined by the collective action of the oppressed within the colonial system, but the degree of lived oppression and resultant alienation may be too difficult to overcome for such transformation.

This connection, for Blauner, becomes the basis for the overarching term of *belonging* to the third world, whether one is a minority in a First World country or inhabit what is commonly referred to as a Third World country. Like other postcolonial scholars (Todorov, 1999), Blauner recognizes the cruel histories of cultural genocides throughout five centuries to show how racial oppression continues to manifest itself in current practice. Blauner believes that the colonized may come to understand their connectedness and develop a possible political unity, though he remains skeptical it will come to pass. For Blauner, agency is limited to a classed analysis, and he does not take into account any inter-subjective sense of agency of the colonized peoples he describes. Inda and Rosaldo have a far different representation of the agency of the subaltern as well as the processes attendant to global migration.

Globalization and flows

Inda and Rosaldo argue that global migration is an uneven phenomenon of globalization whose effects cannot be accurately predicted (Inda & Rosaldo, 2008). They describe these phenomena in terms of “flows of capital, people, goods, images, and ideas

across the world.” They argue against a fairly common assumption of the supposedly increasing spread of U.S. cultural hegemony: that all flows move from the “West to the rest,” by demonstrating a movement of flows among several peripheral spaces. Inda and Rosaldo offer what they call a “concrete attentiveness to human agency.” In describing agency, they argue that “subjects mediate the processes of globalization” by acting upon these processes, rather than merely being the recipients of globalization, particularly the products from the “West.” Through a series of vignettes, the readers observe the Westward flows of McDonalds into Russia as well as the “peripheral” flows of Nigerians understanding their own society through the Indian films they watch, a fairly common phenomenon in Nigeria, the authors assert. Their examples show how those who live in the “periphery” (who I call the subaltern) make agentic choices in appropriating and creating the flows of globalization.

Fundamental to these flows are the reduction of time and space, or key phenomena of what I described earlier as the “postmodern condition.” They argue that since the fall of Fordist production, older statist structures have dissipated, and that producers move as quickly as possible to provide goods for fast consumption. As a result, consumers and producers meet each other rapidly (and often virtually), reducing the former constraints of time and space. There is an uncertainty of where these flows, uneven as they are, may lead us.

Inda and Rosaldo situate their theory and read of history in the works of Harvey (1992) and Giddens (1990, 1991). Both present compatible theories of globalization, emphasizing how globalization has compressed our perception of time and space. Harvey, Inda and Rosaldo demonstrate this compression as a historic result of the decline

of Fordism. Fordism failed in the 1970s, and in its place, faster methods of production and accumulation took root. The structures and protections of state were uprooted, and, as capitalists began contracting work out, time and distance for production (as well as methods of consumption) diminished. They draw on Giddens's work, which emphasizes the decreasing social distance between people in a post-Fordist time, where events in one far-flung part of the world can have great consequences on the people in another place, the "interlocking of the local and global" (p. 11). Ina and Rosaldo emphasize that these relationships are uneven and can move in multiple directions. They do not examine, for example, the migrations that occurred prior to the post-Fordist era, and their analysis seems to lack historic depth because of it, despite a brief and uneven attempt at debunking that globalization is simply an extension of the latest version of imperialism. They round out their analysis from what appear to be objective, albeit nuanced, attempts to demonstrate the uneven flows of subjects and objects in multiple directions.

They argue that people assign different and competing meanings to their increasing interactions throughout the world. They also argue that culture is no longer situated in territory and that it is transferred across terrains and re-situated, a notion which supports two constructs commonly used in transnational theory: the construct of simultaneity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004) as well as the construct of deterritorialization (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994). Therefore, the global migrant does not have to assimilate (as Blauner argues); in fact, as a result of globalization, migrants can now practice what they quote Rouse as referring to as "cultural bifocality," by living in more than one national boundary, communicating with a community that is transnational and situated in an imagined space transcending borders, where members live between

two (or more) national territories (Rouse, 2002). Meanwhile, the state has lost its ability to use its governing technologies, they argue, to inscribe nationalistic characteristics on these transnational individuals. It seems the global migrants, according to the authors, will continue to be unpredictable in terms of their flows and their impacts on other peoples as well as the other objects of globalization. If this is true, the potential impact of transnationals is difficult to predict and certainly worth documenting empirically.

Neoliberalism through a Foucauldian Lens and Migration

Ong's argument about global migration is a descriptive account based in an economic lens, using an interesting turn in terms related to neoliberalism (Ong, 2007). Neoliberalism—generally used to refer to a political-economic regime of free-market, laissez-faire policies—is a term she describes having multiple meanings in everyday discourse and situated in different contexts. Neoliberalism has been implemented in economic and state governing practices throughout most of the world, often at the insistence of multinational lenders including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, who are heavily influenced by the so-called Washington Consensus, or the power-elite corporate leaders and U.S. government-backed policy makers (Harvey, 2005). Countries who accept financing from these institutions are forced to submit their populations to structural adjustment policies wherein state entities are privatized and where social services are often dramatically cut in order to balance budgets (Sachs, 2005). Additionally, and perhaps more damaging for the populations of these countries, domestic goods, finance, and service markets are usually highly exposed to the global market, left without any domestic protections such as tariffs on international imports or subsidies (Klein, 2007). Neoliberal policy supports minimal involvement by the state;

over the decades since the 1970s, most countries' populations, whether relatively materially rich or poor, have seen dramatic increases in inequality. It is easy to understand how global migration has increased so dramatically as a result of the implementation of neoliberal policies. These policies continue today, despite the largest economic recession since the Great Depression and public cries for rethinking the global economic order (Chomsky, 2004).

Drawing upon Foucault's work on technologies of power and governmentality (1977), Ong argues that neoliberalism is a technology to govern life, so that the individual becomes an "entrepreneur of the self," one who engages on the project of self in her or his lifetime but within the governing structures of the demands of the economy. These technologies are used by the state and other institutions in ways that facilitate the individual's internalization of governance on the self. Ong's addition to Foucault's analysis of governance is that neoliberalism expands governmentality beyond the purview of the state. She takes this 20th Century economic phenomenon and describes its place in terms of economizing—and thus governing—the individual. Instead of the state enforcing governmentality, wherein the rules and laws of the state were internalized by the individual, the individual now internalizes her own governance *if* she is actually a citizen whose human capital can be measured by the state. For Ong, agency hinges upon the amount and type of capital a subject can create for oneself, thus her term, "entrepreneur of the self."

Ong describes neoliberalism as exception to some countries' more traditional statist practices and also exception to neoliberalism when some practices are used to include or exclude individuals. For Ong, the self becomes self-governing and limits itself

on the claims it might make on the state. Individuals' values are measured, then, in terms of their human capital. This measurement then allows some individuals to migrate with great flexibility; these individuals in fact have greater claims to citizenship in multiple contexts (such as the enterprising Chinese businessperson with millions of dollars). Conversely, those who contribute less to society in terms of their human capital become more limited in the claims they can make for protection or assistance; thus, their agency is diminished. If Ong's analysis is true, it is important to examine and document the processes of diminishment and expansion of the agency of transnational individuals.

The three viewpoints on global migration—ranging from a Marxist interpretation of postcolonialism, to an anthropological sense of global “flows,” to a Foucauldian read on neoliberalism—demonstrate varying degrees of individual agency possibilities and the systems of governance that limit or allow their agency. Ina and Rosaldo's analysis seems to demonstrate the highest potential for individual agency in terms of the overall global population because they claim such high possibility for present and future actions among the world's people in terms of flows. In fact, their work appears celebratory of this aspect and could even be used to argue for the increased movement of capital, similar to Friedman's celebration of how globalization has “flattened” the world (Friedman, 2005). Blauner is more reserved about individual agency in its historic context of oppression, though he appears to hold out with a Marxist notion of potential for historic and large-scale change rooted in the oppressed's collective agency, that if the subaltern were to unite they could create a political unity which would effectively respond to the tyranny of global, racist colonialism. Ong, on the other hand, suggests the likelihood of a widening gap of those who can lay claims to citizenship and those who will likely be

subject to a simple subsistence kind of living, or, what she calls “bare life.” I examine each of these in turn.

While Blauner’s contribution to our understanding of global migration as a result of colonialism is a helpful remedy to the myth-making of many nations about immigration and its contributions to so-called “melting pots” and “salad bowls,” his failure to understand agency beyond a classed analysis leaves the reader wanting, particularly when there are currently people of color who demonstrate a great deal of economic power today in multinational corporations and in countries including (but not limited to) China, Japan, and Korea—phenomena for which his theory does not account.

Like Blauner, Ong draws a parallel of how race affects potential for agency. However, Ong believes that immigrants who are “whitened” in Western democracies achieve a level of acceptance because of their internalization of neoliberal self-entrepreneurship as well as the way groups of immigrants are regarded and treated by various apparatuses of the state. She does not describe whitening’s implications in terms of how the subject feels about or thinks about that whitening, or even if there’s an awareness of it. Like Inda and Rosaldo, she also sees a decline of the state’s ability to influence all subjects. However, her reasoning is quite different. The agency of the global immigrant for Ong depends directly on her or his potential value to the economy and her or his human capital. On one hand, the individual who has made a project of oneself as a lifelong learner with skills to contribute to economic growth can live in multiple territories within her or his legal rights (and still, to a certain extent, under the laws of the states where she or he resides). On the other hand, the laboring masses of the world’s majority, many of whom are global immigrants, have little agency. In fact, they

are reduced to an existence of “bare life.” They exist as “exceptions” to neoliberalism, outside the purview of the technologies of self-governance. The one institution which can take up their claims is the non-governmental organization (NGO), but Ong argues that the role of the NGO in representing the agency of these people is limited at best. The state, meanwhile, according to Ong, has become deterritorialized in many ways, wielding its power in other once-sovereign territories when it may. Additionally, neoliberalism as exception is used by states to implement market truths beyond its philosophic and historic underpinnings (such as Communism with Chinese characteristics—the characteristics being market-oriented reforms).

These three frameworks of understanding global migration help make sense of migration from different angles, which I attempt to intersect here. By connecting the most salient and well-theorized components of their arguments, I create the underpinnings for understanding transnational theorists’ depiction of agency of the subaltern. Blauner helps create a critical understanding of immigration through a Marxist-imbued lens of colonialism. The examination is helpful, but Inda and Rosaldo compellingly argue that agency is not currently limited to social class and passive receptivity to imperialist influences, citing, for instance, how Turks have created a parallel society for themselves in Germany. Their historic and economic analyses are so limited, however, as to be too thin to explain globalization’s overall impact on global migration as they attempt to do. Ong’s work demonstrates how neoliberalism has shifted governance from the state to the individual and how the location of the worth of the individual depends upon the person’s ability to make an entrepreneurial product of the self. The implication is a greater sense of agency for the relatively few who achieve high

levels of self-entrepreneurship, but the large working masses, including the large masses of global immigrants, exist as exceptions to neoliberalism. It is hard to imagine them as lacking so much agency when Inda and Rosaldo, for example, portray many of the same working masses as transnationally identifying in unbordered communities, beyond national identities. Such activities seem to demonstrate the creative, agentic engagement of even these “bare life” individuals.

Taken together, it is clear that a critical reading of history which focuses on individuals’ and groups’ agency—within, alongside, and despite official recognition of their agency—and the tensions which circulate in how those sources of agency relate will be critical in understanding the transnational nature of families with immigration histories in my study. For this reason, I have contextually situated the experiences of Mexican-origin students in U.S. education and the research conducted about Mexican-origin students. I recognize the need to demonstrate the history of the schooling of Mexican-origin students in order to locate where Mexican-origin students are today. I also highlight the history of Mexican immigration to the U.S. to show that the case of Mexican-origin students is unique, particularly because the two countries share a contested border. Mexican-origin families in the U.S. share a particular historic context. Next, I proceed with a more particular examination of the phenomenon of transnationalism. I attempt to define it within the literature produced over the last two decades and then turn toward transnational researchers’ theorizing of the subaltern’s agency.

Transnationalism Defined

Researchers (Appadurai, 2008; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Khagram & Levitt, 2008; Ong, 1999; Portes, et al., 2002; Vertovec, 2003) have used the term transnationalism to describe many phenomena for multiple purposes. I define transnationalism as the inherently unbordered social practices in the world and their situatedness among the structures which have governing power over those practices.

Transnationalism has traveled across disciplines. Economists since the 1970s have used it to describe corporations which spanned various countries, with a home base of operations in one particular country (Hirst & Thompson, 1999). In other social science disciplines such as history, sociology, political science, and anthropology, it has been used since the 1980s to describe people who move among countries as well as phenomena associated with a dramatic increase in the speed of movement of goods and information (Basch, et al., 1994; Pantoja, 2005; Portes & Hao, 2004; R. C. Smith, 2006). The term transnational, and its accompanying terms of transnationals as well as transnationalism, have been embraced, critiqued (R. C. Smith, 2006; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009), and problematized (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). Smith, for example, refers to “transnational lives” as opposed to what he calls the “buzzword” of *transnationalism* as a term without enough explanatory power about the influences, such as life course, on “transnational lives” (R. C. Smith, 2006). Zúñiga & Hamann argue that instead of referring to people as transnationals they should be called “sojourners” because the term they use is, according to them, more nuanced in describing the processes of transnationals (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). It is challenging to locate trends among those who have written about the empirical nature of transnationalism as well as transnational theory; Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith explain that the meaning has shifted and

been used for multiple purposes: “The concept’s sudden prominence has been accompanied by its increasing ambiguity” (1998, p. 2).

Despite its problems, the term transnationalism maintains helpful descriptive power. Social science researchers can better describe an increasingly complex global ecology and at the same time call into question the artificially fixed nature of borders. It also uproots the idea of immigration as a one-way process and allows for the investigation of social practices across borders. Because of its continued usefulness, the term transnationalism has begun to take its own field as “transnational studies” (Khagram & Levitt, 2008).

Authors who embrace the term (Appadurai, 2008; Basch, et al., 1994; Khagram & Levitt, 2008; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Sassen, 1998a) generally agree there are either new phenomena or phenomena which have historically increased paces and diffusions, inform the concept of transnationalism. They tend to include:

- the increased flow of goods and labor
- global migration
- transnationals’ changes in identity formation and complications of “home”
- the shifting and perhaps weaker role of the nation-state
- structures and institutions which impact global flows
- the increase in communication across borders through digital media
- changes in technology which allow for greater travel across borders, and
- changes in late capitalism and the attendant neoliberal economic policies and economic actors.

Despite the coherence among these terms, other researchers such as Guarnizo and Smith (1998) have argued whether, in fact, these phenomena are really much different from the historic global movements of people for generations preceding the postmodern moment which transnationalism attempts to describe. The field of transnationalism continues to move forward, probably due to the increasing fragmentations of postmodernity as well as the (somewhat paradoxically) increasing interconnections of peoples across borders. In fact, Khagram and Levitt co-edited a lengthy reader of the field they are now calling, “Transnational Studies” (Khagram & Levitt, 2008). Their introductory chapter highlights several ways to take transnational theory in new directions, particularly in how to extend transnationalism in methodology, theory, and even philosophy and the “public” whereby questions of power are directly centered alongside the “givens” of borders and actors within them (Khagram & Levitt, 2008). Because of the unwieldy history of transnational theory, as researcher I am forced to choose among various approaches and tools of analysis for my research. Based on my reading, I agree there is a qualitative general historic change based on the characteristics I listed above. Transnationals’ lives are demonstrated to be different than they were during mass migration movements of the early 20th century. I find the theorizing on individual agency to be a necessary lens for my own research, as I want to highlight how ways of knowing merge with agency in transnationals’ lives.

Globalization and the Subaltern’s Agency

Several of the early and still most notable researchers on transnationalism (Basch, et al., 1994; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Levitt, 2001; Ong, 1999; Portes, et al., 2002) write about transnationalism and its relationship to globalization, particularly the effects of

global capitalism, and they often did so from a critical (sometimes postcolonial) stance. Those writing from a postcolonial position (Appadurai, 2008; Basch, et al., 1994; Khagram & Levitt, 2008; Levitt, 2001) recognize the dislocations and deep social ruptures already created by the colonial project and the new dislocations created among the colonized. Postcolonial theory demonstrates, among other things, how in the process of colonization, the colonizer used white supremacy to help create notions of the “other” as nonwhite and thus lacking, justifying the colonizer’s invasions (Fanon, 1967). It also shows how the colonized are both changed from this forced contact and yet maintain strands of their ways of being, although altered (Césaire & Kelley, 2000; Glissant, 1999).

Transnational researchers often emphasize the local practices of the formerly colonized, or the subaltern, who make up the masses of waves of global migration flows. Among them are anthropologists who recognize there are local processes resultant from the forces of globalization where only detailed description would best explain the phenomena at hand.

They describe, for instance, the ways racial discrimination informs transnationals’ lives in multiple local contexts and how it often shifts as people live in different countries (Basch, et al., 1994). It is clear from transnational researchers that even though the formal colonial era is over, racial hierarchies remain durable (R. C. Smith, 2006). They also tend to highlight the agency of individual actors from subaltern positioning in transnational contexts, which I describe below.

Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc describe transnationalism as resting upon four premises, the first being the relationship between capital and labor as it plays out in global relations (1994). In addition to their sensitivity to the continued impact of

race on people's lives, they present a class analysis, arguing that there is an increasingly global class of capitalists alongside transmigrant workers who move between borders to fill the need for production. Basch et al. recognize the state's role as a facilitator of production through the maintenance of laws which support this production (p. 23), though they also claim that nations are becoming increasingly deterritorialized. They argue that the current transnationalism "marks a new type of migrant experience, reflecting an increased and more pervasive global penetration of capital" (p. 24). However, they highlight the role of "subordinated populations" and their social relations, particularly as they contribute to "social movements that think beyond what is deemed thinkable" (p. 290).

For my research, the above work is helpful in terms of understanding why the families I worked with immigrated to the U.S. as well as clues toward their agency in conceiving beyond what is "thinkable." Their work helps push far beyond ideas of assimilation and adaptation toward social transformation. Their work also supports the sense that the families I worked with had ways of knowing that were distinct from non-transnational families because of the very different experiences they had. Social movements, for instance, could likely be affected by the changes in city composition of transnationals, as theorized by Sassen.

Another key theorist in transnational literature, Saskia Sassen, focuses heavily on the role that global cities play in the current, globalized era (Sassen, 1998a). Sassen describes the replacement of the nation-state's importance by global cities, as a series of swift changes from globalization and the rapid movement of global capital and its location in these cities. She claims that the urban space becomes "denationalized" with

the increase of migrants from both the capitalist class and the working masses. She says there are now “new claims by transnational actors... involving contestation, rais[ing] the question—whose city is it?” (1998b, p. xx). For the Washington, D.C. area, this is a particularly salient question. The level of migration from people of both classes is relatively quite high compared to other U.S. cities. The arrival of Latina/o immigrants to the Washington, D.C. area contributes to this question as well, and the question is further complicated because it is the federal government’s capital. Does the city belong to the elected officials and power elites, or does it belong to those who keep it running day to day in the provision of food, maintenance, and cleanliness, or, does it belong somehow to the entire country, or some mix of all three questions? My own research engaged the situatedness of this particular city.

Sassen describes the “elements of a new economic regime,” a growth fueled by increased economic inequality (p. 149). Despite the increased inequality, she recognizes the agentic capacity of all actors, from the great concentrations of “corporate power” to large concentrations of “others,” where all actors experience a reshaping of their sense of “identity formation” and how it “engenders new notions of community, of membership, of entitlement” (p. xxxii). These changes in transnational identity formation influence and shift people’s ways of knowing. Sassen’s critique of the global economy also lends itself to a novel read on immigration, highlighting how global cities will be central locations of power as opposed to imagining power’s location in the form of nation-states and their systems of governance.

Other theorists (Appadurai, 2008; Vertovec, 2004) also celebrate the potential for transformation resultant from globalization through transnational actors. For Arjun

Appadurai, there are qualitative changes in the imaginations of people the world over of all social strata, impacting *where* and *how* they spend their lives (2008). He explains that the world of fantasy and life possibilities has expanded dramatically: "More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of 'possible' lives than they ever did before. . . through the prisms of . . . the mass media in all their forms. That is, fantasy is now a social practice..." (p. 54). Through these media-infused imaginings, people have more options to consider about how to spend their lives. Would they move to a new continent? Follow families from their home village to the same location in the U.S.? Would they be able to accumulate the trappings of capitalism; would their children get better educations? Would they escape the difficult material conditions in their own countries? Appadurai is careful to explain that these possibilities are not limitless and not always tenable; nonetheless, the imagined futures of people are so different from the past that it does have effect on their present. Steven Vertovec (2004) claims that transnational practices—or those activities and processes of thinking, such as returning to countries of origin for visits and maintaining relationships with people in those countries, related to lives lived across borders—will likely only increase and accelerate additional social transformations, ultimately creating increasingly rapid changes in globalization.

Cultural studies theorists (Bhabha, 1990; Gilroy, 1992) have also been cited in transnational literature as supporting the transformation potential through globalization. Gilroy (1992) is cited as encouraging researchers to look for an “explicitly transnational perspective” by examining the agency of transmigrants, or migrants who return with regularity from the receiving country to the sending country (in Basch et al., p. 290). Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith (1998) cite Bhabha (1990) in his claim

that transmigrants' "practices and identities" (p. 5) work against the hegemony of the state. Their ideas, however, are not left uncontested.

Other key transnationalism researchers (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Ong, 1999) contest the issue of subaltern agency in the process of globalization. Aihwa Ong, in *Flexible citizenship* draws upon Foucault's work to present a critique of what she claims is an over-statement of transnationals' agency:

Seldom is there an attempt to analytically link actual institutions of state power, capitalism, and transnational networks to such forms of cultural reproduction, inventiveness, and possibilities. This is a significant problem of method because it raises hopes that transnational mobility and its associated processes have great liberatory potential... for undermining all kinds of oppressive structures in the world (1999, p. 14)

Ong also shows that there needs to be, in her opinion, an analysis of structures of power which also limit the agency of actors in transnationalism. This kind of analysis is largely lacking from much of the literature. She does not negate that transnationalism changes people, though, as mentioned in a prior section on global migration, she explains that many of the transnationals who become "exceptions to neoliberalism" have a type of agency reduced to what she describes as "bare life."

Ong is not alone in her critique. Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Michael Peter Smith are also at odds with what they claim is an over-stated case of the agency and the disruptions of hegemony by transnationals "from below" (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998). "The total emancipatory character of transnationalism in these discourses," they argue, is "questionable" (p. 5). Researchers who argue against the "emancipatory character" of

transnationalism draw the power of capital into greater focus and its hegemony in structuring behaviors. For all these authors, they are reluctant to embrace the sense of potential and counter-hegemony offered by some of the theorizing on transnationalism. They continue by citing Ong's work (1996) about Chinese in the United States who have worked toward capital accumulation as opposed to disrupting hegemony (p. 6). Their cautious framing can be helpful in assuring that further empirical work not be blindly utopian or celebratory, though up to this point it has been neither. This caution is still important for researchers who are interested in global equality so that they do not find evidence of processes which do not truly exist, or the fictions of liberations in their own imaginations, something I took pains to avoid in my own work. Next I examine trends in empirical research.

Trends of Empirical Research in Transnationalism

Much of the scholarship on transnationalism is empirical (Khagram & Levitt, 2008, p. 5). Many anthropologists (Foxen, 2007; A. Miles, 2004; Orellana, et al., 2001; R. C. Smith, 2006; Stephen, 2007) have worked to demonstrate the shifting nature of social relations, identity shifts, and networks among transnational actors while larger global processes create the conditions which often precipitate their transnational practices. Sociologists (Guarnizo & Portes, 2003; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Portes, et al., 2002; Portes & Hao, 2004) have attempted to quantify these phenomena as well as create models which demonstrate relational variables among these phenomena that hold predictive value. I offer some trends among key texts in transnational literature.

Anthropological literature, true to the task of the discipline, has examined local phenomena in various contexts, applying transnationalism as a methodology as well, by

researching in multiple locations. Issues addressed range from: the negotiation of national identity with race in the “host” country of transnationals in multi-national comparative work (Basch, et al., 1994) and the shifts in transnational social fields, where children from the same family inhabit multiple locations (Orellana, et al., 2001). A trend in ethnographies has been to examine the relationship between transmigrants in the new migrant context and their sending hometowns in other countries. Some of these ethnographies show how people from small towns or villages maintain a negotiated form of community in usually one geographic location in the U.S. as well as in the sending hometown (Farr, 2006; Levitt, 2001; R. C. Smith, 2006; Stephen, 2007). These studies have shown the shifts in the agency of various actors as well as multiple social factors which work in tension with that agency. Following I offer brief summaries of a few ethnographies which are relevant to my own research, because they examine Mexican-origin transnationals and/or because they are multi-sited ethnographies.

Robert Smith attempts to answer why people from the Mexican village of Ticuani, Puebla, maintain deep relationships and even return to their hometown from New York in *Transnational New York* (2006). He also tries to answer why the second generation continues these transnational practices. He shows how the life course plays into the second generation’s decision making. For instance, very young children are often less interested in engaging transnational practices and, despite their disinterest as youths, they sometimes reach marriage-age as adults and return to the sending country for a partner. Parents, he finds, often want their children to return to Ticuani to develop a sense of who they are and also to enjoy their time there in relative freedom, as compared to the parents’ efforts to watch for their children’s safety by allowing them out less in

New York. His participants' religious practices are also very important, translating across countries with the help of the Catholic Church and the New York community's creation of similar practices from Ticuani (such as the installation of the patron saint image in their church and the annual public running of a torch to the church). Women can move toward greater work opportunities in the U.S. (though there are exceptions he reports), and both women's and men's gender performances shift based upon whether they are in the U.S. or Mexico. He also shows that Mexicans as Latina/o ethnic minority in New York try to make sense of themselves in the racial hierarchy there, as they compare themselves against Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. His work points toward generational and religious ways of knowing which helped me interpret my own work. I notice that there are generational differences in how the Ticuani community members see the world and also how they change and mix religious practices—trends towards which I was sensitive in my data collection.

Lynn Stephen writes about what she calls “transborder lives” while discussing many of the same phenomena of transnational studies, including migration patterns, the increasingly limited role of the state, and capitalism (2007). She compares the practices of indigenous origin individuals from two small towns in Oaxaca, Mexico, and their lives in California and Oregon, highlighting the historical patterns of physical movement between the two countries and the more recent back-and-forth migrations. She examines her participants' indigeneity, showing how indigenous Mexicans are misunderstood as inferior in both countries, a legacy of colonialism. Some of her participants organize themselves politically and economically in both countries, working toward better agricultural working conditions in the U.S. and in supporting community festivals in

Mexico. Stephen's work is helpful as she highlights often overlooked indigenous practices as well as internal racial and cultural hierarchies among Mexicans in both countries, though her work also echoes Fox's and Kearney's recognition of indigenous transnational cultural practices and identities between Mexican indigenous groups and the U.S. (Fox, 2006; Kearney, 2000). These are issues I was sensitive toward in my research.

Peggy Levitt (a sociologist who conducts an ethnography, an exception in this review of anthropologists) examines the transnational community and organization practices in Miraflores, Dominican Republic, and New York City in *The Transnational Villagers* (2001). She draws into focus these larger groups for analysis to highlight that transnational practices are often heavily situated in the collective. She also writes at length about the impact of transmigration on the sending community, Miraflores, and how the community is impacted, often creating disruptions and new pressures (such as the new need to have more things inside the newer, "better"-constructed house). In her analysis, transnational political organizations in Miraflores are largely subject to the moneyed organizations' interests in New York (to create nicer school facilities, for instance, even though instruction may not improve). Catholic Church practices are affected in both countries as well with cyclical migration. Regarding race, Levitt shows how the Dominicans in her study struggle against pre-constructed notions of who they are in the U.S., expectations which, she explains, lock them out of ever becoming "fully American" because of how they are read phenotypically. Her work shows how culture and ways of knowing are affected, even among Mirafloreños who never leave the island. Her research also informed my thinking about religious, racialized, and political ways of knowing and how they are informed by transnationalism.

The above anthropological researchers have offered data regarding complicating shifts in gender relations, race relations, class positioning, the increased tensions among kinship networks in multiple, expanding locations, and shifts in religious practices. Some works (Basch, et al., 1994; R. C. Smith, 2006; Stephen, 2007) highlight novel cultural practices among transnationals which erupt from the deterritorialized spaces created from their transnational positionings. Some researchers (Basch, et al., 1994) attempt to define who is transnational and who engages in transnationalism, even expanding the definition to include those who are engaged with communities outside of the country in which they reside in “simultaneity” (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

Sociologists (Guarnizo & Portes, 2003; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Portes, et al., 2002; Portes & Hao, 2004) have tended to emphasize categories of transnationalism, arranging criteria to determine who is transnational and rates of transnational participation. These researchers have also attempted to map and model trends among variables of transnational actors’ behaviors and experiences, including their political participation, return rates to the country of origin, and senses of racial discrimination. For instance, Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo demonstrate that immigrants who qualify as “transnational entrepreneurs” in their model are only a single-digit percentage of the U.S. immigrant population (Portes, et al., 2002). They claim the phenomenon of transnationalism (borrowing the definition established by anthropologists) is still worth investigating, explaining that “the impact [of their activities] goes well beyond themselves.” (p. 293). Guarnizo and Portes (2003) examine the transnational home-country and host-country political participation of immigrants in the U.S., finding in their survey data that only about one sixth of respondents participated

in transnational political activities with regularity (p. 1225). They also note that higher education levels, gender (male), national origin, and higher socioeconomic status were predictive factors of transnational political participation. Itzsigohn and Giorguli-Saucedo (2005) create a model that shows the connection between gender, incorporation, and immigrants' linkages to country of origin, based on the same data set used by Portes (2003). The variables in their model play out in complicated ways, but some quantitative data indicate that women incorporate into U.S. society more easily than men. Itzsigohn and Giorguli-Salcedo also show that both incorporation and transnational practices are "complementary rather than competitive processes" (p. 917). These trends served as signposts in my own work regarding my understanding of political participation, gender and incorporation into the receiving country, and socioeconomic status and incorporation.

These quantified data from sociological research show that transnational phenomena are not merely interesting curiosities, celebratory musings of anomalous cases highlighted by anthropologists. The models could also be signposts of further investigations for anthropologists. Portes et al.'s transnational work is usually written inside the larger framework of immigration studies, situating the concepts of incorporation near his concept of segmented assimilation (Portes, 1995). Their understanding largely eclipses the phenomena of transnationalism which many of the anthropologists mentioned above attempt to highlight as an ever-increasing trend laden with possibility.

Transnationalism in Education Literature

As mentioned previously, approximately one in five students in U.S. schools currently has at least one immigrant parent, and by 2040 that ratio will likely shift to one

in three (C. Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2008). Because so many students and their families are transnational, and because the lens of transnationalism is helpful for educators to be more effective with these students, educational researchers should continue to expand their inquiries in the field of transnationalism. Research about transnational students and families helps shift the discourse surrounding immigrant students. Instead of viewing immigrant students and their families as culturally deficient (Valencia, 1997), highlighting the transnationalism of students, or even the potential to be transnational—demonstrates a variation on their funds of knowledge (N. González, et al., 2005), particularly the ability to shift among different ways of interacting among various cultural contexts. Following, I highlight more recent work in education and transnationals; later I will address the larger field of research regarding the education of immigrant students.

In the field of education, research specifically related to transnationals began to emerge over the last decade (Hornberger, 2007; Sánchez, 2007; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). Most of it has been rooted in understanding transnational students and families who reside, predominantly, in the U.S. U.S.-based educational researchers have attempted to show the unique practices of transnational families in order to complicate the notions educators have about immigrant families as well as provide recommendations for how to better educate transnational students (Brittain, 2002, 2009; Ek, 2009; Machado-Casas, 2009; Petró, 2009; Sánchez, 2007).

The researchers mentioned above have used qualitative methods to understand and portray transnational students' and families' experiences, particularly in terms of how families negotiate language, identity, and large, global political and economic conditions. Ek highlights the fluidity of identity of one research participant, a Guatemalan woman

who grew up between return trips to Guatemala and the U.S., and how her identity ultimately shifted toward being more “American” as she pursued her educational and professional goals in the U.S., while at the same time maintaining cultural practices which required the use of Spanish, such as church participation (2009). Ek theorizes that her participant’s shift from “Guatemalan” to “American” can partly be attributed to restrictive school schedules which discouraged her visits to Guatemala and assimilationist schooling practices (2009). Machado-Casas offers a helpful correction to the artificial homogeneity of the “Latino” community by demonstrating the heterogeneity of identities among those usually enveloped by the term “Latino” (Machado-Casas, 2009). She demonstrates how multilingual indigenous families from several Latin American countries struggle and maintain indigenous languages and practices in the face of discrimination against indigeneity, partly by participating transnationally without crossing physical borders (through sending funding for community needs in the sending country, voting in the sending country, and supporting the extended family’s business). Clearly, transnational youth and families have multiple identities and cultural practices which shift, work in resistance against, and are shifted by the effects of schooling.

Brittain highlights how Mexican co-nationals, located in both the U.S. and Mexico, understand and share information through networks regarding schooling (2009; 2002). She highlights their perceptions of negative racial confrontations in U.S. secondary schools, a lower quality curriculum than what is offered in Mexico, the difficulties of learning English, as well as their positive senses for free services offered in schools and caring teachers (2009). These researchers demonstrate that immigration is not always a one-way track toward direct assimilation, and that there are various cultural

practices which U.S. schools seldom officially recognize but merit understanding by educators.

One of the most prolific researchers in education and transnationalism is Patricia Sánchez. Much of her work has focused on three co-researchers—teenagers during the time of her three years’ data collection—and their multiple lenses of perception and experiences as transnational Latinas. Sánchez, a transnational researcher whose approach is rooted in Chicana feminism and participatory action research (Sánchez, 2001), uncovers rich understandings with her Mexican-origin co-researchers (Sánchez, 2009), such as their expansive, nuanced views of global citizenship and the implications for expanding curricular approaches to working with the funds of knowledge transnational students bring to K-12 contexts (Sánchez, 2007). By completing multi-sited ethnography in both Mexico and the U.S., she provides ethnographic portraits of these students’ complex lives which serve as correctives to culturally deficient ideas about Mexican-origin youth (Sánchez, 2004). The young women in Sánchez’s study demonstrate deep knowledge of comparative analysis of both countries and enhanced funds of knowledge based on their participation in their Mexican contexts, both in the U.S. and in Mexico (Sánchez, 2004). Instead of pathologizing these youth, Sánchez offers strong evidence that shows their skillfulness at managing multiple cultural, social, and political contexts. The youth demonstrate insights, wisdom, and skills which would position them far better than many monolingual students in the U.S. to negotiate our increasingly globalized world, both personally and professionally.

Some educational researchers have intentionally focused their work outside the U.S. in order to better inform the field of transnational educational research (Petrón,

2009; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). Zúñiga and Hamann discuss Mexican teachers' struggles with their returning transnational students as well as complicated attitudes Mexican nationals have toward their transnational Mexican-origin peers (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009). Petró shows how English teachers in Mexico utilized their language training in the U.S., a result of their families' circular migration flows (2009). These teachers were highly competent in communicative ability and were able to convey language skills to Mexicans inside Mexico, an ability which is increasingly valued in Mexico as the country responds to continuing pressures of globalization. This shift in focus outside the U.S. helps educators understand the long-range consequences of their work (e.g. their current U.S. students becoming Mexico's future teachers) as well as understanding the historically sending country's increasingly complex contexts. Because of the increased movement of people across the U.S.-Mexico border, the increased rates of transnationalism, and the countries' increasing connections and tensions, understanding transnationals' Mexican contexts is more important than ever. Arguably, had educators understood Mexican contexts better in the past, the histories of schooling of Mexican-origin students in the U.S. would have played out differently.

Researchers (Lukose, 2007; Villenas, 2009) have called for increased research in transnationalism and education, recognizing that the work done around immigrant education has been limited and can be better addressed by including the framework of transnationalism. In the most recent years, some researchers have begun to highlight specific cultural practices which can inform teachers' pedagogies, such as cross-border literacy practices (Hornberger, 2007; Nogueron, 2010) and transnational story-telling and its recontextualization in school spaces (Enciso, Voz, Durriyah, & Price-Dennis, 2010).

Educators have visited large migrant-sending regions of Mexico to the U.S. in order to inform their approaches to multicultural education (Olmedo, 2004). Education is only beginning to use the lens of transnationalism—its interpretive framework can be applied to a host of issues. How might instruction be shifted to embrace the sophisticated understandings transnational students and families have? How do non-transnational students engage and learn from transnationals? How do political tensions (such as nativist anti-immigration sentiment) bear out on transnationals? One area which remains under-theorized is an exploration of the ways of knowing of transnational students and their families—an area which would also help educators better work with transnationals by helping them understand that transnational students and families ways of knowing are different than their own. Demonstrating these differences will allow educators to both adapt their instruction and hopefully recognize these ways of knowing as foundational blocks from which to build their instruction.

Ways of Knowing

Ways of knowing are the perceptions of and actions upon reality, as they are understood through feeling, thought and/or intuition. Theorizing ways of knowing helps answer several questions, including: How do people perceive the world? How do people come to make sense out of their perceptions? How do people develop internal senses of knowing, including intuitive levels? Transnational students and their families have unique ways of knowing, based upon the transnational nature of many of the experiences they have, which are documented in previous sections. In my research, Mexican-origin parents negotiated where to raise their children based not only on economic prospects but also on how they wanted the identities of their children to be influenced. Parents wanted

their children to feel a sense of collective obligation to their extended family and community in Mexican hometowns of a few hundred people, while sheltering their children from increasing drug violence in Mexico (Ellingwood, 2010). They also wanted their children to have greater access to economic security, despite the increase in anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. Transnational children comprehended events in both countries through the lenses of understanding from multiple countries. They sometimes, for instance, longed for Mexico when they lived in the U.S., imagining futures in Mexico where they could use their bilingualism as a skill while recognizing that in Mexico they had to spend significantly more time focusing on relationships with community and family.

These complicated ways of understanding the world are indicative of ways of knowing. They are laced with action, feeling, intuition, and thought, and the ways of knowing create changes in reality which cannot be fully anticipated. More generally, ways of knowing help create culture and cultural practices, though they are not synonymous with either. The following section addresses several approaches to understanding how people know, pointing toward the development of an approach to understanding transnational students' and their families' ways of knowing.

Educational researchers often direct teachers to connect new learning material to "prior knowledge" as a best educational practice (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Vygotsky's foundational research in sociocultural theory supports the notion that students' pre-existing knowledge and skills should be engaged in order to facilitate students' additional learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Similar instructional recommendations are given in English for Speakers of Other Languages research as well as bilingual

education (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Wong, 2006). Because prior knowledge is so important, theorizing and demonstrating, then, about ways of knowing, should facilitate educators' future work with transnational students and their families. In fact, I argue that not only should educators understand prior knowledge, but prior ways of knowing. Instead of merely understanding what students know, educators would better serve students by understanding *how* they know. My research highlights unique ways of knowing of transnational families.

The concept "ways of knowing" is generally used to indicate multiple modes of knowing, and the meaningfulness of the phrase is questioned with its frequent use in social sciences (Harris, 2007). It is often used synonymously with epistemology, a field whose study captures discussions which have lasted for millennia, perhaps from the time humans became self-reflexive. I prefer to use the terms "ways of knowing" because it is less mystifying for common discursive usage. It also is more encompassing term that recognizes the ways of knowing of people who have been subjugated throughout history and have struggled against and resisted colonizing ways of knowing (L. T. Smith, 2006). Western ways of knowing (which I describe below), bolstered by the Enlightenment, have privileged the empirical, observable, what can be ascertained through the so-called "five senses." The ways humans can know the world can be understood to be universally true, under the Western sense of knowing. That is to say, sunlight is sunlight, and it heats, burns, and provides energy whether one lives in Anchorage or Addis Ababa.

Humans have maintained and developed additional ways of knowing, alongside and despite the Enlightenment. Sunlight may not be merely understood for its physical properties. For some, outside of Western ways of knowing, it is the source of all life in a

cosmological sense; for others, it is an essence of healing. Anthropologists including Barth (1995) and Harris (2007) argue that ways of knowing are always contextually situated. Harris explains that ways of knowing are “in the world”; that a way of knowing is “the movement of a person from one context to another, rather than ... different kinds of knowledge” (p. 1). Harris elaborates, “The phrase ‘ways of knowing’ is used to remind us that any knowledge is inevitably situated in a particular place and moment; that it is inhabited by individual knowers and that it is always changing and emergent” (p. 4). He explains that knowing is understood not merely through what individuals say but what they do. Barth invokes the concept of knowledge in an article titled, “Other knowledge and other ways of knowing,” as the “modality” of culture for anthropologists to use to describe the people they research: “The image of culture as knowledge abstracts it less and points to people’s engagement with the world, through action. It acknowledges the fact of globally continuous variation, not separable into homogenized and mutually alien cultures” (p. 66).

Gloria Anzaldúa also recognizes Western ways of knowing as anemic, that such knowing is only partial, and thus developed a theory of *conocimiento*, which literally means “knowledge and skill” (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2000c, p. 206) and “ways of knowing” (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2000a, p. 266). She draws upon her experiences of having physically and spiritually inhabited several borderlands, from those of sexuality to racial identification to physical borders of growing up in South Texas; these experiences have helped her develop her journey of *conocimiento* (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2002). One of her clearest definitions of *conocimiento* follows:

My term for an overarching theory of consciousness, of how the mind works. It's an epistemology that tries to encompass all the dimensions of life, both inner—mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms—and outer—social, political, lived experiences... you could say that *conocimiento* is basically an awareness, the awareness of *facultad* that sees through all human acts whether of the individual mind and spirit or of the collective, social body. The work of *conocimiento*—consciousness work—connects the inner life of the mind and spirit to the outer worlds of action (Hernández-Ávila & Anzaldúa, 2000, p. 177)

Anzaldúa shows that knowing is not only about what can be ascertained from only the five senses, but those five senses in addition to other forms of perception. She also highlights a collective way of knowing, demonstrating that forms of knowledge are contextually and culturally influenced. Her concept of *conocimiento* shares affinities with several other ways of knowing.

I now highlight ways of knowing which are not commonly acknowledged in Western schooling but which have persisted through wisdom of practice, ways that also help to inform my definition of ways of knowing. I draw from non-Western paradigms to shift from an understanding of ways of knowing that has historically been highly oriented toward cognitivism and rational thought toward an understanding that instead allows for a problematizing of subject/object divides and where subjectivity becomes a valid source of knowing. They are ways of knowing I looked for in my research with transnational students and their families, alongside indications of these families' Western ways of knowing as well. Briefly, I address the latter and then attend to the former.

Western/Hegemonic Ways of Knowing

Western ways of knowing usually situate knowledge as knowable in an objective way, what is often referred to as positivism. According to Crotty, “positivism offers assurance of unambiguous and accurate knowledge of the world” (1998, p. 18). Fruit of the European “Enlightenment,” it prioritizes scientific observation through *the* scientific method to know reality. In the first half of the 19th century, Comte, the leading philosopher behind the rise of positivism, believed the use of “positive thought” would bring the different “phases of human history” to universal triumph (Crotty, p. 23). There is a celebratory sense commonly found in positivism and its methods and various truth claims; this sense is also part of the underpinning of the age of modernism.

Positivism moved from use in math and science to philosophy and the social sciences (where it is still alive today). It celebrates empiricism. Research conducted through a positivist lens includes such methods as experimental design, statistical analyses, and surveys (Crotty, 1998). It has been used to make arguments for extermination of humans (e.g. Hitler’s genocide attempts in World War II as well as the US’s sterilization programs in the earlier half of the 20th century among the mentally ill and other populations). Positivism has also been used in the name of “progress” in social and technological science, as well as other fields (Howe, 2009). In education, positivism undergirds the current era of accountability and high-stakes testing (Willmott, 1999) as well as many forms of education research (Howe, 2009).

Positivism and modernism have grown from male, white, European origins which have celebrated the “rational” and empirical; as such, they tend to discount intuitive, emotional, and spiritual ways of knowing (Goldberger, 1996a). They also marginalize ways of knowing which do not come from this background (white, European ancestry) as

less-than. Women, for example, were actively excluded from the academic community just a century ago (lest their reproductive organs atrophy, or so the argument went) (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 7). People of color have been colonized in attempts to dismiss and erase both the people and their ways of knowing (L. T. Smith, 2006). These forms of knowing, though they have been passed down through millennia in wisdom of practice, cannot be accurately measured or empirically demonstrated in the most privileged form of Western ways of knowing's research method—that is, through “scientific method” research trials. It is difficult to deny both their influence on human practices as well as their resilience—similar to what Mignolo refers to as “border thinking,” or the resultant, resistant form of thinking from violent forms of contact and colonization (Mignolo, 2000). I now turn to some of the multiple ways of knowing which run counter to the projects of the Enlightenment and colonialism.

Beyond Enlightenment

The Enlightenment served to provide justification of the truth of the superiority of Western thinking and the need to colonize others to Western way of thinking, the so-called “White man's burden” (Kipling, 1899). Clearly these non-western ways of knowing are in many ways resistant to the “proofs” and scientific method necessary to the knowing of positivism. They are slippery, indicative of the ways they sometimes elide discursive boxing while at other times appearing to be strategically essentialist (Spivak, 1993), that is to say, drawing upon one sense of identity to highlight how a way of knowing positioned from one space interrupts the seemingly “value-free” male, European-origin positivist thinking.

In my own research, I interpretively frame ways of knowing; I recognize that these ways are contingent upon a person's positioning in a moment in time and in self—what is referred to as history-in-person (Holland Herring & Lave, 2001). Each person has a historically situated set of experiences and narratives to describe them in their “history-in-person” (Holland Herring & Lave, 2001). I also recognize that individuals can position themselves in a shifting multiplicity of identities, ones which include heteroglossia of meaning in their internal dialog and heteroglossia in their external dialog (Holquist, 1981). Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (2001) explain there is not unlimited difference which makes each individual unique in his or her own unique world. They theorize instead, similar to Harris, that individuals are part of social worlds in which multiple members share similar understandings of belonging in communities of practice, referred to as “figured worlds,” ranging, for example, from memberships in groups from Alcoholics Anonymous to the figured world of romance (Holland, et al., 2001). They also show how people are positioned by their circumstances—that is to say they do not have unlimited agency to experiment in whatever figured world she or he may wish (Holland et al., 2001). Because the way a person identifies and is identified are intricately linked with what and how people know, it was important for me to have a sense of the identities of my research participants. For my research, this understanding helped me theorize the multiple and simultaneous identities of research participants as well as better contextualize both my understanding and the results of my data.

Having offered these multiple complications of identity and the practice of knowing, I visit some of the theorizing of counter-hegemonic ways of knowing. I have chosen several ways of knowing which highlight subjugated ways of knowing that

persevere despite and alongside hegemony. I start with indigenous ways of knowing, as they provide a good starting point to consider Mexican-origin families who, according to Bonfil Batalla, likely have some relationship to indigeneity (2007). I follow with women's ways of knowing, as these, too, have been historically subjugated by Western hegemonic ways of knowing, despite their persistence among women. Next, I offer critiques of women's ways of knowing and various standpoint positionings which enhance the women's ways of knowing theorizing through interstices of positionalities, including race and class.

Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Despite the catastrophic damage done to native peoples by colonization, indigenous ways of knowing have persisted for millennia (Aikenhead, 2001; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Stanndard, 1992). Bonfil Batalla argues that Mexico is actually a "Mexico profundo" defined by the indigenous ways of knowing throughout Mesoamerica which maintain their vitality (2007). He demonstrates a host of cultural practices which appear consistently throughout Mexico, including a general cosmology which links the individual with the entire natural world as part of a "harmonious relationship" as opposed to a Western one based in exploitation of natural resources (p. 27). The Mexico profundo persists despite an "imaginary Mexico" to which a minority of Mexicans—the elites and middle class—aspire. For Bonfil Batalla, the imaginary Mexico is one that embraces the Westernization and the U.S., while it is at hostile odds with the indigenous roots of Mexico's history and population. He contends that most Mexicans maintain cultural practices which speak to Mexico profundo's persistence (2007). For my research, I remained open to understanding the possible influences of this indigenously-oriented

Mexico profundo on the students and families with whom worked to better portray the ways of knowing of my research participants.

Bonfil Batalla's argument is similar to how some educational researchers (Aikenhead, 2001; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005) have framed the differences between Western and indigenous ways of knowing. Barnhardt and Kawagley explain that indigenous people traditionally come to knowing through their experiences with the natural world (p. 11). These experiences are closely related with one's ability to survive and provide for the group in the natural world, and that is how one's skills are measured (as opposed to the Western construct of written tests, for instance). Also, several ways of knowing the world are at odds with Western ways of knowing—where the collective is part of decision making, large kinship networks tend to be important, and time is understood as more flexible (p. 12).

Barnhardt and Kawagley argue for a shift away from merely understanding how to facilitate indigenous students' adjustment to Western ways of knowing to one that centers understanding indigenous ways of knowing (2005). They explain that indigenous students have under-performed academically because of a lack of congruence between their own community experiences and ways of knowing and those of Western schooling systems. By embracing indigenous ways of knowing as part of a multicultural instruction plan, students can learn both ways of knowing at once. They argue that indigenous ways of knowing will be helpful to scientists and educators struggling to find ways to live more sustainably (p. 9). Smith echoes this notion, explaining that indigenous frameworks for learning may help create new ways to consider how we structure learning as well as the kind of learners who are created (2005). For my research, I used these broad trends

identified above about indigenous ways of knowing to help understand my research participants and also to consider alternative approaches to schooling. As Bonfil Batalla highlights, these indigenous ways of knowing are likely to be present in many Mexican families, and I did not want to overlook them. Beyond indigenous ways of knowing, however, my research participants, many of whom were women, also had unique ways of knowing, which I now describe.

Women's Ways of Knowing

Recognizing that women's voices have long been overlooked or discounted in research regarding epistemology, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule seek to represent women's voices in the question of how women know (1986). They recognize that the research on knowing had almost entirely represented men's voices, particularly the well-known work of William Perry (1970), which had been used to show what he theorized as linear stages of developmental learning. These researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 135 women from various racial and social backgrounds. They attempted to code their data using Perry's stages of learning development, but they recognized that the voices of the women they researched did not fit well in those categories. Instead, they recognized a need to provide new categories, ones that were not necessarily linear or stage-like.

The researchers designate five epistemological categories which represent what they call women's "perspectives on knowing." They first describe *silence*, where women are passive knowers, and where authority is external to them, where they are "voiceless." *Received knowledge* is the kind of knowledge women get from other sources and even reproduce with others, though they are not the authors of knowledge in this sense. In

subjective knowing, truth and knowledge are understood as personal and subjectively known, often through intuition. External sources of authority were often mistrusted. *Procedural knowing* allows for women to use external, “objective” sources of information to gather and communicate knowledge. This kind of knowing includes two inter-related subsets—*connected knowing* and *separate knowing*. In the former, women recognize the use of empathy in making sense of knowledge they receive and use an attitude of trusting the other. In the latter, women recognize multiple other positionings of understanding and use the frameworks in those other positionings to attempt an “objective” knowing from those positionings. Separate knowing aligns with the insights generated from standpoint theory (which I describe in the next section). Finally, Belenky et al describe *constructed knowledge* as a type of knowledge where women recognize their multiple positionings in their lives as integral to their understanding of the world, as authors, while at the same time recognizing that all knowledge is contextual, echoing again both Harris and Holland et al’s work in identity and how people situate their identities. Taken together, these ways of knowing demonstrate that knowing is not merely linear, not entirely based on logic, but rather based on emotional and subjective senses in concert with reflective understandings of others. These understandings supported my attempts to understand the ways of knowing which persist beyond the five senses privileged in Western ways of knowing; they point to counter-hegemonic ways of knowing based in subjective understandings which are validated by this research. Also, I examined the women’s ways of knowing non-linear categorization of ways of knowing as a possible model for consideration in my data analysis.

The Women's Ways of Knowing framework has been critiqued on multiple counts, and the same authors represent these critiques in their co-edited text a decade later, *Knowledge, Difference, and Power* (Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996). One critique—which seems unjust to me—is that the authors had discounted the importance of “rational” knowing. A closer read, however, shows that “separate knowing” still allowed for a space for reason to play into knowing. The original authors recognized that while they had worked with a diverse sample of participants, they had failed to interpret their data along the lines of race, class, and culture and include essays which highlight those problems.

Aída Hurtado offers an important corrective in the *Knowledge, Power and Difference* text—demonstrating that women of color have experiences beyond and outside the range of white women's experience as well as men of color in their same ethnic groups (Hurtado, 1996). She theorizes a sixth way of knowing held by women of color, what she calls *subjugated knowledge*, or “knowledge that is temporarily suspended or subjugated to resist structures of oppression and to create interstices of rebellion and potential revolution” (Hurtado, p. 286). Hurtado explains that subjugated knowledge aligns directly with Anzaldúa's theorizing on ways of knowing in the form of “border consciousness.” Taking Hurtado's and other's critiques to heart, the editors of *Knowledge, Difference, and Power* include a recognition of the interconnectedness of knowledge and power and the need for an analysis of knowledge from this angle, what they refer to as “*standpoint epistemologies and social positionality and situated knowledge*” (Goldberger, 1996b, p. 9). From theorizing about women's ways of knowing, Tarule et al. help shift the conversation from how people know away from

Enlightenment-oriented, rationalist, linear ways of knowing to more complicated forms, including standpoint theory.

Standpoints

Standpoint theory recognizes that all knowledge is situated in the positioning of the knower. Harding argues that there can be “strong objectivity” based upon the marginalized positioning of the knower (Harding, 1998). Harding explains how knowing from the perspective of the “Other” begins and helps us understand the taken-for-granted assumptions of what is commonly described in discursive practice as “neutral” knowing:

It starts research in the lives not just of strangers or outsiders but of “outsiders within,” from which the relationship between outside and inside, margin and center, can more easily be detected. It starts thought in the perspective from the life of the Other, allowing the Other to gaze back “shamelessly” at the self who had reserved for himself the right to gaze “anonymously” at whomsoever he chooses. It starts thought in the lives of people who are unlikely to permit the denial of the interpretive core of all knowledge claims. It starts thought in the perspective from lives that at this moment in history are especially revealing of broad social contradictions. (1991, pp. 150-151)

Harding shows that standpoint theory highlights a shift of knowing from hegemonic understandings to understandings which are situated in multiply unique positionings outside or on the margins of hegemony. The social contradictions to which she points indicate that those who live in the contradictions would have the positioning to both explain them and the conditions which create the contradictions. Harding argues for an understanding of the lenses which are better-positioned to interpret what she says is the

reality of the world around us. Mexican transnationals, both as people of color and as transnationals, have standpoints which are uniquely situated on margins of understanding.

One problem I recognize of standpoint theory is the potential to both romanticize the “other” as well as force the “other” into a position of having to speak if the “other” is as invested in the project of “knowledge” as the standpoint theorist appears to be.

Haraway, a proponent of standpoint theory, also cautions against assuming any innocence of epistemological stances and cautions that we not look for a unifying theory but rather a “powerful infidel heteroglossia” in breaking away from dualisms and embracing multiple standpoints, particularly as they occur alongside an ever-increasing technological advance of tools (Haraway, 1991). Heeding Haraway’s nuance of standpoint theory, I attempted not to portray transnational families as wholly innocent of contact with and influence by hegemony or expect them to be able to completely demystify reality from their standpoints.

Following, I engage literature from the development of an endarkened epistemological standpoint and Chicana feminist epistemology. These two approaches to knowing show community and context-specific ways of knowing. After examining these two approaches, I show what they have in common.

Towards an endarkened epistemology.

Patricia Hill Collins explained the need to understand the positioning of the “outsider within,” in 1986, aligning herself with standpoint theorists (p. S14). She argues specifically for understanding the positioning of African American women, whose experiences at the juncture of the fight for equality in sexuality and race have given them unique understandings. In describing what she calls Black feminist thought, she explains

that there is not one correct way to categorize such thinking, that through different social positionings Black feminist thinking will carry different insights. For Hill Collins, Black feminist thinking will be shared among African American women and produced by them, from “ordinary women” to women in the academy. She situates Black feminist thinking along three themes: “the meaning of self-definition and self valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of redefining culture” (p. S24). She shows how African American women have responded to material conditions which impose structures on African American women’s lives with agentic responses grounded in subjective understandings of who they are as well as the conditions in which they live. Despite the dehumanizing objectification of African American women against an oppressive norm of white *and* male, Black feminist thought allows for a space of understanding multiple forms of oppression, including what hooks calls the dichotomous either/or (including male/female or black/white forms of oppression) (1984).

Cynthia Dillard weaves Hill Collins’s work into her formation of an “endarkened feminist epistemology,” intentionally contrasting the experiences of African American women against the discursively privileged “enlightening” commonly referred to in new senses of knowing. For Dillard, this epistemology:

embodies a distinguishably different cultural standpoint, located in the intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socialization of race, gender, and other identities and the historical and contemporary contexts of oppressions and resistance for African-American women. (2000, p. 661)

She contends that the knowledge people carry is largely situated in the “consensus and ethos of the community in which it is grounded” (p. 662) and also highlights a shared

spiritual dimension. Dillard uses the metaphor of responsibility for research—the responsibility to the communities being studied and the African American women’s voices conveying those knowledges. For Dillard, knowing something is “having a living relationship with it... responding to and being responsible for” (p. 673). She argues for an endarkened feminist epistemology in efforts to disrupt “culturally hegemonic domination in knowledge production” (p. 672).

Chicana feminist epistemology.

Another approach toward invoking both the intersectionality of experience of and resistance to oppression is Chicana feminism. In her 1998 article explaining what a Chicana feminist epistemology is, Dolores Delgado Bernal explains this is also an “endarkened feminist epistemology,” but one that is situated in the common experiences of Chicanas. A footnote in Delgado Bernal’s piece recognizes that part of the “endarkened epistemology” of Dillard rests upon black identity—Delgado Bernal takes the term up because she wants to use the “feminist thought of all women of color” (p. 578). Like Black feminist thinking, she challenges the Western assumptions of “objectivity” and a “universal foundation of knowledge” (1998, p. 555). Similar to Black feminist thought, she draws upon Chicana researcher Sofia Villenas in arguing that Chicanas “become the subjects and the creators of knowledge” (1996, p. 730). Delgado Bernal explores several themes which make the experiences of Chicanas unique, including:

issues of immigration, migration, generational status, bilingualism, limited English proficiency, and the contradictions of Catholicism. In addition, through the process of naming dynamic identities and diverse cultural/historic

experiences, these issues have been studied and written about by numerous Chicana feminists in a much different way than most Chicano male scholars. (p. 559)

She adds that concepts such as “mestiza, borderlands, and Xicanisma” are unique to a Chicana feminist epistemology. She describes Anzaldúa’s notion of knowing as mestiza consciousness as “a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity” and her ability to shift identically among conflicting racial and national identities (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 101). Delgado Bernal then elaborates her own concept of “cultural intuition,” drawing upon Strauss and Corbin’s analytical research concept of “theoretical sensitivity,” which is largely grounded in individual ways of knowing. For Delgado Bernal, cultural intuition is informed by “ancestral wisdom, community memory, and [personal] intuition” (1998). It can be manifested in the stories shared among family members from both the mystical and the wisdom of practice. Finally, in educational research, she argues that the researched should share their Chicana understandings as part of the analysis of data.

Standpoints, community orientations.

The endarkened feminist and Chicana feminist ways of knowing described above share much in common. They both acknowledge the wisdom of the people who have endured, survived, and thrived in their communal histories as well as spiritual elements which influence and guide these ways of knowing. Their perspectives are also related to the U.S. struggle for civil rights and ethnic studies orientations which have, through communal self-determination, asserted and demanded a recognition and appreciation of non-white populations. These orientations pull upon the work of critical scholars who

have existed even prior to the Civil Rights era. Hill Collins, for instance, draws upon W.E.B. Du Bois's early 20th century analytical construct of "double consciousness" (1994) in describing how "disempowered people" can engage their cultural wisdom and respond to how the "powerful" see them through protecting and preserving their senses of identity by developing alternative understandings of themselves and dominant groups (2009, p. 9).

What makes each of these perspectives different is both their strength and their weakness. Each one becomes a standpoint in effectively describing their uniquely "strongly objective" positioning regarding, for instance, hegemonic practices of Whiteness in the U.S.; they may draw upon their double or mestiza consciousnesses to offer critiques and insights Whiteman knowers would have difficulty seeing without their assistance. These positionings run the risk of essentializing by how the reader understands their work: these depictions of people in their community and gender affiliations could be read as static. Additionally, one has to understand that the lenses of the people who embody these perspectives will change as history changes. While I don't think those who engage Chicana feminist epistemology or an endarkened epistemology would disagree that their ways of knowing will shift (they may, in fact, be the most fluid in understanding these necessary shifts), the forms in which these ways of knowing have been presented could be (mis)understood—especially by Whiteman knowers—to offer a sense that such knowers are statically situated in these ways of knowing.

I argue that ways of knowing can be multiple and shifting among historically marginalized standpoints as much as identities shift, that one standpoint may largely determine how one knows in one moment while invoking another standpoint in

simultaneity. The importance of including the perspectives of historically marginalized standpoints and the understandings carried with them cannot be understated. De Lissoy explains that we should combine various perspectives situated in a larger historical process toward understanding “complementary evidences” which can lead to a “compound standpoint” (2008, p. 78). Delgado Bernal’s work moves in the direction of situating simultaneous standpoints in her article, “Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge” (2002). This article shows how a “critical raced-gendered epistemological perspective” offers a set of new perspectives about what counts as knowledge that differ with Western views.

I recognize that people’s situated experiences are likely to influence their ways of knowing, often engaging more toward one kind of knowing over another. In my research, I examined how standpoints and ways of knowing changed, shifted, expanded, and contracted. I aligned the standpoints from which my research participants knew the world and the shifts and simultaneities among those standpoints. I hope this accounting allows for educators to better work with transnational students and families, understanding that their standpoints are likely at times different from those of U.S.-based educators.

Theoretical Framework

My research framework draws from two areas, transnational theory and the theory of *conocimiento*. I first offer a model to define who is transnational, based on transnational theory. Then, I use several emerging tools of transnational theory to frame my approach toward transnational families’ ways of knowing, including simultaneity of

transnational experiences and ways of knowing, networks, and identity. I also draw upon *conocimiento*, or “knowing” as theorized by Gloria Anzaldúa and extend that theorizing to include a preliminary set of lenses I may use to categorize my research findings, rooted primarily in several critical Mexican-origin researchers’ work in education. I turn now to my model for describing who is transnational in my research project.

Theoretical Tools of Transnationalism

Transnational theory has helped researchers understand several phenomena, largely how migrants’ lives have been affected by and have created transformations (Vertovec, 2004) in the processes of globalization. The theory has helped make sense of the shifting role of the nation-state and the research approaches available for understanding social phenomena in light of the shifts of the nation-state. However the newest iterations of transnational theory “go even further” by:

advancing the claim that the global, regional, national, and the local can be analyzed through transnational methodological, theoretical, and epistemological lenses; that is in contrast to traditional perspectives, which see transnational phenomena and dynamics as a subset of these occurring somewhere between the national and the global, TS [transnational studies] includes another, in some cases, more productive option. What are assumed to be bounded and bordered social units are understood as transnationally constituted, embedded, and influenced social arenas that interact with one another. (Khagram & Levitt, 2008, pp. 4-5)

While not denying the existence of borders, Khagram and Levitt show that transnational practices can be understood beyond and in concert with these borders by situating research approaches of transnationalism in various lenses. Methodologically, they

explain that research may cross borders, part of what my project does with my research participants. Theoretically, transnationalism is used to understand human and institutional interactions beyond and because of borders. Epistemologically, transnationalism can be understood as the nature of the ways we know things, that “transnational phenomena and dynamics are the rule rather than the exception” (p. 8). A transnational lens allows the disruption of the assumption of Western ways of knowing in my own work toward understanding the additional ways of knowing of transnational families. My goal, like that of transnational theory is “not to arrive at a single paradigm or master narrative but to find ways to hold these different theoretical accounts and approaches in productive conversation with one another” (p. 8). While I researched tendencies which held among my research participants, I do not make sweeping generalizations about all transnationals. My work should serve instead as signposts for future research and for educators to use when considering the transnationals with whom they work.

The transnational lens allows for the researcher to understand the potential simultaneity of transnational ways of knowing. Above, I discussed Levitt and Glick Schiller’s conceptualization of simultaneity as “living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally” (2004, p. 1003). This includes the simultaneity as well as ruptures of ways of knowing operating in a person, family, or community. My research highlights the potential for simultaneous ways of knowing and how they are informed by my research participants’ understandings of multiple contexts, particularly from influences in Mexico and the U.S.

I do not attempt to say there are no larger, structuring influences on the lives of transnationals; nor do most who use transnationalism for their research, as mentioned previously. I instead define the structures of power on people's lives and the "power dynamics underlying social relations" which affect transnational families (Khagram & Levitt, 2008, p. 10) and their interplay with various networks with which transnationals engage (Ong, 1999). As I highlighted previously, transnationals engage rich and complicated networks; I demonstrate how those networks are part of the ways of knowing of transnational students and families. Transnationals' imaginations, life choices, and possibilities regarding education and indeed impacted by the networks to which they have access.

I use transnationalism to help better understand the hybridity of ways of knowing invoked in transnational research (Lukose, 2007). Clearly, the ways people identify are bound up with their ways of knowing. I illustrate the connections to identity and ways of knowing. I demonstrate some of the often hidden transnational practices (Sánchez, 2001) and ways of knowing which emerge from living transnational forms of hybridity, or the mixing and emergence of identities based upon transnational experiences.

Conocimiento

To add to transnational theory's tools for theorizing ways of knowing, I use Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of *conocimiento*. I draw upon Gloria Anzaldúa's final chapter in her last co-edited book, *This bridge we call home* (G. E. Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002) to explore the notion of *conocimiento*. Anzaldúa has referred to *conocimiento* as "knowledge and skill" (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2000c, p. 206) and "ways of knowing" (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2000a, p. 266). In her final text, she describes seven nonlinear stages of the

lifelong journey of *conocimiento*, a concept I believe encompasses the broad themes I highlight below. She explains, “We stand at a major threshold in the extension of consciousness, caught in the remolinos (vortices) of systemic changes across all fields of knowledge. . . You know that the new paradigm must come from outside as well as within the system” (G. E. Anzaldúa, p. 541). Anzaldúa speaks to the historic change we witness and how our ways of knowing will subsequently shift. She also explains how those in power continue to “single out and negate those who are ‘different’ because of color, language, notions of reality, or other diversity” (p. 541). These “different” voices, much like the voices of standpoint theory, are the ones which can, alongside the shifting optic of transnationalism, help better represent transnational families’ underrepresented ways of knowing.

Interplay of Transnational Theory and Conocimiento—A Beginning Framework

Taken together, transnational theory and *conocimiento* offer complementary and at times overlapping tools which can be used to understand the transnational ways of knowing of Mexican-origin families. Transnational theory offers a focus on historical conditions, approaches beyond nation-state centered research, and analyses from throughout the world which share often overlapping conclusions. *Conocimiento* offers interpretations of ways of knowing generally neither recognized nor valued by the Western research community. It also recognizes the importance of embodied personal and collective experiences, present and historical, in how *conocimiento* surfaces in people’s lives. Anzaldúa was from the Mexico-U.S. borderlands (physically, spiritually, emotionally) (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999); as such, her work specifically speaks well to Mexican transnational families’ ways of knowing.

Transnational theory attempts to move beyond static academic categories to characterize new phenomena, those resultant from globalization. Transnationalism helps situate the historical factors of globalization in this process. It has achieved helpful analyses of the complex human networks which support transnational lives, the dynamics of power and their influence on transnational experiences, as well as hybridity. Most transnational research is still situated in a Western paradigm of knowing. This is evidenced in the generally empirically styled texts from the field which demonstrate and theorize the observable as understood through Western lenses (Basch, et al., 1994; Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Portes, et al., 2002; R. C. Smith, 2006). However, several researchers appear to have a sense of wanting to move beyond, as demonstrated by Khagram and Levitt's (2008) focus on reframing epistemology through transnationalism and Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) interest in theorizing the simultaneity of experiences of transnationals.

Conocimiento is an important respaldo (backing) to transnationalism, a corrective to its over-emphasis on Western approaches to research and knowing. It is among the co-theories that transnational theory claims to be looking for to expand its usefulness (Khagram & Levitt, 2008). Conocimiento draws from the subjugated knowledges, spiritual and psychic knowings rooted in concrete historic conditions. It helps en-flesh (or humanize) the research participants as opposed to objectifying them. Anzaldúa's description of the border as "una herida abierta," an open wound, (1999, p. 25) is an invocation of the physical, psychic, emotional incision grafted upon those who are forced to reckon with the border's painful consequences and violences. In this case, Mexican-origin transnationals of my research study are among these people. Conocimiento, for

me, was a provocation to co-participate in understanding my research participants' ways of knowing and responding to them with reciprocity. This reciprocity is one that respects and values multiple forms of *conocimiento*.

By merging understandings from transnational theory and *conocimiento*, the historically specific situatedness of Mexican-origin transnationals' ways of knowing in the U.S. are more fully understood. Transnationalism provides a broader conversation about why and how people are affected by globalization's flows, offering tools to understand the historic and socio-economic conditions which help create the movements and lived experiences of transnationals. *Conocimiento* allows for a much more expansive sense of ways of knowing—particularly beyond Western senses of knowing—and, it articulates well with Mexican-origin families. The application of these theories in concert to understand Mexican-origin transnational families' ways of knowing can help educators better understand the populations with which they work and perhaps expand upon their own *conocimiento*.

Chapter Three: Methodology

My research frames the ways of knowing of Mexican-origin transnational students and their families who reside in the Washington, D.C. area. Principally my research focused on these ways of knowing in regards to schooling and education. I worked with four families in critical-ethnographic case studies, and I visited the sending pueblos from which these families came to provide additional context to understand these ways of knowing. I contend that educators and educational researchers need to begin to (re)consider the ways they work with transnational students and how they understand Mexican-origin transnational students' and their families' ways of knowing.

Based on the historical context I have provided, it is evident that Mexican-origin students continue to be miseducated in the U.S. education system. As such, my research supports the efforts of other critical educational researchers to reverse this trend to help create a more equitable education system. I situate my research in the critical paradigm of social science research. Before delineating these paradigms and how I see my own approach, I revisit my research question:

What are the ways of knowing of Mexican-origin transnational students and their families in the Washington, D.C. area? How do these transnational families experience their ways of knowing regarding education in formal schooling contexts?

Qualitative Methodological Choices

I used a qualitative methodological approach because this was the best way to approach the multiple, rich, and complicated data I found. I recognize that quantitative and qualitative data are not mutually exclusive in approaching a research question. In

fact, they are often complementary (Mertens, 2009). For instance, Zuñiga and Hamann use quantitative surveys of thousands of students in Mexico to demonstrate important trends regarding the perceptions of transnational students, while also reporting qualitative interview data about teachers' experiences with transnational students (2009).

Because there isn't, as far as I can tell, a theory of the ways of knowing with respect to education of Mexican-origin transnationals, it would be difficult to use quantitative methods to get at this information. In terms of prior research informing my research question, qualitative approaches have been the most fruitful. For instance, in attempting to articulate the category of "women's ways of knowing," Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule used qualitative interviews with their participants, reporting trends from their respondents to theorize their ways of knowing (1986). Their methodology and data analysis were not questioned, rather, their theoretical underpinnings were (Goldberger, et al., 1996). I avoided the cultural assumptions these researchers later recognized as impairments in their theorizing (Goldberger, et al., 1996) while using their typology as a model to consider when I analyzed my data.

In terms of theorizing transnational students and education, qualitative methods have been most useful (Brittain, 2009; Hornberger, 2007; Sánchez, 2007). Quantitative work in transnational research has focused more upon trends related to how much transnational participation there is in a community (Guarnizo & Portes, 2003; Portes, et al., 2002) and multivariate statistical models about influencing factors of transnational participation (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005).

Practically speaking, for this project, I was a one-woman research team. I previously had conducted formal research and recognized that I prefer qualitative

research, particularly because of the valuable human relationships I can establish in research. For me, these relationships are rich sources of data that offer information which cannot be harnessed through quantitative methods. I recognize that relationships are subjective, as are my interpretations, but I did my best work to ask the types of questions and do the kind of interpreting which I hope provide meaningful contributions to educational research and to research participants. These ideas point toward the research paradigms which influence my thinking.

Use of the Critical Paradigm

I used the critical paradigm to underpin my research agenda, though I also find the deconstructivist paradigm offers helpful explanatory power. Deconstructivists argue persuasively about how we are influenced by discourses whose circulation is so pervasive it is hard to know they are there (Cary, 2007; Lather, 1986, 1991). Demystifying these discourses is a project I find important, particularly in achieving the emancipatory ends hoped for in the critical paradigm. I also see that the deconstructivist paradigm has the potential to be so esoteric as to lend itself to an overemphasis on the world of theory and not in the world where people love, suffer, live, and die. For me, the palpable human experience, as explored through the critical research paradigm, is too attractive—too demanding—to ignore. More specific to this research project, in my data collection, I was compelled toward the critical paradigm as I witnessed the real results of what is theorized as an artificial border. For instance, one family in my study arranged their lives around where they could best avoid being caught for not having documentation to live in the U.S., paying acute attention to local, state, and federal rulings about immigration. They knew they were misunderstood by people in both the U.S. and Mexico for their

abilities to see the world through transnational lenses; this was painful and frustrating. To honor these experiences and the transformation they created, I treat these knowledges with the tools of the critical paradigm, rather than the often detached lens of postmodernism. This is not to say my affinities toward the deconstructivist paradigm were turned off, as if I could flip a switch, but the *reality* of struggle and *sobrevivencia* I witnessed begged to be treated as if that reality is, in fact, real.

For my research, I understand and make explicit ways of knowing of Mexican-origin transnational students and families in regards to education. Having been an educator for almost the entirety of my professional life, I have witnessed so many systemic inequalities in education that I hope to contribute, however small, to eradicating these systemic problems. As a bilingual person who has lived between U.S. and Mexico contexts (physically/mentally/spiritually/emotionally), and a former English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher in the U.S., the question of ways of knowing has an urgency to it. What have educators been missing about Mexican-origin transnational students and their families? If we reframed the deficit thinking (Menchaca, 1997; Valencia, 1997) about these students and instead tuned into their ways of knowing—which I contend are largely mystified to most educators at present—how might educators both better educate and shift their own thinking? How might transnational people reframe their own thinking about themselves if an additive approach were taken to understanding them in hegemonic spaces, especially the institution of school?

Undoubtedly, my research has an agenda, and I realize it is not completely innocent, but I am compelled by hope and a sense of urgency. I am inspired/tempered by research on decolonizing methodologies (L. T. Smith, 2006) and framed my own

research within a larger context of decolonization. As a Western scholar, I tried to “reach out in democratic and liberating ways, with great humility, to engage in research collaborations that help to achieve social justice” (González y González & Lincoln, 2006). I weave together the lenses of transnational theory and *conocimiento*, two framings which are compatible with the critical paradigm and decolonizing methods. Both frameworks have been used to theorize social transformation (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2002; Khagram & Levitt, 2008) in ways that are compatible.

Theoretical Framing

I used theoretical tools of transnationalism and *conocimiento* described in Chapter 2 to frame my research methodology. Anzaldúa’s theory of *conocimiento* is heavily influenced by feminisms, critical race theory, and queer theory. Her work is clearly oriented toward the critical research paradigm. Anzaldúa’s seven stages of *conocimiento* allowed me to search for ways of knowing which were not limited to the five senses. More specifically, I used Anzaldúa’s stages of *conocimiento* for living in an “intercultural society,” as she explores them in an interview with Irene Lara. They include:

- coming to know the other; not coming to take her
- entering the other’s house/culture; sit, look, listen; relate, empathize
- imagine yourself; be yourself
- look past your genes/culture/ego..
- [use a] mindful tongue; *lengua con corazón y razón* [with heart and reason]

(Lara, 2005, p. 45)

These steps were critical in maintaining an attitude that was open to understanding these same steps taken by the students and families with whom I worked. There was a high degree of reflexivity about the self and about the people with whom I worked in these steps. Also, my use of *conocimiento* was informed by additional Mexican-origin researchers' ideas which lend themselves to *conocimiento* (Dolores Delgado Bernal, 1998; Galván, 2005; Sánchez, 2009; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Urrieta, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2005; Villenas, Godinez, Delgado Bernal, & Elenes, 2006).

Transnational theory can be oriented inside the critical paradigm, according to Khagram and Levitt (2008). Methodologically, as already mentioned, I conducted multi-sited qualitative work in order to cross the borders that my participants crossed and to develop a sense for the physical contexts which were part of their lives. Part of the transnational methodology also includes understanding that cultural practices naturally occur across borders. With that understanding, I was mindful to collect data as phenomena and ways of knowing also across borders.

Critical Ethnographic Case Studies

I conducted critical ethnographic case studies. By critical ethnography, I refer to my “historically situated knowledge claims,” (D. Foley, 2002, p. 487) located in the critical research paradigm with its investment in emancipatory outcomes (tempered with deconstructivist senses of questioning what I attempt to represent). I worked with four distinct families who constituted multiple case studies. For the purposes of my research, I defined family as the kin-related members who lived in the same residence, including the nuclear and extended family members who lived there. In this case, it turned out that

only nuclear families resided under each roof at the time of study. However, each family had at some point shared their roof with other blood and fictive kin during their time in the U.S. Each family was a “bounded system” of study (Stake, 1995, p. 2) whose ways of knowing with respect to education I worked to understand, categorize, and represent. Because my questions were “what” and “how” questions, case study was an appropriate method (Yin, 2009, p. 10).

I chose four families who were most helpful in “what we can learn” as opposed to trying to get a “representative” sample of transnational families (Stake, 1995) (if such a thing were possible). I did not choose a single case because I wanted my data to be more “robust” (Yin, 2009) in terms of their indications toward ways of knowing. Also, I was eager to find inconsistencies in data to force my thinking and theorizing so as not to present a set of arguments about ways of knowing that were overly-determined, as they may have been if I had only examined a single case. Single case studies are excellent for studying anomalies or particularly interesting phenomena (Yin, 2009). There are so many Mexican-origin transnational families in the U.S., I formulate beginning ideas regarding consistencies and variations in these families’ ways of knowing. These four families form the core set of participants for my data collection, which consist of interviews, participant observation, photography, and document review.

Starting in 2009, I gathered data over two and a half years in the U.S. and Mexico, with three brief (approximately 10-day) visits to the designated pueblos in Mexico; the majority of my work was in the Washington, D.C. area. Data collection depended somewhat upon rapport, as is the nature of ethnographic research, though I maintained consistent relationships among the four families with whom I worked. With these four

families, I conducted ethnographic interviews and oral history interviews, which I describe later. The former emerged on-the-spot as part of my participant observation (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Ethnographic interviews provided supporting data. Some of the areas around which I held ethnographic interviews included: revisiting conversations I heard, significance of visual and auditory objects (e.g. music) in domestic spaces, and discussing local and national political issues, particularly ones related to immigration. I wrote up the notes from ethnographic interviews and observations at the end of each visit with families in order to help me conceptualize where my research was heading.

Settings

It seems in some ways artificial to locate setting in a transnational study. Due to the back-and-forth nature of the lives of transnationals, I researched in these back-and-forth contexts as well. Primarily, my research was situated among Mexican-origin families from two distinct Mexican pueblos in the Washington, D.C. area. I spent time in the homes of participants as well as in social spaces, including work spaces and school functions. I also researched in the virtual space of Facebook with the expanding network of some families online. Geographically, these families were located in the Northern Virginia suburban region of Washington, D.C., where I taught in the public education system and lived for six years prior to moving to Austin for my PhD. While each neighborhood in the region had its own flavor and characteristics, there were unifying characteristics in the Northern Virginia area which were familiar to me. I researched the respective settings in the Northern Virginia area and their particular political, socio-economic contexts to provide further context to understand the data I present. I also

gathered data to understand the unique neighborhood and area connections which helped bind the families in my study.

In Mexico, the families I worked with were from two pueblos. The first is San Gabriel (a pseudonym), Michoacán, a primarily agricultural town of about 800 people who generally claim a historically indigenous heritage. I visited twice during fiestas anuales and once when they were not holding festivities. The other pueblo is slightly larger with about 3,200 people—San Juan Diego (a pseudonym), Jalisco. Like San Gabriel, San Juan Diego is mostly an agricultural pueblo situated in mountainous highlands. Indigenous tribes inhabited the area prior to the Spanish Conquest; currently it is a town of high levels of out-migration, situated about an hour's drive northeast of Mexico's second-largest city, Guadalajara. Several families from that town have moved between San Juan Diego and the neighborhood where I used to teach in the Washington, D.C. area. I attended their patron saint festival in January, 2011 with one of my research participants and her extended family. Both pueblos and states have long histories of sending migrants to the U.S. (Durand, et al., 1999).

Participants

I used a snowball sample to work with families in the Washington, D.C. Northern Virginia region, based upon community nomination of members with whom I had already established some *confianza* or trust. I worked with four families. Each family had school-age children or children who had recently exited the public school system and at least one parent available for interviews. Ideally, I wanted to work with two families from each pueblo. I was able to find two families from each pueblo, but one family had a more urban identity. In the Delgado family, the father was from the town of San Juan

Diego and the mother was from a small town on the opposite side of the large city between the two pueblos, Guadalajara. They started their family in the city of Guadalajara when living in Mexico, so their children have a mixed picture of urban life in Mexico and visits they have made to their father's hometown, San Juan Diego.

Selection Criteria

I conducted initial get-to-know-you meetings with the mothers of families as a way to introduce myself and initially screen for transnational criteria and also rapport. I also informally interviewed adolescent age children to check for rapport as well. Children needed to be enrolled in or exited from public schools, as my research orients itself toward public education. I had several criteria which fit a stronger definition of transnational participation (as opposed to merely emotional transnationalism). Families needed to have made return journeys into Mexico with their children on several occasions with the intention of maintaining ties to Mexico (as opposed to an emergency family visit, say, once in 15 years). This intentionality of return journeys helped meet a stricter definition of transnationalism. I also found and interviewed extended family members on both sides of the border who engaged as emotional transnationals and family members who did not fit the framework of intentional or emotional transnationalism but as simultaneous transnationals.

I was interested in interviewing families with working-class backgrounds as opposed to the exception of transnational elites or middle class Mexican families (also a small percentage of Mexico's population), though demographic data do not indicate there are many families in either pueblo who would be considered elite or middle class. I preferred students who had memories of ESOL classes (there is no bilingual education in

Virginia) in order to find data about their language acquisition process as part of their ways of knowing, though this was not a static criterion for selection. While I have identified transnationalism very broadly, I wanted to interview families who had more than one member who had made regular return trips to Mexico. Following are the families, family members, occupations, and home pueblos in Mexico.

Table 1. Family Participants (all names are pseudonyms)

Family name and sending community	Family members	Occupations
Medrano Family (from San Gabriel, Michoacán)	Lupita (mother) Santiago (father) Diego, high school son Bobby, middle school son Virginia, Kindergarten aged daughter	Childcare provider; Roofing crew leader
González Family (from San Gabriel, Michoacán)	Alba (mother) Moisés (father) Margarita, married daughter (living in Houston) Cristián, high school son (former ESOL student) Marco, middle school son (still designated as ESOL)	Food truck owners and operators
Paredes Family (from San Juan Diego, Jalisco)	Ernestina (mother) Daniel (father) Gloria, recent college graduate (former ESOL student) Lorena, fourth year college student (former ESOL student) Daniel, first year college student (all former students of the high school where I taught)	Former daycare provider and cafeteria worker; Construction worker

Table 1. Cont

Delgado Family (from San Juan Diego, Jalisco)	Edith (mother) Luciano (father) Nicolás, high school son (former ESOL student) Jessica, middle school daughter Taylor, elementary school son	Secretary to an obstetrics practice in Mexico and stay- at-home mom in the U.S.; construction worker
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The Researcher

Postcolonial theory helps frame the story of how and where I grew up, a place where structures of power were generally mystified by my formal schooling. As the recipient of a summer scholarship to an affirmative-action oriented program for West Virginia high school youth, I finally began to understand the relationship between West Virginia’s out-of-state landowners who plunder the old mountains for coal and their influences on good ol’ boy politics. I would carry a colonized sense of inferiority for years for both the state in which I grew up as well as my single-parent, working class background. In graduate school I would come to understand my home state, West Virginia, has been internally colonized in the U.S. (with, of course, the contamination of it being populated by mostly white folks who tend to readily support structures of white privilege). I have experienced the postcolonial sense of exile (Said, 2000) as someone who is now an outsider to West Virginia, particularly with my critiques of white privilege (R. L. Allen, 2001; Leonardo, 2009; Lipsitz, 2006; McIntosh, 1990), hegemony, and openness to understanding. I would become unhomely (Bhabha, 1994), a fragmented creature. I love the place where I grew up; I recognize there is little space for me there.

My exile has pointed me in the direction of transnationalism, in both my life experiences as someone who became bilingual while living off-and-on for many years in

Mexico and in my research agenda, where I seek to highlight what can be learned from the potential of those who live their lives in hybridity and transnationality. I also recognize that the sense of being from an internal U.S. colony, coupled with my childhood background, helps me empathize with other forms of colonization and the effects it has on people. To be clear, this does not mean I understand all forms of oppression and colonization, far from it. It means my compass may point more accurately at times.

In this research project, I am careful to note the differences between the people with whom I researched and myself. While I have lived in Mexico and speak Spanish, I did so from the position of having U.S. citizenship, U.S. educational credentials, and white skin. I could never claim that my experiences are “the same” as my research participants’. While residing in Mexico, I never worried that I would be deported with shame and embarrassment (though I did have tenuous legal status at times); for me, deportation would have meant returning to networks of people who could help me re-establish myself in the professional or academic world where I could eventually secure work and good standing again. Deportation would not have meant uncertainty for how my family would survive or fear of how I might make the return journey to the expelling country to continue to make a living. Neither in Mexico nor in the U.S. do I fear unjust persecution by legal authorities because of the color of my skin. In fact, I have the unearned privilege of protection by it.

I also recognize that my skin color provokes uneven reactions which I cannot predict nor control. In some ways, it represents status that may have gained the curiosity or initial interest of research participants. That being the case, I worked against any ideas

that I may have “naturally” had superior status in efforts to work against the pervasiveness of white supremacy, or the global regime of white racial privilege supported through economic, social, and political structures (R. L. Allen, 2001; Leonardo, 2009). At the same time, my whiteness may have been a cause for suspicion. White people have a long history of exploiting people of color for their own gain (L. T. Smith, 2006), and this is no secret to people of color. Initially, I may have been met with guardedness that I worked to overcome.

In most ethnographic texts, “we” does not occur, but rather an “I” (often vanishing) who does the telling about “them” (Pratt, 1986, p. 71) or the “Other(s).” It is one thing to center oneself as an act of reflection; it seems another to make sense of co-occurrence of the self and the local community, the “we.” While the story I portray is not about me, I include examinations of how my role was intertwined with my research participants. For instance, when Luciano Delgado’s brother was tragically killed in a car accident in Mexico, I was called to help them consider the fastest and most economical way to buy plane tickets to attend his brother’s funeral. For Diego Medrano, I helped him get into honors classes and work against the low institutional expectations of Latino young men in his schools. Furthermore, my positioning had an impact and influence on the ways people around me act, as would anyone’s. A researcher figured in a different body would have a separate story to tell. My intention is not to suggest my work is objective and replicable but utterly entwined with my positionality.

Data Collection

I used a critical ethnographic case study approach with four Mexican-origin families. The methods used include: participant observation, oral history interviews, photography of important events from the students, and field notes from my observations.

Participant Observation

As a participant observer (Spradley, 1980) with a sensitivity toward the “nature of human encounter and experience itself,” (Lassiter, 2005, p. 63) I occupied multiple roles with families in the home, at work, and in school contexts. First, I attempted to be a humble learner who enlisted my participants’ support in demystifying Mexican-origin transnational families’ *conocimiento* (though aware of my positioning as university researcher and teacher). I deferred to whatever language (between Spanish and English) they preferred to use with me and shifted according to their preference. With all parents, I spoke Spanish. With all but the Medrano children, I spoke English. I was also available to consult about schooling in the U.S., such as avoiding lower-tier schooling tracks and advice about university and career tracks. I attempted to provide some usefulness to families as I accompanied them during my research. Tedlock described the formerly “scientific” role participant observation held in the field of anthropology, where it was developed as a method where the observer was distant from the observed (Tedlock, 2005). Today, however, there is a change toward the reflective “observation of participation” by the researcher wherein the researcher “emphasizes relational over autonomous patterns, interconnectedness over independence, translucence over transparency, and dialog and performance over monologue and reading” (Tedlock, 2005, p. 467). I focused myself so my research remained grounded in the relational status with

my participants and oriented toward participatory dialog where we shared together, not merely for me to observe as university scientist.

Spending meaningful time with people is one of the best ways to demonstrate genuine interest and care in participant observation. While it was not practical to live with these families as a married and eventually pregnant woman and then mother, I was available and willing to convivir with families when they were willing to have me present. I observed several areas to inform my understanding of ways of knowing. I observed how parents and older family members taught their children, how both silences and languages were used among family members, how objects were created and used (ranging from cookware to religious symbols to music to other media). I paid careful attention to explicit discussion regarding the U.S. and Mexico and any comparisons which occurred, as well as discussions regarding schooling and education. I interviewed family members informally regarding decision making processes and what they think infuses their life choices—or ways of knowing. Below are some of the questions I referenced prior to visits:

1. How do family members communicate information to each other? (Verbally, through body language, through silence; what is the direction of communication?)
2. What are storytelling moments like, and how are they received? What is the purpose of their delivery?
3. When are explicit references made to Mexico and/or the family's pueblo in Mexico, and how are they built upon/received?
4. What is the contact like between family members?
5. What is the contact like between family members and non-Mexicans? (Who speaks? How is language understood; e.g. dichos?)

6. How are objects used, created, and placed, and what is the interaction with objects (e.g. religious symbols, types of clothing, cooking apparatuses, decorations, jewelry)?

7. How are registers of Spanish and English used in various contexts?

8. How do family members engage private (such as home) and public (such as school) spaces?

I suggested opportunities for outings as well. With one family (the mother and her three children) we traveled to the U.S. Mall to visit the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. On a different occasion, I took two sisters from a San Juan Diego family to the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival on the U.S. Mall to see multiple exhibits from the 2010 invited country, Mexico. I also counseled the elder of the two sisters about how to consider applying to graduate school on multiple occasions, both in face-to-face meetings and over the Internet via email and chat. These outings and additional conversations provided an opportunity to participants to continue to expand their sense of habitus (Bourdieu, 2008) in the Washington, D.C. area, something many families—regardless of background—struggle with in their busy lives. In some ways this may have expanded with some of the participants' ways of knowing. For instance, the young women from San Juan Diego explained upon seeing the Folk Life Festival's almost exclusive devotion to indigenous groups' cultural practices, that they did not know Mexico had such a vast diversity of cultures within its borders.

Other events I observed were school events, where I witnessed the ways family members participated in these institutions. For instance, I was able to see how parents did or did not fit into the larger school culture during a science fair event and a multicultural night festival. In Mexico, I observed community and extended family

relations in order to make sense of how extended family and community impact the individual's relationship with communal ways of knowing. I also observed families in churches in Mexico, interested in understanding the roles church, spirituality, and religion (dis)connected with ways of knowing.

In my participant observation, I was keenly aware of wanting to provide some sort of reciprocity. As a former Central Office ESOL employee, teacher, and department chair in a large Northern Virginia school district, I shared cultural and social capital regarding how to navigate the schools with one family from San Gabriel and another from San Juan Diego. As already mentioned, I shared my insider status as a graduate student who is navigating her third graduate program with the elder sister of the family from San Juan Diego.

Throughout my participant observation, I made quick jottings of important ideas and observations to later flesh out upon arrival to home, where I wrote up rigorous field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Snow, 1995). I recorded observations I believed most relevant to help me toward understanding ways of knowing.

Oral History Interviews

In addition to informal ethnographic interviews described above, I conducted more formally structured oral history interviews with parents as well adolescent aged children. I conducted these in a series of at least two interviews per person. These focused on the ways of knowing with respect to schooling and education, searching for the “meaning that events hold for those who lived through them” (Chase, 2005, p. 652). I asked both explicit questions regarding teaching, learning, and education in the U.S. and Mexico as well as less explicit questions which indirectly approached ways of knowing

(such as questions regarding spirituality). I inquired about migration and return visit stories as well as the shifting lenses for understanding multiple contexts and stories which demonstrated those knowings. I believe these stories of coming-and-going between Mexico and the U.S. were fundamental to understanding their impact on the shifting senses of knowing such as bifocality and what Rouse has described as the “first” and “second” languages of transnationals, reflecting their respective ways of knowing, *not* language acquisition processes (Rouse, 1992). These kinds of knowing, I believe, necessarily impacted experiences in formal schooling contexts. I checked to understand how families used these shifting lenses in these formal schooling contexts. With adolescent children, I was careful to show a nonjudgmental or leading sense of expectations of answers. I was also careful to offer a sense of acceptance of their answers.

Luken and Vaughan explain there are four ways social scientists understand oral histories, including objective, subjective, dual, and “social construction” positions (1999, p. 408). Social construction best describes how I understood the data I gathered from these interviews, as I recognize how they were contextually situated performances created for both the interlocutor and the investigator. I believe these interviews support the “performative ethnography” advocated by Mirón as spaces where the narrators are an “embodied presence” demonstrating the “will of subaltern subjects” who as a result of their performances “are potentially transformed into political agents” (Mirón, 2008, p. 558). My data suggest that research participants in some ways were already political agents, though I hope their participation in my work made them (and me) increasingly political, defining the word broadly to include everyday acts which challenge hegemony.

Interview Protocols

I invoke Anzaldúa's approach to *conocimiento* in an "intercultural society" described in my theoretical framing and in my interviews, where I tried to suspend my own assumptions while empathizing with the participants I interviewed. With the U.S.-based families, I conducted at least two oral history interviews with each family member, of the age of adolescence or older, who was willing to participate. Eventually I chose to only interview the women parents in the study out of respect for the women in addition to the adolescent children I interviewed. I felt these interviews were too intimate a space, one that the women themselves may not have been able to engage conversationally with their husbands.

I had similar yet distinct interviews for adolescents and older adults. I conducted the interviews in locations comfortable to the participants with minimal ambient noise for ease of recording. I asked participants if they were comfortable with recording, and, if they hadn't been, I was prepared to jot notes during the interview instead. Follow-up interviews allowed me to re-engage themes which emerged from the initial interview and created deeper *confianza*. In some cases, I conducted a third interview with participants. I began interviews with the mothers, as I had the most immediate *confianza* with them in most cases because we were generally age mates. I began interviews after preliminary meetings among the participating families. Through relationship building, I established increasing levels of *confianza* in order to put participants at ease.

The first interview focused on the participants' oral histories, directed at the participant's immigration stories and/or experiences of being of Mexican-origin in the U.S. and return visits to Mexico as well as their experiences in education in Mexico

and/or the U.S. Because some of these experiences were very intense to recall (particularly regarding journeys to the U.S. and adjustment issues), I responded with great empathy and put the needs of the participant first, offering to stop the interview if the participant preferred.

The second interview was focused on interrogating the meaning of some of the experiences shared in the previous interview. I had preliminarily coded the first interview in order to lift generative themes for deeper probing. I also asked more pointed comparative questions about the experience and understanding of life between two countries, particularly as it pertained to education, pulling upon themes mentioned in Chapter 2 of transnationalism, such as identity and bifocality. I asked questions about the participant's identity and how and if it changed and shifted, based on multiple transnational contexts, and particularly as that impacted schooling.

The third interviews consisted of a reflection between the participant and me about understanding the transnational meanings of the responses from the participant. I pulled into relief some of my emerging senses about what I thought seemed transnational about their ways of knowing, such as the shifting of simultaneous and multiple perspectives to view one event or problem (such as immigration policy, school events, and major life choices such as choosing a life partner).

For all interviews, they were conducted in either Spanish or English or both, depending on how the participant was most comfortable. I conducted them in locations that were convenient for the participants. Those with adults and older adolescents usually lasted approximately 90 minutes; for younger adolescents, they usually lasted no more than an hour. I digitally recorded each interview and transcribed it subsequently.

Finally, I also planned to conduct interviews with one teacher of four separate students from my research participants, for a total of four teacher interviews. I attempted to select teachers based upon family members' suggestions of who might respond well and who is also considered a "good" teacher. For the families from the school district in which I used to work, I had little difficulty locating these teachers. However, the other school district was challenging to work with. Teachers directed me toward administrators, and administrators pointed me toward difficult and lengthy procedures about research in their district. When I tried to press for how to engage these procedures, my emails and phone calls were ignored.

The two teacher interviews I did conduct gave a brief indication of the kinds of attitudes and understandings teachers have regarding transnational students. I also conducted interviews of at least seven community members in the two separate pueblos to provide a general context and understanding of the backgrounds of my research participants which further helped me understand ways of knowing originating in the Mexican pueblos. I found community members who through consensus of family participants were representative of local knowledge regarding their pueblos.

Photography and Videos

I reviewed photos and videos with participants in their visits to Mexico and also in their U.S. contexts. These photos and videos provided points of entry for us to talk about their ways of knowing. I learned about issues related to how adolescents and adults know socially through community networks in visits to their pueblos as well as forming perspectives on global issues such as the economy and politics.

Data Analysis

Using thick description (Geertz, 1973), I wrote extensive notes after each family visit. I recorded my ethnographic notes on a computer in a standard word processing program which was later used to check for and add emerging themes among the data. Notes were recorded immediately following each site visit to maintain fidelity to observations and also because recall is usually best shortly after observations (Emerson, et al., 1995). I digitally recorded interviews with family members, community members, and teachers, which I later transcribed to a computer. In attempting to adhere to decolonizing methodologies, I used the native Spanish for much of my transcription as well as notes write-up (Lincoln & González y González, 2008). Following, I describe more thoroughly my data management strategies, journaling, within-case and cross-case analysis, and coding (as it lead to categorizing and theorizing).

I implemented various strategies to make the vast quantities of data I had manageable and useful for interpretation. I downloaded audio files from interview recordings to my computer for playback with a foot pedal mechanism for transcription. I used Microsoft Word to write journals, field notes, and interview transcriptions. Creating a small column on the right side of these pages, I electronically recorded codes (see following section). I also included analytic memos regarding my interpretation of data (Saldaña, 2009) and observations in highlighting. For each interview, I coded it at the top with dates, locations, and demographic information of participants (including the pueblo with which they are related to Mexico, their role in the family, age, and interview date) (Merriam, 1998). Pseudonyms were used for all participants for identity protection purposes. Similarly, I coded each day's field notes. I also indexed each entry with this demographic data, to "paginate" the entries for cross-reference and ease of identifying

(M. B. Miles & Huberman, 1994) when I wanted to reference certain interviews or field notes. Finally, I created an Excel spreadsheet of codes, categories, and themes as they emerged for easier use in interpreting data. All data were stored on my personal computer and backed up regularly on a flash drive.

I maintained a journal in addition to my field notes. In it, I interrogated regularly how I related to participants and observed phenomena; I also reconsidered the research questions and my emerging coding (Saldaña, 2009, pp. 34-35). The journal provided a space for me to explore those feelings instead of leaving them uninterrogated to the point where the feelings may unwittingly have a negative impact on my work. For instance, I managed frustration and guilt in the face of participants without legal papers; it was better to acknowledge this in my journal rather than become disempowered and potentially negligent of the research and my participants. In a similar vein, I reflected on problems and ethical choices I made.

First-cycle coding is the initial phase of attempting to code the mass of qualitative data from research (Saldaña, 2009). I recognize this (and all manual data analysis) used an “interpretive” process that was “intuitive” (Merriam, 1998) and “subjective,” (Saldaña, 2009), dependent upon my positioning. For instance, as a woman pregnant with my first child, I saw the world through the lenses of parenting, protection, and caring in ways I did not see prior to this state. This lens played into my data analysis as well (and after the birth of my daughter). While I do not want to deny this lens, I also was sure to use multiple other lenses of interpretation, though I am naturally limited by only as much as I know. Despite these subjective lenses, I was careful to make sure data were

accounted for and coded. More specifically, I did not ignore large chunks of information simply because it did not appear to fit my framework or interests.

Using the methods suggested by Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, I began with open coding of field notes and interview data (1995). With the open coding, I read all data line-by-line in order to search for salient themes related to ways of knowing which emerged from the data. Before describing the subsequent rounds of coding, I turn toward the case study component of my research to describe how I integrated my data analysis of case studies.

Gathering all the data for each family, I analyzed each family case initially to check for themes that emerged within each family (Merriam, 1998). For the cross-case analysis, I created a word table of important themes which emerged from each of the cases to check for consistency among the four families (Yin, 2009). I attempted to avoid superficiality and wove together more substantial themes. For themes which appeared to have little consistency, I reconsidered my analysis. I wrote up my data analysis based upon three key emergent themes: sobrevivencia (survivalist) knowing, Nepantlera (in-between) knowing, and chained knowing.

I continually worked through the data with open coding to maintain a sense of openness toward potentially emergent themes and to disrupt the initial themes as necessary. In second (and third and fourth, etc.) cycles, I searched the data with focused coding, relying on my framework of transnationalism and *conocimiento* and their relationship to ways of knowing (Emerson, et al., 1995). I refined the codes to more effectively work through the data in efforts to write up my findings. I also used pattern coding to aggregate subsets of codes into larger thematic codes (M. B. Miles &

Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2009). Eventually, the codes were sorted into the most salient categories which answer my research questions and developed into my theorizing about the data interpretation and results.

Chapter Four: Ways of Knowing

Beginning/ending/beginning

Lupita Medrano followed the sidewalk past her *suegra's* small storefront, part of a two-storey concrete building painted mint green. She considered buying a bottle of water for the first leg of her journey *al norte* but continued past her mother-in-law's *tienda* because they had already said goodbye. She decided there was no need to stir up the mother-in-law again, frail as she was. Because they had parted on good terms, she did not want to tempt the winds of their strong personalities toward the bad feelings they had sometimes felt toward each other. When she found herself anxious, she was prone to feeling worse by exchanges with anyone as she was leaving her *pueblo*. It was hard enough to know that she had to make the journey across the desert once again to the U.S., evading ICE and a host of new dangers.

Passing her *suegra's* store, Lupita noticed the heaping bags of dried beans perched under a wooden aquamarine bench. Her next bag of beans would be measured in pounds, not kilos, and packaged in shiny clear plastic north of the U.S. border, boiled in water straight from the tap instead of from the large blue bottles transported atop truck beds in Mexico. A few doors down two of her cousins shared a wooden chair as they giggled and clicked on Internet links in the *pueblo's* first cybercafé, a set of four rebuilt computers, sitting atop desks made from wood harvested nearby from forests of pine. San Gabriel, this town of 800, nestled in Michoacán's mountainous highlands, was for the first time linked to the globalized world electronically.

Don Ramón, her father's first cousin, passed by atop his horse. "*Buenos días,*" they greeted each other politely; Don Ramón's head nodded under his light straw cowboy

hat. She had last seen Don Ramón watch the Christmas *pastorela* in the daytime, one leg bent at the knee, leaning against an adobe wall, the old style of construction still visible among some of the homes that had not been reconstructed by the dollars remitted to the U.S. She wondered if it was true, what she had heard, that Don Ramón had left a woman in the state of Washington to return to his wife and four children in Mexico. She then remembered how he had donated his own construction materials to finish putting the floor in her parent's modernized bathroom when they had run out of cement to complete the flooring. Lupita felt itchy and a little anxious, seldom eager to leave the pueblo where she grew up, especially knowing her passage *al norte* would be along the "chain" of people who would expedite her crossing without documents over the Mexico-U.S. border.

Lupita stepped underneath a yellow archway, detailed by a white protruding edge as she neared the destination of this final pilgrimage. Her black athletic shoes took a slower pace once inside the archway. The sun was directly overhead, yet it still cast eastward shadows from the grave markers to her left. She could find several generations of her *antepasados* in that small graveyard. To her right stood the well-maintained heart of her pueblo, the church. She caught wood smoke on the air; a neighbor woman was preparing her family's midday meal.

Inside the entrance at the rear of the church, Lupita's long coffee-colored hair fell over her shoulders as she bent her head, slowly made the sign of the cross, taking a slow, long breath as she crossed the church's threshold. Her intense, clear brown eyes filled with light as she looked toward the altar where Saint Michael's statue was cloaked in a wine-colored velvet robe, a gentle face framed by his crown and light brown hair.

“San Gabriel, a tí llego para encomendarme. Yo sé que me cuidas día y noche, pero te pido que ahora como nunca que me cuides con toda tu atención.” or, “Saint Gabriel, I come to you to ask for your all-encompassing protection. I know that you care for me night and day, but I ask that now more than ever you care for me with all of your attention.”

Lupita decided to sit with San Gabriel for a few minutes. She thanked the saint for her immediate family’s good health, that they still had housing (despite having to move from a free-standing house to a mobile home from a brick, two storey-home they had bought), and she asked San Gabriel to watch over her family and her community. Two older women of the pueblo parted their lips in repetitive prayers of the rosary, their shoulders covered by hand-woven black and blue *rebozos* they had worn for years. Lupita knelt on a wooden pew closer to the front so she could see the image of her protective saint better. She straightened her blue jeans from creasing beneath her knees against the kneeler.

Por favor, deja que esta cadena de gente que nos va a pasar sea de buena voluntad, porque tu sabes que voy allá por el bien de mis hijos. Te prometo que si me dejes pasar, volveré con mis hijos otra vez para agradecertelo. Sé que eres muy potente, y te quiero con todo mi corazón.

Please, let this chain of people that will help me cross the border to be of good faith, because you know that I’m going to the U.S. for my kids’ well-being. I promise that if you let me cross safely, I’ll come back with my kids again to thank you. I know you are very powerful, and I love you with all my heart.

Lupita breathed slowly and shifted her eyes towards the image of San Gabriel again. She was not distracted by the image of Christ or that of the Virgen of Guadalupe; like all her other final visits to her pueblo of San Gabriel, she only had eyes for San Gabriel. He was the one who had protected her for so many years, and despite the twenty or so years she had lived away from San Gabriel, he was always with her. Images of the people who would help her cross the border crossed her mind—the set of shrubs at the hill’s crest where she, her husband, and the group of border crossers would wait for the next man to pick them up. The man who carried a gun and would walk with them for hours between that hill and through desert paths. The next man who wore a black sombrero and would lead them toward a small house the group would cram into shortly after they crossed the border. The woman who would pick them up in a van and drive them away from that house... These faces mixed together as she felt a strong sense of calm—her San Gabriel had never failed her in these journeys and would not fail her this time, either. His face, the one she had looked into in her youth and adolescence, week after week, would be near her the entire journey.

Emboldened with the confidence that San Gabriel had never let her down, she left the church, the final ritual for each of her visits to her hometown. It was her last stop in San Gabriel before she rejoined with her children and husband, and she was ready to go *al norte* once again. Like all her previous visits, she would arrive to the U.S. without experiencing grave dangers. Once again, she would thank San Gabriel for safe passage.

The above passage details what the journey to the U.S. for Lupita Medrano was like over several years of the tremendous risks she made to return and visit her home pueblo. It is a compilation of data from her recollections of the return journeys and the intense period immediately preceding her departures from San Gabriel. It also shows how important it was for Lupita and her family to make these return visits to Mexico, a part of her and her family's knowing and being between countries, between worlds.

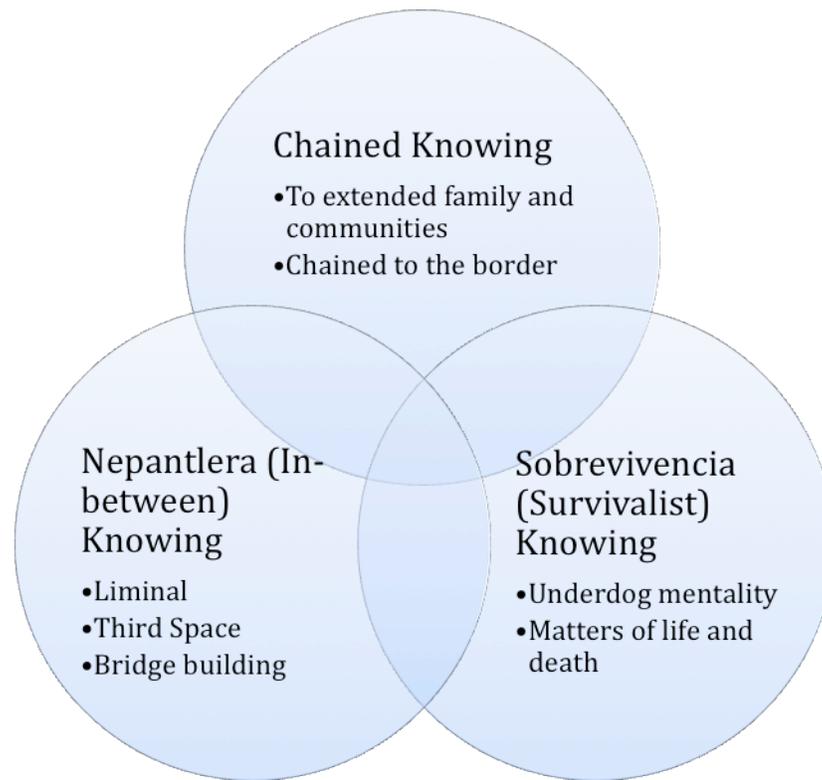
Introduction

Educational researchers have highlighted the strengths immigrant and Mexican-origin families bring to the U.S. education system (N. González, et al., 2005; Valdés, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). These works disrupt the condemning, inaccurate, and unhelpful analyses which depict such families as culturally deficient (D. A. Foley, 1997; Menchaca, 1997; Valencia, 1997). The funds of knowledge approach (N. González, et al., 2005) has been especially helpful in providing a set of tools for teachers and researchers to use to find the particular strengths of their students and families. In turn, the six areas of knowledge they highlight are directly applicable to U.S.-based curriculum as delivered in school.

The results I show in this chapter elaborate a different approach to understanding Mexican-origin, transnational families. I am not finding a certain number of areas of knowledge but am showing the ways of knowing the world in the families in my study. I draw into focus the paradigms out of which the families organize their lives and act. These themes emerged over and over again among the families, and I saw them at play in both the U.S. and in Mexico as well as in the participants' experiences while reflecting on their lives in the opposite countries.

The three ways of knowing I identify operate in concert with each other; there is not one that takes precedence over any other. Unlike stage theories of development (Piaget, 1971) and learning (Perry, 1970), these three ways of knowing inform each other simultaneously. At times, they overlap each other in their simultaneity. The ways of knowing are: chained knowing, sobrevivencia knowing, and Nepantlera knowing. Chained knowing refers to the linked forms of knowing that family members have—linked to family, community, and ancestral members as well as their links to the Mexico-U.S. border. Sobrevivencia knowing is the set of senses regarding how the individual, family, and community survive and thrive. This is rooted in the recognition that survival is a priority and yet precarious if one does not work toward it. Sobrevivencia encompasses shifting kinds of knowing dependent on context, including political and economic conditions. It includes practical skills, an “underdog” mentality, and matters of life and death. Last, Nepantlera knowing refers to the liminal state of being between spaces, which allows for attempts at bridge buildings and Third Spaces (Bhabha, 2004) while at the same time exposing oneself to the pain of attempting to construct bridges and Third Spaces. It has roots in Mexico, real and virtual, and it plays out in both countries. Taken together, these three ways of knowing situate the Mexican-origin, transnational family members as unique knowers of and actors upon the world.

Figure 1. Three Ways of Knowing



Chained Knowing

Lupita Medrano’s visit to her patron saint, the protector of the people from her pueblo, is a typical visit which occurred among the families who participated in this study. Her story of repeated passages without legal documents over the Mexican-U.S. border is also shared among at least one family member of all four families in this study.

The visit of Lupita to her patron saint also exemplifies how her life was literally chained to the reality of the U.S.-Mexico border, and her family, like all the families in this study, were chained to the border. The border seeped into how the family members looked at the world, made decisions about it, and how they knew themselves. Lupita was

also linked to her family, her community, and her ancestors. I explore these areas of chained knowing in the following sections.

The participants in this study demonstrated a host of ways of knowing which were attached to other people; their knowing did not stop at the border of their skin. Primarily, participants were connected to their families and home communities both in Mexico and in their geographic locations in the U.S. Like the work on funds of knowledge (N. González, et al., 2005) and Yosso's cultural capital (2005), these families had vast networks of people on whom they could call for support. Instead of showing how this can be a means to an end, I suggest in many cases it is *the end* for participants. Knowing that these extended family and community members are part of one's life (and one's family) is an end in itself. Participants understood that they belonged to these groups and found ways to maintain connections from various locations and in multiple circumstances.

Chained Knowing in Networks of People and Its Rootedness in Respect

What makes these networks of people an end in itself are the values in which the relationships are rooted. For generations, families have taught values to their children, especially the value of respect (Valdés, 1996); "*el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz*" (respect of another person creates peace) was a common *dicho*, or saying, cited in several families when describing the values they learned from their parents and passed on to their children. Living that respect meant maintaining an attentiveness both to family and community locally and to family and community across borders. For instance, some children participants reported having closer relationships with their grandparents in Mexico than even their cousins who lived in Mexico, relationships where the children

showed a deep respect for the grandparents. Children who were based in the U.S. could also describe relationships with a host of cousins both in Mexico and the U.S. For instance, Gloria Paredes, residing in the Washington, D.C. area, knew all 30 of her cousins from face-to-face visits in Mexico and in the U.S. and had been taught that those relationships were important to maintain and cultivate. This included meeting cousins who lived in other parts of the U.S. while in Mexico (such as cousins residing in California) and during visits across the U.S. One of many ways the Paredes family showed its respect for the larger family was, at great expense to Gloria's family, her brother Daniel danced as an official accompanying member of his California cousin's quinceañera which was held in San Juan Diego, Jalisco. Following, I offer several examples of how that respect among family and community members was demonstrated.

Before addressing how respect played out transnationally, I offer some examples of respect in the daily lives of participants based in the U.S. In the immediate families, I witnessed several forms of respect. Parents were at once patient and firm with their children about their expectations for their kids. The children participants were respectful toward me, without fail, during all of my visits and in my observations of their lives performed outside of their homes. I was offered drinks, my bags were taken, and I was given the best seat in the living rooms and kitchens where we talked. It is worth nothing what I did not observe, as well—there was no complaining about needing to do chores, bargaining with parents to avoid obligations, or sour faces when the children were asked to do something. The family members reported that the children and parents had disagreements, but they were managed outside my presence and generally not issues where there was enraged and loud fighting.

The children consistently and respectfully worked to meet their parents' expectations regarding their responsibilities in the family, and these responsibilities were often quite adult-like, similar to Rogoff's description of intent community participation (2007) where Mayan-origin children were folded into the community through observation of and later performance of meaningful community tasks. All three of Lupita Medrano's children helped her when they were home in the summer and on days off from school in the childcare she ran from her home. The two older boys successfully swaddled an infant, prepared his bottle for feedings, and were familiar with age appropriate toys. The daughter, even in pre-school, was attentive to the needs of younger children in the daycare, getting brightly colored toys off shelves and playing lullaby music for babies. This was all done under the watchful eye of their mother, Lupita. Where Rogoff's work shows the way that children learn through observation, I add that the children are also internalizing an orientation toward knowing by being part of the fabric of their family and community. Simultaneously, the adults' instruction also re-wraps the sense of being part of the community into their way of knowing the world.

In another example, every morning, Cristián González woke up at 4 am to buy ice from a local provider for his parents' business, two food trucks which traveled around the Northern Virginia region providing breakfast and lunch to its customers. "I don't mind doing it," he said. "It's just what I do. What else would I do?" While I might have imagined a teenager would complain about this kind of daily sacrifice, Cristián did it regularly for his family with little complaint, after observing his parents doing this for years as a boy. His question of "What else would I do?" demonstrates an internalized

form of knowing that shows this participation in his family's work is now second-nature knowing.

Boys commonly learned from the paid work in which their fathers participated as the prerogative of the fathers to instruct them in this way. Diego Medrano described his and his brother's experiences learning to work for his father's roofing crew as one where he learned to respect his dad. Even though he was at odds with his father's strong opinions at times, he continued to join him on Saturday mornings to work on his crew.

As soon as I can remember... I would clean all of the trash that would fall... I think [I was] probably six or seven. He... started taking me up to the roof then I started realizing how difficult it is and how I really don't wanna do that job when I'm older. And he told me the reason why he took me to work [is] he wants me to learn to do better in school or else I'm going to be working like that 'cause he was in high school, but he dropped out and now he says he wishes he can go back and finish and get a better job than he has right now...

I like to go to work with him but I don't like it because it's really hard, it's a lot of work... When I was twelve I just couldn't believe how my dad would do this every single day of the week, I would just do it one day and I don't even want to get up in the morning... And I would wake up and just be dead and my dad would still wake up earlier and do it all over again. So I guess I have respect for him because he works for us every single day and I don't know, I still don't know how he does it because I can't keep up with him, but he does it and I guess I do respect him for that.

Like other Latino immigrant fathers, Santiago took his sons to work with him on a regular basis so that they would learn how hard working with his hands was in order to encourage them to complete their formal education. Santiago's intention was not to gain his children's respect through some sort of hard-fisted fathering approach but to teach them through their connection to him as their father—from who else could they learn such a powerful lesson? Diego learned respect for his dad as a by-product of the years of experience. Also, he grew connected to his dad through this work through the respect he felt for him and through the physical presence of working with his father in this capacity. He demonstrated the respect through the acknowledgement of the fatigue he felt after working so hard and how his father managed to persist, day after back-breaking day.

Mothers in the study worked as well, but their paid labor was often more in the informal sector of the economy and/or related to domestic work, running daycares out of their home or working in the foodservice industry. Lupita Medrano was teaching her daughter to cook, especially the art of how to *tortear* or make tortillas. At the age of six, Virginia did not need to be prompted to assist her mother. Without words, her mother would enter the kitchen and pour dry flour to make *masa* or dough into a bright blue plastic bowl. She separated a smaller proportion of the dough after working it into a rough amount. Virginia pulled out a stool so she could reach the countertop, and then she separated small amounts of the rough dough into lumpy balls. She then worked the dough just enough time and with the right amount of pressure into the right size smooth balls which she and her mother placed into had made that were too small and rework them, adding a bit of her own dough to them without commenting to her daughter, neither bothered nor praising her.

“This is my job,” Virginia said, as she lifted the lid of a heavy metal tortilla press lined with thin sheets of plastic on each side.

“How did you learn that?” I asked.

“I don’t know, I just did.” She said without judgment or any apparent further thought.

And then she patted each of the tortillas with just the right amount of pressure for her mother to pick them up and heat them atop a hot griddle which sat atop the counter. Those tortillas were far better than any tortillas available in the Washington, D.C. area at any store. Virginia, without saying she respected her mother, had learned to assist her without being prompted, and she participated with eagerness.

It seemed the women did not use their labor as a tool for instructing large life lessons the way the exact same way fathers did with their sons, perhaps due to the historic legacy of the diminution of women’s work the world over, especially work related to domestic labor. I also sensed that the mothers expected their children would have better-paid work opportunities than they had. Lupita said more than once, “*Yo quiero ser más,*” “I want to be more,” but knew she was limited by her lack of formal papers to work in the U.S. She worked to position her own children to meet their life’s ambitions, knowing that as citizens born in the U.S., they would not have the same limitations on their professional lives as she had. To be clear, women were unashamed of their work but wanted their children to have advanced education to secure work which would match with their aspirations for their children’s education levels.

Respect was something siblings held for each other as well. Among the Paredes family siblings, who had all graduated from high school, they all cited each other as

sources of learning in their lives. In the Medrano family, the older boys lovingly carried their sister around and read to her. Elder siblings often took on the role of protector for younger siblings, perhaps also as a way to help the younger siblings navigate the difficulties they faced in U.S. society and schooling.

As another sign of respect, siblings, including elder siblings, regularly attended their brothers' and sisters' school and church functions willingly. In the Delgado family, the two older siblings and the father created their own unique face masks for a multicultural day held at the 2nd grader's school on a Saturday. Nicolás commented, "*Nos divertimos mucho ese día en la escuela de Taylor, cada quien haciendo su máscara;*" "We had a lot of fun that day in Taylor's school, each one of us making a mask." Each mask was displayed atop the TV bureau in their family room for months following the event. Nicolás, a high school senior, demonstrated enthusiasm which runs counter to mainstream discourses surrounding the role of elder siblings in the U.S., one where teenage siblings are not supposed to be interested in what their younger siblings do, especially at school. Similarly, the older brothers in the Medrano family attended their younger sister's elementary school multicultural night and cheered her on when she walked across the stage in the dress typical of the region her family is from in Mexico. Their genuine excitement and pride connected them to her, and the dress she wore, typical of the indigenous P'urhépecha dress still used at times inside Mexico today.

Family members demonstrated respect as part of their chained knowing within their families and communities in their transnational participation when in Mexico. Adults reintegrated themselves into community life by helping cook meals, cleaning laundry, and maintaining homes, in addition to participating in conversations and social

events. Edith described her position as the daughter returning to parents suffering from a host of serious ailments which often accompany those who live with limited resources in Zapopan, a municipality which has become synonymous with the larger urban area of Guadalajara.

Yo llego y por ejemplo mi mamá está lavando. Yo agarro la tina de ropa y subo a... a ayudarle a tender. Se hace más tarde y yo veo que va a llover. Subo y bajo la ropa, ni si quiera preguntar ... no es lo mismo es más trabajo. . . Pero yo no puedo ver a mi mamá trabajar y yo estar sentada. Verle a mi mamá que está haciendo de comer y yo sentada esperando el plato, no. Yo trato de "acomodarme" en lo más que se pueda. O veo a mi papá que necesita ser, por ejemplo antes pues, no había pasado todo esto [his illnesses]. Que necesita ir a una cita, que necesitaba a un doctor, que... y ando... en haque. . . Pero para mí, la verdad si es más trabajo allá que aquí.

I arrive and, for example, my mom is doing laundry. I grab the laundry basket and go up [to the roof] to help her hang them up. It gets late and I see that it's going to rain. I go up and bring the clothes down, they don't even ask... Then, for me... it's not the same, it's *more* work. . . But I can't watch my mom work and me be seated. To watch my mom who's making a meal and me just waiting for the plate, no. I try to make myself as useful as I can. Or I see my dad needs to be, for example before, not all [these illnesses] had happened. That he needs to go to an appointment, that he needed a doctor, that... and I go... around like crazy. But for me, the truth is it's more work there than here.

Edith's case demonstrates some ways she respected her parents and her connections to them. Her parents both had a host of physical ailments and were also taking care of an adult-aged brother of hers who was no longer able to take care of himself physically. She tried to pre-empt some of her mother's domestic labor when she saw signs that problems might arise, such as rain that might spoil the clothes hanging on the roof on the line. She also accompanied her mother in her domestic labor, showing her connection to her mom in that form of participation. Similarly, she was sure to accompany her father to his appointments and make sure he was receiving quality care for his cancer.

Families in my study also demonstrated respect by bringing an array of practical gifts to family members, being sure not to leave anyone out any individual sibling, niece, nephew or cousin. Gifts included clothing, shoes, and Christmas toys for children. They fully participated in communal family discussions, sharing news and stories about distant relatives and engaging in familial discussions. When families rode in larger vehicles such as trucks to return to Mexico, they were able to take an abundance of goods as gifts. Alba, who grew up in El Salvador, described her family's habitual delivery of new toys to children in the town of San Gabriel during Christmas time visits, "*Quiero que tengan lo que yo no tuve; quiero que mis hijos vean lo importante que es compartir cuando uno tiene más,*" "I want them to have what I didn't; I want my kids to see how important it is to share when one has more than others." Alba had grown up without the opportunity to have a pair of shoes that fit her and weren't broken; for her, she wanted to give back and to show her children how important that act was.

Even with the more recent weight restrictions in air travel, family members took as much as they could possibly fit into suitcases. When I accompanied Gloria on a return

trip to San Juan Diego, her shoulder hung low as her large green duffel bag strap cut into her shoulder, jammed with the gifts of sweatshirts, pants, and dress shirts which would not fit into her checked suitcase for her extended family. She dragged her bag through customs, got stuck on an escalator in Houston with it, and even had it checked thoroughly at Immigration in Mexico, but she didn't give up on or complain about making sure what was sent to Mexico arrived to its recipients. Sure enough, on one of the evenings of annual patron saint festivities, her aunt sported the black dress slacks and royal blue silk blouse Gloria took her; despite the distance, Gloria's mom had chosen the sizing perfectly to fit her sister's frame. Gloria's aunt's usage of the clothes shows her pride in what her sister provided her. To be clear, what families send from the U.S. to Mexico is not an act of patronizing charity but one of maintaining the chains of connection among family members and an expression of love.

Families returning to the U.S. took very different kinds of items back; while they may not be as valuable in terms of market value, they are valuable in a way that cannot easily be gauged in terms of pesos or dollars. These items include foodstuffs which cannot be replicated in the U.S., largely because they are made with ingredients grown in and/or crafted in Mexico. They convey a Mexicanness that cannot be bought inside the U.S., even if the foods are made with the exact same recipes inside the U.S., a *sabor mexicano*, or Mexican flavor, which is beyond replication by ingredient or sentiment. Gloria shared what she brought with her from Mexico during the visit we made together for the patron saint festival.

For my sister, someone sent her one of the religious bracelets that have all the saints all around. I brought a picture that was taken with the family when we went

to Chapala that my grandma sent to my mom of all of us sitting at the table. Someone also sent my brother *un rosario* [a rosary]. I don't think I did this last time, but usually my grandma sends *queso* [homemade cheese] with us *y gorditas de elote* [and cornmeal treats made with corn kernels]. Also, candy is always something to bring back. *Paletas de chile* [hot chili pepper lollipops], *borrachitos* [candies made which have alcohol], *mazapanes* and other traditional Mexican candy.

These artifacts were typical of things sent from Mexico in my research. In fact, when I returned from my last visit to San Gabriel, Lupita Medrano's aunt and her cousin sent me with two kilograms of homemade cheese for two families, wrapped in handmade, cross-stitched napkins by the sender, and large bags of home toasted pumpkin seeds for separate families. One of the bags of seeds was the last bag the most of Lupita would ever send her from Mexico before she died. Her mother, like Lupita, did not have the legal papers to cross into the U.S., but her seeds made the journey, and I'm so glad they did. These artifacts served as symbols of the love the people back in Mexico had for their families and communities residing in the U.S.; they helped maintain a chaining of connections through physical representations of their love for their community members.

U.S. based families often made great economic sacrifices to support their hometown's annual fiestas. These fiestas are usually a religious tribute to the patron saint for whom a town may be named or recognition of Christmas through community-wide events in the form of *pastorelas*. In San Juan Diego, the local government established an "Orange Festival" where people celebrate for several days around harvest time of this locally produced food. From the U.S., families donated the participation of a bull for

rodeos, fireworks, elaborate floral altar decorations, and payments for live local bands. These festivals usually last between two and seven days and attract visits from Mexicans who live in the U.S. They are one of the largest draws of families for return visits.

Children made a host of respectful choices which demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the circumstances they encountered when going to Mexico as they encountered their extended families and communities. Children showed a great deal of analysis of social conditions, political issues, economic problems, and language and identity issues. Following, I offer some examples of these abilities.

Diego Medrano described how he attempted to dress in his return visits. Even though he had “nice” clothes, he only used them for special events when he visited San Gabriel.

As I get older, ‘cause I get, like, nice clothes and I love the clothes. And when I go over there, I’m like, what do I bring? ‘Cause there’s a lot of stuff that I have over here that’s really nice, but I don’t want to flash it all the time. But, like I guess most of the time when I do wear nice stuff it’s probably just in San Gabriel [for the parties].

Diego explained that he had a collection of fancy Mexican hats, boots, and shirts he had bought in Mexico which he combined with elements of clothing purchased in the U.S. At an evening dance during the Christmas festival, he fit in among his local community of young men by wearing a crisp, clean, broad-rimmed hat, pointy and well-kept cowboy boots, a crisply ironed dress shirt, and clean dark jeans. While a large *banda* played music that the local townspeople danced to with high energy, he asked several different

local girls to dance. He was a favorite of many because he both knew how to fit in and also was new to the town because he was a visiting community member.

Part of Diego's calculations about when and how to dress included his understandings of the economic climate in San Gabriel. He understood that when he and his family took clothes back to Mexico to give away, the people really needed them, because, as he said, "they can't get jobs." At the same time, it was respectful for him to dress up for the fiesta events, because the local townspeople wore more formal clothing as well. Part of his training came from his mom when he was much younger. When he was staying at his grandmother's in Mexico, he was curious about some of the differences in the homes. He picked up a pillow that was covered in a sheet repurposed as a pillow cover, with much looser contents than what he was used to for supporting his head to sleep. "Why do the pillows feel like rocks?" he asked. Lupita quietly explained that they were coarse relative to the ones they used in the U.S. because they were homemade of reused materials—clothes that could no longer be mended and served better as balled up pieces of fabric to fill homemade pillow cases. When Diego shared this story, he laughed, but he also looked down with some shame, remembering that it shamed the Mexican family members with whom he stayed when he was a younger boy.

Other children in the study made similar calculations about the ways they dressed in Mexico. Similarly, this decision-making regarding how they dressed translated into their dressing for formal events in the U.S. for Mexican-oriented contexts such as girls' quinceañeras or weddings. Young men in this study wore their Mexican boots, belts and hats for such events, too.

When the Paredes daughters returned for the town festivals, they went to great lengths to be formal enough for the evening activities, which meant they had to spend money on additional clothing for the festivals to take with them to Mexico. Despite the troubled economic conditions in her hometown, Gloria understood that it would be insulting to not wear formal attire. The townspeople made sacrifices to dress accordingly. I witnessed this preparation for a few weeks leading up to the patron saint festival I attended with Gloria. Gloria and her mother talked to each other from opposite sofas in the living room of the Delgado family mobile home. She spent several days looking through clothing racks at major department stores and discount clothing outlets alone, with her mom, and with her sister. *“Es que no encuentro ningún vestido, ya fui a Macy’s, TJ Maxx, Marshall’s, no sé que hacer,”* Gloria lamented, *“It’s that I can’t find any dress, I went to Macy’s, TJ Maxx, Marshalls, I don’t know what to do.”* Several armoires housed the family’s television, videos, photo albums and photos on display. There were pictures of each of the children graduating from high school with their parents, among others. The albums contained photos of scores of family members in the U.S. and Mexico, sometimes dressed in those formal dresses Gloria hoped to find. Her mom was practical about the matter, *“Pues llévate estos dos vestidos que ya tienes aquí,”* *“Well take these two dresses that you already have here.”* It was a great source of anxiety for Gloria, but she eventually took old dresses because she could not find something which met her standards in the U.S.

Once inside San Juan Diego, while preparing for the final night of the patron saint festival which culminated in a large dance, Gloria was very stressed to try to meet the standards of beauty in the town. That evening in preparation, she had painted her nails,

something she seldom did in the U.S. She knew what was expected of young women based on what her mother had told her and the videos she had seen from previous years of the festival.

“*No voy a ir*” “I’m not going,” Gloria told her cousins an hour after all other family members had already headed toward the town square to participate in the festival.

Dressed in elegant satin dresses and four-inch heels, with expertly applied makeup, the girls pleaded, “*Gloria, te ves bien, no te preocupes,*” “Come on, Gloria, you look good, don’t worry.” Gloria was extremely upset and cried for some time; eventually she was convinced to attend. Her transformation was dramatic; indeed to participate appropriately in this event she had made many changes. She wore a red satin dress that was cinched at the waist and hemmed above her knees; she wore high heels which made her a few inches taller. She attracted the attention of many men when she walked the circle among the uncommitted towns’ girls around the town plaza’s central kiosk, *dando la vuelta*, in the opposite direction of potential male suitors. This was a stark contrast to her usual jeans, t-shirt, leather shoes, and mussed ponytail. She later said she was relieved she had done it and learned from participating in the events; she said she participated out of respect for the town’s customs. She said that despite the gendered nature of the tradition, she was glad to know what her mother had lived through as a girl in the town and also to experience this important tradition which was central to the rites of passage for her community members in San Juan Diego.

While in Mexico, the children who spoke fluent Spanish were very careful to use Spanish during their visits. Even when they felt stronger in their English abilities, children attempted to speak a great deal of Spanish. They explained they did this out of

respect. Shortly after arriving to San Juan Diego, Gloria Paredes and I were unloading our bags onto our respective twin beds in her cousins' pink bedroom; they had offered it to us. The father in that family worked regular seasons in the U.S., in planting and harvesting in California and also in meatpacking in Iowa, and he spoke some English. His wife and two daughters had secured travel visas and had visited him in the U.S. and were used to the sounds of English surrounding them. Out of respect for the family's not being fluent in English, she directed me, "*Ahora sí tenemos que hablar puro español,*" "Now we have to speak completely in Spanish," and we did during our stay together, despite our near constant use of English in the U.S.

Similarly, Cristián and Diego were careful to use only Spanish when in Mexico. Cristián explained that it was most important in front of local, non-English speaking people. They used Spanish between themselves during their visits when they spent a great deal of time together, and despite their more frequent use of English together in the U.S. They continued to use Spanish even when it was very difficult to understand each other. During the Christmas festivities in San Gabriel, townspeople, predominantly men, wore expertly carved wooden masks secured to their heads which obscured their faces and lips. Townspeople were unable to identify who was behind each mask, their costumes were so elaborate and successful at masking their identities. When the mask wearer spoke, the voice was quite muffled and had to be projected outward. Despite the difficulty of understanding each other when wearing masks for celebratory dances, Cristián and his cousin Diego spoke nothing but Spanish during their dancing among the community men during Christmas festivities.

Parents were pleased with the level of respect their children demonstrated in their return visits. Families sensed they were being evaluated on return visits for how loyal they remained to local customs. Clearly they could return to Mexico and put down the people around them if they wanted, leaning on their US status. However parents were pleased to see their children adapt and the reactions to their adaptations. Edith Delgado explained her children's interest in eating the foods in Mexico:

Pero les sorprende [a mi familia] por ejemplo que, que mis hijos cenaban cosas que no han probado. Y agarran ellos a probar. Y los demás, 'No me gusta.'... Y ellos, les gusta ir y estar allá contentos y andar probando. En el tianguis les encanta andar probando, verdad? Las gorditas, '¿A qué sabe esto Abuelita? ¿Qué es?' Y a mi mamá le encanta todo eso. Mis, mi hermana... Ella fascinada porque, 'Tus hijos todo se comen.' Todo, todo ósea no, no hay de que, 'Esto si esto no,' porque los mismo sobrinos que están allá, unos no les gusta. Todas esas cosas y ellos [my children] todo, todo se comen. Y pues es muy grato llegar y estar uno con su familia y que te lleguen esos olores y come rico.

It surprises my family for example that, that my kids ate things that they hadn't tried. And they grab that and try it. And the others, 'I don't like it.'... And them, they like to go and are happy to try things. In the market they love to try new foods, right? Like the deep-fried corn shells with savory fillings. 'What's this taste like, Grandma? What is it?' And my mom loves all that. My, my sister... She's thrilled because, 'Your kids eat everything.' Everything, I mean, everything, there's none of this, 'Maybe a little of this but not of that,' but for my nieces and nephews who are there, to some they don't like everything. All this

stuff, and them [my children], they eat it all. And well, it's very satisfying to arrive and be with one's family and all these smells arrive and you eat well. First, it's noteworthy the Delgado children were so willing to engage in the tianguis. This tianguis was a large outdoor market where all kinds of commerce occurs, from the sales of food at food stalls, to clothing, to pots and pans, to used tools. When they visited the Guadalajara area, they could have easily insisted on going to the more "modern" shopping malls, monuments of marble and air conditioning meant to inspire a sense of modern economic development and luxury. The tianguis space is many things, but not luxurious. Yet these children embraced their time there, including, in this illustration, their willingness to try foods. They engaged their grandmother, expecting on her expert knowledge to inform them about what they were eating, by asking her to identify the foods they were about to try. In fact, they were more open to eating Mexican food than their cousins who had lived their entire lives in Mexico. Their *not* disdaining the local cuisine was a sign of the respect they had for this part of their family's heritage.

Chained to the Border

Aside from the family and community networks, participants' knowing was also deeply chained to the harsh reality of the U.S.-Mexico border. Anzaldúa, without ever having needed to risk her life to cross the border understood the profundity of its mark on her personally. She explains the pain of the border on her being: "me raja me raja" (1999, p. 24); the border wounds and splits her, and there is no way of avoiding her connection to it. Urrieta highlights the importance of distinguishing between metaphorical border crossings and the physical and ontological realities of crossing the border: "I wonder how many of the scholars that build fame by using the border-crossing

metaphor have ever risked their lives across the barbed wire, the sewer drains, the hot deserts, or the polluted and deadly waters of the Rio Grande” (Urrieta, 2003, p. 149).

I cite both these theorists’ work to demonstrate that the border figures largely into the lives of Mexicans rooted in the U.S. and those who have family members who have physically and undocumentedly crossed the border. The border is unavoidable and a real presence in these terms, despite its artificial creation as a political construct. Unless it is dismantled, it is an unavoidable reality to which the families in my study are forever-bound in terms of the effects it has on their lives and the lives of the people they love and are related to on either side of it. So much of what they know is situated alongside the reality of the border. The border here is not a healthy container for them but rather a limiting device, one with long-reaching limitations on individuals, whole communities, a nation.

I take the image of the “chain” from the reported experience of how one set of parents crossed into the U.S. from Mexico after their bi-annual visits. Contrary to conventional wisdom suggesting that one solo “coyote” helps people cross the border, they follow a “chain of people” who drop them off at various locations along the way to arrive safely over the border (Spener, 2009). Almost all the parents in my study had crossed the border without legal papers to do so with the intent of seeking a better life because the economic conditions made it nearly impossible to do so in their home country; this chain of crossing the border (and thus being chained to the reality of the border), is a very real one.

Lupita explained about the people who transport undocumented people from Mexico to the U.S.:

*Casi siempre es una **cadena**, es una **cadena**, no es una persona aquí hasta el final--siempre es una **cadena**... Es por decir, si es por el río que te lleva hasta al río y hay otro que te pasa al río, hay otro que te lleva a la casa, hay otro que te entrega, es una **cadena**, son muchísimos.*

Almost always it's a **chain**, a **chain**, it's not one person from here to the end-- always it's a **chain**... This is to say that, if it's by the river, well someone takes you to the river and another person who takes you across the river and another who takes you to a house, another that takes you in, it's a chain, they are many. Contrary to the idea of there being just one *coyote* or person who moves undocumented people over the border from Mexico to the U.S., Lupita's words highlight the need of the chain of individuals to get people through the vast distances and terrains. A chain ceases to work if a link breaks, and here that chain is intimately linked to the border and the survival of those who attempt to cross it.

The border figured prominently into and became part of the knowing of the family members in my research. They realized their family members in Mexico were chained to Mexico because of the border, forced to stay away from coming to the U.S. for any important events or for visits because of strict U.S. immigration policies unless they were able to secure travel visas (a difficult process for almost anyone in Mexico, short of the very rich). Likewise, those who lived in the U.S. were chained to the process of having to return to Mexico should they want to maintain their relationships to the people and land by actually being present inside Mexico.

Before continuing, I offer a slice of one of Lupita Medrano's many undocumented journeys across the Mexico-U.S. border. There are numerous accounts of the real and

increasingly risky dangers involved (Spener, 2009). For the scope of this research, I offer one as a reminder of the real fear at play in crossing the border. The fears continue to grow as the border becomes increasingly militarized on the U.S. side. Lupita had been crossing the border for two decades, and she shared this story to show how she had become differently fearful as the border crossing changed. This was one of Lupita's most recent crossings. She had already described a few parts of the journey after having changed hands among people along the route to the north. She described the words of one man in the middle of their journey, the one who inspired a new kind of fear during her crossing:

Y ya nos dijo, este, “Iren, vamos a caminar, este no vamos a correr, vamos, simplemente les digo que se agachen, se van a agachar, no vamos a caminar más que media hora.” Y nos dice, nos dice, ya tenían radios en ese tiempo, ya le llamaron que ya estaba listo y dijeron “Ok, están listos?” Si se levantó el gabán y sacó armas... Y dice, cuando se levantó el gabán dice, “Miren esto no es nada... es para la protección de ustedes.” Y de nosotros porque nunca sabemos lo que va a pasar en esta media hora de camino dice, “Pero yo no les voy a hacer nada ni va a pasar nada pero es por protección.” Entonces el nos llevó hasta un, no era río, si no las presas de agua para regar las verduras hasta allí. Entonces allí llegamos y dijo “Hasta aquí” dice, “aquí se me acabo lo mío, ahora ustedes se van a cruzar ese riyito, pero hasta aquí. Y luego de allí, le van a correr” dice “y van a ver a alguien esperándolos allí.” Y ya, o sea fue solo esa media hora de con armas pero todos como que nos espantamos. Porque no nos habían dicho nada y luego no eran armas pequeñas.

And he told us, “Look we are going to walk, we are not going to run, let’s go, simply I’m saying to crouch, you’re going to crouch, we’re not going to walk for more than half an hour.” And he tells us, he tells us, they had radios in those times, and they called him that everything was ready and he lifted his cloak and pulled out guns and says, “Look this isn’t anything... it’s for your protection.” And for us because we never know what is going to happen in that half hour of the trip and he tells us, “But I’m not going to do anything nor is anything going to happen but this is for protection.” So he took us to a, it’s wasn’t a river, no it was the wells of water there they water vegetables up to there. So we got there and he said, “Up to here,” he says, “here my part finished and now you are going to cross this little river, but up to here.” And that was it, it was only that half hour of being with arms but all of us like we were frightened. Because they hadn’t said anything and then they weren’t small arms.

Among the chain of multiple individuals who crossed Lupita over the border during that journey, this was a new experience for Lupita. She said that she and her husband were becoming more reluctant to cross because of a heightened fear inspired by this incident. What would a person imagine about the nature of the person facilitating the crossing bearing those kinds of weapons? What new dangers might be waiting for them? What danger might they have been in under the assumed protection of this crosser? How would those fears butt up against knowing that Lupita’s children (documented U.S. citizens) were not with her in that moment? The danger involved in crossing is something that anyone who has journeyed without documents knows in her skin; she carries it with her forever. Family members who had lived these perilous border

crossings often did not share the details of the journey with their children at length, though they said they did try to convey the sacrifice involved in their choosing to live in the U.S.

Family members also had to make sense of their relative wealth to those in Mexico because of the near impossibility of their working class families' lack of access to resources inside Mexico. This resulted in both a sense of responsibility as well as guilt and frustration at times. Edith Delgado explained her frustration this way about her family in Mexico and how they viewed her upon her return visits:

Empezando ellos piensan que llega uno con un costal de billetes. Y una camioneta que... y no hablando español, hablando inglés. Cosa que en todo se equivoca. Uno quizás está más necesitado que ellos, más luchado, más de todo... y con sacrificios vas y das tu vuelta... Porque ellos piensan que eso... tenemos aquí... una aspiradora y... con esa aspiradora llenamos bolsas de billete. Y quizás como así como nosotros lo vemos a ellos quizás también ellos nos ven a nosotros.

To start with they think that one arrives with a big wad of bills. And a truck that... and not speaking Spanish, but English. Something that they are wrong about in all ways. One may be more needy even than they are [in Mexico,] more struggle, more of everything... and with sacrifice you go and make your trip. Because they think that, we have...a vacuum and ... with that vacuum we fill bags of bills. And maybe like this we see them here as they see us.

Like the Medrano and the Paredes families, the Delgados lived in a mobile home. They spent hundreds of dollars a month renting their tiny parcel of land from on which they located their homes. They had no health insurance, and like tens of millions of other

people in the U.S., lived in fear of what they would do if they required serious medical attention. The furniture in their home was comfortable, leather couch and chairs, a glass dining table with four wooden chairs, and a kitchen with newer appliances. However, their home was still a mobile home, something that carries a heavy stigma in the U.S. but is probably difficult (and perhaps shameful) to convey in discussion with people in Mexico.

Edith's quote shows her frustration of not being able to convey to her family that despite their relative level of comfort, they were not in any way truly comfortable. One somewhat serious illness would wipe them out, send them packing back to Mexico. A couple months of unemployment for her husband, if he were to suffer an injury in his physically demanding work, would have been a catastrophe. All of their sacrifices to afford their children U.S.-based educations would be on the line. But with the border cutting across their understandings of families over the border, how could they convey precisely what their realistic fears were? Some of Edith's cousins had begun to achieve the beginnings of middle class life in Mexico. Her niece, for instance, had become a dentist. When I met her in Guadalajara, she drove a new sedan and wore a black fitted dress with stylish tights. When Edith commented that the case may have been that her family looks at the ones in Mexico as the fortunate ones, I can see how she would wonder.

Youth also had a sense of how they were viewed upon return visits from the U.S. as having "more." Diego Medrano explained how he is perceived upon return visits and tried to imagine what it would feel like if he were the extended family who lived permanently in Mexico:

There are people I know that hang out with me and always see me... I guess [if it were me] I would see like a family that still lived over here [in the U.S.] and if I lived over there and they come to see me I'd probably have the same impression as the people there. The way they see me... with like clothes and stuff and they ask me for shoes and I mean I'll give them some. I probably would ask for some too.

Diego was able to shift into the perspective of the families in Mexico, most of whom had not been to the U.S. and to try to imagine how they perceived the people who resided in the U.S. Because of the border, the families who resided in Mexico were forced to only conjure what life was like there, knowing how difficult the journey north would be, as very few had the legal documents to cross without inviting peril. Because of the border and the distant promise of a better life that drew so many to risk so much from San Gabriel, the families left there had to imagine that things were much better for the families residing in the U.S. The border was both an invitation to imagine and also a fixed line that limited the scope of imagining, as it was a real fact of life that inspired fear and yet held promise for those who dared to cross it.

Family members also were often chained to following each other over the border in a way that connected the chains of community/family with the border, despite the eruptions in what they knew as home. In Ernestina Paredes's case, she attempted to break the chains of following her husband into the U.S. She had come to the U.S. with her husband as a newly married woman, following her husband to the city of Baltimore. Once she had her first daughter, she wanted to return to Mexico so that the support

network she had in her home country could be leaned upon. She explained the chains she followed and her attempts to break them:

Sí, nació Gloria y la regresé para atrás de tres meses... y allá me embaracé de Lorena y de Daniel... Mi esposo nada más venía tres o cuatro meses a trabajar, y ya se regresaba, porque... ya no quiso, ya no quiso continuar aquí, viviendo, pues, que viviéramos aquí... Ya, ya no quiso, pero después allá poníamos negocitos, para vivir, pues para vender, en la casa poníamos negocitos y pues no nos daba, o sea no, no nos funcionaba... y él corría otra vez para acá, a trabajar acá... trabajaba tres o cuatro meses, juntaba dinerito, se iba para allá conmigo y así estábamos [sin los hijos], pero ya al último... pues yo dije, bueno, pues “Cómo vamos a estar, aquí yo con los niños y todo, siempre?” O todos juntos aquí, bien pobres o allá un poquillo más, pero todos juntos, edá? Lo que se puede hacer porque de todas maneras, pues usted sabe que aquí la vida, pues también es carita, porque también tiene uno que trabajar, también la mujer, para poder, este, eda? Sobrellevar, entonces, este... Pues no, al último él decidió que mejor, él ya estaba aquí, que me viniera y me trajera a los niños, y ya aquí nos quedamos, o sea, que...

Porque de todas maneras, allá yo sola, los niños se estaban criando casi sin él... Nomás con la mamá y como que también a mi eso no se me hizo muy bien, porque, dije, “pues yo siempre con la carga de los niños, yo sola, él por estar allá trabajando no los está viendo crecer”... No? Yo, yo sola y le dije, “no, sabes que, pues, aunque no hagamos nada allá, pero, con que estemos juntos”, edá? Todos.

Yes, Gloria was born and I took her back [to Mexico] at three months' age... And there I became pregnant with Lorena and Daniel... My husband only came here three or four months to work, and then he went back... he didn't want to, he didn't want to continue here, living, well, that we all lived here... Then, then he didn't want that, but later there we put together some small businesses, to survive, to sell, inside the house we made some little shops but it didn't work out, well, no it didn't work for us. And he came running again over here with me [without the children] and that's how we were, but at the end of it, I said, ok, well, "How are we going to be, here, me with the kids and everything, always?" Or we all need to be here together, real poor, or there with a little more, but all of us together, right? Whatever can be done, because in any case, you know that the life here, it's also expensive, because one what to work here, even the woman, to make it, right? Making it, then, well... Well no, at the end of it all he decided that better yet, he was here, and for me to come and bring the kids, and so here we stayed.

Because at the end of it all, there, me alone, the kids were growing up practically without him. Only with the mom and also for me it didn't seem right, because, I said, "Well me always with the responsibility of the kids, me alone, and him to be over there working he's not seeing them grow up"... Right? Me, me alone, and I said, "No, you know what, well, even though we can't do anything over there, but, with the knowing that we're together" right? All of us.

Ultimately, Ernestina found herself connected, or chained, to her husband, who was chained to trying to make a living in the U.S., despite their best attempts in Mexico in entrepreneurial activities there. For her, *knowing* that she was with her husband and

her nuclear family “*knowing* that we’re together” became more important than the temporary visits from her husband and his temporary life inside the U.S. While immigration theorists have described chained migration and how, for instance, “social capital” accumulates and helps family and community members have additional resources to decide to migrate to the U.S. (Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002), Ernestina’s situation speaks more to her knowing, rather than deciding with some sort of calculus. Undoubtedly it would be difficult to make much money in a small town in Mexico whose livelihood depended largely on the men who sent money from agricultural and construction work in the U.S. When I visited San Juan Diego, there simply weren’t regular jobs, only occasional seasonal ones, for the men to work harvesting mangoes and other agricultural crops. Because of the border and the realities of the differences in life possibilities across the two countries, Ernestina *knew* she had to follow her husband, leaving behind most of her undocumented family members who could not come to the U.S., even for visits.

Similarly, Edith attempted to have her husband stay in Mexico, but he was unwilling to try to make a living there and persuaded her to follow him to the U.S. with their firstborn son. Her husband’s life chances were thwarted by his class positioning and his low formal education. He also had several siblings in the U.S. (part of his own chain) which he could follow and locate himself among to make a better living. After having visited their hometown in Mexico and the city where they lived prior to coming to the U.S. and their family members in Mexico, I believe their style of living is better in the U.S. in terms of material goods, and their children are likely better positioned for upward class mobility in the U.S. than where they lived in Mexico.

Non-nuclear family members and pueblo members are also links in the chains of knowing and migrating to and from Mexico. In San Gabriel, Michoacán, I interviewed Lalo, one of a few farmers who managed to survive by working his land, despite the onerous trade agreements which have diminished Mexican farmers' chances of survival (Castañeda, 2007). Part of his good fortune to simply survive was based on the capital he raised in the U.S. to buy himself mechanical equipment in order to farm his lands in Mexico. Daily, he and his wife worked their land and tended their animals. Despite his family's economic viability, he continued to consider returning to Virginia to work, because their enterprise was one of day-to-day survival. He described how Lupita's husband Santiago was a powerful magnet who attracted local men from San Gabriel to work on his roofing crew in Virginia for a second tour of work:

Ya volví con mi troca, mis herramientas, y ya me quedé. Ya anduve por allá, ya no. Y vino en diciembre otra vez Santiago, y me dijo, "Entonces que, te vienes, si o no?" Y le dije "No."... Trajó una trailer con lavadora, pues, con muebles, muchas cosas, lo trajo para él. Tiene una casa aquí. Yo había comprado un tractorcito viejito chiquito viejeto pero yo decía, pues eso es lo que quería, ya tengo. Entonces ya otra vez vino para acá en febrero, y entonces que, "Ya ahora no vas a ir?" Y le pregunté, para que quieres que me vaya?" Pura verdad el quería que me fuera a manejar. Lupita no quería manejar porque tiene miedo con la trailer. Y le dije, "Ya no."

Pues ya entré con estas [nodding toward his wife and three daughters] y les dije, "Pues me voy a ir con él." He nodded toward his wife to show her response: "Pues allí tú verás." Y me fui.

I came back [to Mexico] with my truck, my tools, and I stayed. I went over there, and that was that. And he came back again in December, Santiago, and he said to me, “So, then, are you coming, yes or no?” And I told him, “No.” ... He brought a trailer with a washer, well, furniture, many things he brought for himself. He has a house here. I had bought a small little old tractor but I said, well, this is what I wanted, now I have it. Well one more time he came back in February, and well then, “So you’re still not going to go?” And I asked him, “Why do you want me to go?” The real truth is he wanted me to drive. Lupita didn’t want to drive because she’s afraid of the trailer.

And I told him, “No, I’m done.” Then I told them [he nodded toward his wife and three daughters] “Well, I’m going to go.” He nodded toward his wife to show her response, “Well you’ll see.” And I left.

In this return journey to the U.S., Lalo was able to afford a bigger, newer tractor to work his land, which grew beans, corn, and other basic agricultural staples. He made improvements on his house with the money he earned on the return trip to the U.S.; his floors were covered in large square tiles. The kitchen contained modern appliances, including a refrigerator, a sink, and a gas stove. The exterior of his home was painted white and well-maintained, three archways adorned the walkway to the front door. He had expanded his stable for some of his animals, including a larger cement and metal feeding trough for his cows. During the interview, I asked if he’d consider going back. His wife adamantly said she didn’t want him to, but a glimmer of possibility reflected in his eyes, “Who knows?” he wondered. Perhaps another powerful offer from the kin of

his community would be a strong enough pull, or the promise of improving his farm, or the hope of providing more for his three daughters.

I note that Lalo may not have returned that most recent time to work in Virginia had it not been for one physical thing—the trailer attached to Santiago’s SUV. Santiago has hedged his bets, creating a home near his hometown from the money he has earned in the U.S. Because he did not have documents to reside in the U.S., and with his desire to be “home,” he slowly built himself a home away from present-day home. Without the realities of the border, perhaps he would have been more likely to have stayed in the U.S. if he were legally permitted to be there. One can only speculate.

While I recognize that Mexican family members were also largely chained to the interior of Mexico, sometimes the chains among the community and family members were threatened. This happened as a result of both adaptation to the U.S. as well as the strains families faced in attempting to maintain their relationships. All four families reported they had less contact than they used to with extended family members once they began to reside in the U.S. While they still participated in social lives, the families in my study claimed to go to fewer parties and get-togethers than they would have in Mexico. It should be noted that they all knew of families that maintained incredibly active social lives with family members who resided in the U.S. My sense was that the families in my study were slightly more cut off from their sending communities which existed in the U.S.

Immigration policy had real and dramatic effects on the participants’ chained knowing with respect to the border. As already noted, it was a great strain to maintain relationships when family members simply could not cross over the border from one

direction to the other. In this study, one San Gabriel community member—and former cohabitant of the Medrano family household—was sent back to Mexico during my research. Santiago Medrano was also detained during my research while trying to return to the U.S. from visiting his ailing mother. Two families in the study were directly involved in trying to help the young community man maintain his stay in the U.S. to no avail. The young man was reported to have been deported two months after his initial detention. The nature of his detention seems the result of unjust immigration policy. Lupita explained that an Asian police officer pulled him over for driving on a Friday night, supposedly having failed to put on his blinker to make a turn. When asked to produce his driver's license, he had a legal license from the state of Maryland. The officer further questioned him about his residency, and the young man got nervous and admitted to residing in Virginia where he was at the time of the incident. One thing led to another, and the young man was placed in detention. This occurred in Prince William County, Virginia, which made the “toughest anti-illegal immigrant law in the nation” in 2007; it allowed police to stop and apprehend anyone they suspected of being an illegal immigrant (Fisher, 2011). The community member was a victim to this inherently racist law.

In Santiago's case, he was apprehended near Laredo. Lupita knew very few of the details only until after he returned from Mexico once again several months later; he was loathe to share them from the detention center in Texas where he was being held, at the risk of being surveilled from the detention center. A man who was highly productive in the U.S. economy as a foreman for a roofing company and the father of three children who were doing well in school—he was suddenly framed as criminal. And the family's

entire future was called into question. Lupita felt she had to decide about whether he would attempt another return to the U.S. (with the fear that if apprehended again, he would be detained for several years), and also how/if she might maintain her family economically on her own. While her husband had left her with money he had earned, she was not sure how long it would last. Additionally, she had to think about what would happen if she were detained, too. What might become of her children, then? The U.S. had begun sorting the children of detained families into Child Protective Services where they were sometimes sent to fostercare (*Deportation 101: A community resource on anti-deportation education and organization*, 2010). The seventeen years she and Santiago had spent as parents would be erased by a detention, and their blood linkage could be permanently severed by such policy. Fortunately for the family, Santiago's brother risked his own legal status in the U.S. and prison time, by retrieving Santiago in Mexico and passing him over the border. After this incident, the family began to think differently about their return trips to Mexico. Santiago's mother told him, "*Ya no, ya no te vienes,*" "No more, don't come back again," because of the hardships they had endured with his detention.

Chained knowing is in a way its own feedback loop, like the ends of an infinity sign. At one end are the family and community members to which these transnational families are chained, at the other is the Mexican-U.S. border. Decisions and sacrifices are regularly made with the sense of the family and community in mind. Knowing the community and family is rooted in the core value of respect, as it orients the families toward their participation locally and transnationally. In fact, as evidenced above, some of the U.S.-residing children are understood to be more respectfully oriented toward their

families because of their transnational participation during return visits to Mexico. The border is directly linked to the community as it colors who people are in relation to the border and their life chances with how it figures into their lives. It is an inevitable reality which figures into the fabric of who transnational families are.

Sobrevivencia (Survivalist) Knowing

The next form of knowing is *sobrevivencia* knowing, or survivalist knowing. The term has been used by other researchers to connote forms of knowing and being that move beyond merely surviving but to persisting and thriving (Galván, 2006; Villenas, 2005). Galván's work highlights the deep connection between spirituality and the lived experiences of women who use their resources of ancestral and community wisdom to co-create spiritualities which are sustaining and deeply meaningful for women who stay in Mexico while their husbands migrate to the U.S. (2005, 2006). While spirituality is undoubtedly a part of the sustenance of the families in this study, their *sobrevivencia* has qualities which are distinct. Their *sobrevivencia*, like what Galván describes, exceeds merely surviving, but it includes a grittiness and at times stark realities which force the families to call up sources of strength that imbue their knowing toward their survival.

Common to the parents in the study was the discussion of doing what was necessary to "*salir adelante*," an expression used frequently among parents about their families' situations and the reasons they came to and persist in the U.S. The term literally means to "go out ahead" but connotes far more than that. According to Cervantes Soon, it "has more to do with survival and with staying the course rather than achieving or arriving to a particular destination" (2011, pp. 216-217) it is imbued with a sense of "*lucha*" or struggle for both everyday *sobrevivencia*, or survival, and this sense of

moving ahead in life (Galván, 2005). When I spoke with Lupita Medrano about the threshold where she found her family when Santiago was detained in Texas, she embraced the sense of *salir adelante*: “*No importa lo que pase. Aunque nos regresemos a México, aunque nos quedemos. No sé si regrese mi esposo o no. Pero tenemos que salir adelante.*” “It doesn’t matter what happens. Even if we go back to Mexico, even if we stay. I don’t know if my husband’s coming back. But we have to keep on going, surviving.” Despite the fear, the way the border had cut the family apart, the not knowing about their futures, Lupita was fixed in her sense that the family would survive, and she held to it, a philosophical rudder with which she could continue to navigate the family.

Families demonstrated *sobrevivencia* knowing in their spiritual lives and practical everyday life skills which were passed on to the children, the work skills acquired by parents. My research corroborates the well-documented examples of spiritual practices among transnational Latino families (Levitt, 2001; R. C. Smith, 2006) and practical knowledge among Latino families (N. González, et al., 2005; Moll, et al., 1992), so I describe in depth the kinds of knowing that have not been as well-documented. This survival was often imbued with a sense of being the underdog—racially, culturally, and economically. Matters of life and death presented themselves as well in the families’ lives, including real deaths and illnesses across borders as well as the measure of life chances and opportunities across borders. I discuss each of these areas in turn.

Underdog Mentality

The adolescent and adult participants in my study all had a clear sense of their positioning as being the underdog in the U.S. They were positioned this way racially,

culturally, and economically. An underdog is one who is not expected to perform well, but just may, despite the odds. Commonly, in U.S. English, the underdog is hoped for, rooted for, and feels a sense of self-satisfaction when she has beat the odds; there are often powerful forces at work against the underdog's success. It is used a great deal in discourses of sport and politics; popular narratives of the underdog include David vs. Goliath, Rocky, and even the rise to the presidency of the United States in Barack Obama's election (Paharia, Keinan, Avery, & Schor, 2011). An underdog is often a newcomer and/or one with fewer resources than its competitor; these two characteristics certainly describe the families in this study. Spanish does not seem to have an equivalent. When competing, the underdog hopes against the odds and usually has a type of fight or grit that accompanies the struggle.

While some educational researchers have theorized that grit is what explains an individual's performance and ultimate success when theorizing why some people achieve more than others (Duckworth, Peterson, & Matthews, 2007), I argue that there is a *grittiness* that accompanies this underdog mentality. In my research, not all families succeeded despite playing the game the way they were supposed to, according to U.S. based rules. The grittiness is the clenching of teeth that goes along with being an underdog and the mess of sometimes being misguided and locked out of the rules of play for nonwhite families in the U.S. I illustrate these points in the following examples.

On several occasions, the Delgado family—both parents and children—complained about how they felt they were perceived by “*americanos*,” which typically meant white people of European ancestry in the U.S., similar to findings documented elsewhere (R. C. Smith, 2006). The Delgado family, of the four in my study, was the one

that “looked” the whitest among all four families (as arbitrary as this designation is). Even though they could have passed as white in many ways, they still felt this pressure. “*Nos ven como, pues, no sé. Con el sarape y el sombrero y la botella de tequila, juntos con nuestros burros, creo,*” complained Luciano Delgado. “They see us as, I don’t know. With the woolen cape and the sombrero and the bottle of tequila, next to our donkeys, I guess.” Luciano invoked the most stereotypical image of the rural Mexican, a stereotype even used within Mexico to depict someone who is slower, perhaps backwards in “modern” times. Feeling like people perceived them this way demonstrates Luciano’s sense that his family has something to prove in an environment that is inhospitable to the Mexican.

At other times, this Delgado family explained that they knew that whites looked down at them. Again Luciano described how it felt to attend school events, “*Cuando nos vamos a algo para la escuela, muchas veces somos de las pocas familias hispanas, y nos quedan viendo como, ‘Qué están haciendo aquí?’*” “When we go to something for school, many times we are of the few Hispanic families there, and they watch us like, ‘What are they doing here?’” Indeed, again, they demonstrated the perception of feeling like the outsiders, even though these events were open to the public. They most likely accurately understood how they were perceived, as there is no shortage of microaggressions which people of color endure on a daily basis in the U.S. (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2010); racial antagonism has taken far more subtle forms that continue to be damaging to those who endure systemic racial prejudice.

When I saw the five members of the Delgado family at a regional science fair event for their eldest son held at Calhoun High School, I noticed the family was slightly

better dressed than many of the other families in attendance. Edith wore gray wool pants and a sweater; Luciano was in black dress slacks and an argyle sweater; many of the other parents wore jeans and button-down shirts or sweaters. Nicolás wore a black suit and tie, a mirror image of many of the boys in attendance in terms of his attire. Despite the family's ability to decode and even exceed expectations regarding dress to assimilate at school events, they still felt their outsider status. Edith said, "*Pues ni modo, vamos a ir de todos modos; tenemos que apoyar a nuestros hijos y estar pendientes de lo que hacen.*" "Well, too bad, we are going to go anyway; we have to support our kids and be behind whatever they are doing." True to the efforts of the underdog, the family persisted despite the expectations others had of them, despite the deficit views which continue to haunt Latinos in U.S. schools (Valencia, 1997).

The underdog often endures the taunts of those who have limited expectations, and I was disgusted to learn that Luciano is sometimes called, "beaner" by his work colleagues. This term has been used as a pejorative to refer to Mexicans' dietary habits but is meant to mean "wetback" or "greaser" (Stavans, 2009). Luciano did not have a great deal of formal schooling, but he was wise and knowledgeable. For instance, we discussed global politics on several occasions, and his knowledge of global politics surpassed that of many highly formally educated people I know. He was also well-spoken in both Spanish and English—a language he learned only after arriving to the U.S. to work—in a host of registers. On his construction work crew of a handful of people, he was the only Latino, he said. When Edith tried to bring this into discussion, Luciano minimized it, seemingly out of shame. I have to wonder that if a man who appears white and is so articulate in two languages is referred to as "beaner," how can

Mexicans in the Washington, D.C. area feel anything but being the underdog when they live here? The location of a man who demonstrates the purported skills to “make it” in the U.S. (intelligence and a skilled trade) by branding him with an racially-charged slur serves to maintain his positioning, and the people he represents, in a racial hierarchy which continues to keep non-whites down (Leonardo, 2009; Lipsitz, 2006). Specifically, in the case of calling Luciano a “beaner,” his status as an immigrant is invoked, and he is linked as being a less-than person, one who falls under the strange but condemning construct of being an *illegal alien* (Ngai, 2004).

Ernestina Paredes often described her love of her pueblo, but at the same time, she saw it as left behind in the past and limiting, especially for her as a girl growing up. It seemed she had a sense of inferiority, something which an underdog knows can hold her back if not overcome. She described how, for instance, her mother had little access to providing the full nutrition her children needed when they were young because during summers, the entire family stayed in their rancho, or farm, with little contact with other families. They could only eat what they harvested there and whatever the mother could cook with her brood of nine children. The children had to go to the river to bring back water, which wasn’t always clean, Ernestina reflected. She remembered the rancho days of her youth as hard but also with affection. On numerous occasions she said, “*Nos vamos civilizando*,” or, “We are civilizing ourselves,” in reference to her home rancho, her pueblo, her family, and the entire world.

Youth in my study had similar understandings of their underdog status. Nicolás Delgado complained bitterly about how Spanish was misunderstood as a deficit, and how he received multiple negative messages about Spanish during his time at Northern

Virginia High School. Despite the school's having about 25 percent enrollment as Latino, and slightly over 25 percent as African American (which made the school a "majority-minority" school), there was a clear lack of understanding about the strengths of Latino communities.

Nicolás said that when representatives from the U.S. Marines were visiting to recruit from his school, the history teacher asked a representative, "Isn't it good if the recruits speak Spanish?" and that the representative said no, that they were only interested in other languages like Farsi and Arabic. He said that other invited guests who spoke about careers also derided Spanish. "*Me molesta mucho que no le veen la importancia del español,*" he said, visibly angry, "It bothers me a lot that they don't see the importance of Spanish." He also was very frustrated by non-native Spanish teachers and insisted that his Spanish was incorrect at times, such as one instructor's use of the pronoun form *vosotros* for the plural of you. It is almost never used in Mexican Spanish, perhaps only as seen in texts from Spain, and yet his teacher, he said, insisted he learn the use of *vosotros* because it was "proper." This explanation irritated him and conveyed to him that his Spanish, even, was inferior. The teacher told him that she was a fan of all things from Spain, he said, as she had studied abroad and lived there for a couple years. He said she had only limited experiences in Latin America.

Luciano Delgado echoed his son's sentiments, "*Por qué tienen que disminuir el español que usamos? No es un español malo, es el español correcto para nosotros,*" "Why do they have to diminish the Spanish we use? It's not a bad Spanish, it's the correct Spanish for us." Linguists have noted that not any one group can ever claim the "correct" form of a language; they exist as separate variations used according to the

internal rules and structures that make sense to those speech communities. Luciano's protest, while made only at home, indicated a kind of resistance, or what Pizarro refers to as a fighter identity (2005). This fighter identity is also a marker of the underdog—one who persists despite the odds. One can see how Luciano, despite the stereotypes about the roles of men and especially Mexican men, worked doggedly to support his children by attending their school functions, dressed formally and eager to show that he was, in fact, not the stereotype but a caring father. All along he knew he wasn't expected to perform this way, but he persisted with a sense of grit and grittiness. Knowing he had been called "beaner," and that he could be framed in a negative manner at any turn, he still presented himself in attempts to serve as support to his children and family.

Only one of the nine youth I asked had felt that his Spanish had been valued while he was in school, and, yes, at times the underdog is encouraged by representatives of the dominant. Diego Medrano said that sometimes he read texts in language arts classes in 3rd and 5th grade where words were written in Spanish (he could not recall which texts), and that his teachers would ask him to translate the meaning and elevate his language knowledge status as something to look up to. He said it made him feel "kind of cool."

Despite these positive experiences, he understood clearly that the expectations for Latinos were very low in schools, a continuation of the low expectations of Latino students in U.S. schools (Orfield, 2001; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Urrieta, 2009). This informed his underdog status, that sense of knowing how he was perceived as "less-than." He described a dissonance between the hopes of Latinos for their kids' formal educations and the ways Latinos were treated in schools. This dissonance demonstrates a high level of awareness and critical thinking about both his individual positioning and his

group identification and how they were connected. He used the word “Spanish” to describe Latinos, a term commonly used in the Washington, D.C. area by Spanish speaking community members to self-refer:

[People of Latino origin] want us to make us better like they want us to [dispel] the stereotypes... so I feel all Spanish people are trying to push for more education. That’s why I’m surprised sometimes when I’m the only Spanish person in all my Pre AP classes, and I get some people don’t really expect me there either, like the white kids. They probably don’t expect me because ... they probably have a stereotype I’m Spanish I should be in normal classes not in Pre AP classes. I mean sometimes they’ll be like “you’re the only Mexican in the room” and I will be like “yeah I am.”... I’ll know like almost all the Spanish people in the school but I won’t really know them know them like other friends ‘cause I don’t really have many classes with the Spanish people ‘cause they’re in the regular classes.

Diego had a clear understanding of how the system was weighted against him and people of his “Spanish” background, especially because he sometimes fielded questions and observations about why he was the only Mexican in his advanced classes. The expectations were low, he understood. Part of his performing as the underdog included the trade-off of not being as close to his co-ethnic peers. Not being as close to his co-ethnic peers also shows the kind of isolation the underdog sometimes experiences on his path toward achieving his goals. An underdog is just that because he does not rise up the ranks with masses of other people. He was a pioneer of sorts, on the edge of breaking through by participating in his pre-AP classes.

Diego had been tracked away from honors courses by the educators in his schools, and only because his mother intervened for two years straight, did he maintain his upward tracking. The tracking of Latino students out of honors courses is not new (Oakes, 2005) and he is a case-in-point. Between his eighth and ninth grade years, his teachers had decided for him that he belonged in general education courses, echoing the history of deficit thinking about Latino students (D. A. Foley, 1997; Menchaca, 1997; Valencia, 1997), even when Diego had competently performed to meet the academic expectations for performance in honors courses. His mother, Lupita, visited the school and counseling staff to have them switch him toward honors courses, which was set into his course schedule for ninth grade. When he transferred school districts during the summer, the new school district decided for him that he would enter general education courses again. Once again, his mother had to visit the school guidance office and insist on his placement in honors courses. After his first year of high school, his preAP world history teacher argued that he should be tracked down toward general education world history. His mother had to meet with a counselor again to insist he be tracked back upwards.

Similarly, Nicolás Delgado had to fight against the system when in high school to be allowed to take honors courses. Out of sheer will, he decided to register for honors chemistry during his sophomore year. He had been placed from 8th grade into what was then called, “Freshman Focus.” This was a school-within-a-school where students who were thought to be low-performing academically but that had more potential than failing out of high school were placed. It was literally located on the fringe of the campus, near the classrooms where severely disabled students took classes in four classrooms. Nicolás

explained that he was told there was no way out of Freshman Focus. He stayed there and then told his science teacher he wanted to take honors chemistry because he liked the challenge of science. “You can’t do it—you’ll never pass,” she told him. He was strong enough to find a way around her, as she wrote over his registration pages that he be placed in general education science for the following year. While his science teacher’s discouraging comments may have crushed the aspirations of others, Nicolás mustered the strength to approach his guidance counselor, the one with the authority to key in his schedule into the computer system, and begged she let him take honors chemistry. He passed the next year with a C. While that C may appear low, it was the first step in his trajectory toward several more advanced courses. His senior year, his schedule included: AP government, AP Spanish language, physics, pre-calculus, architectural drawing, and pre-engineering. Nicolás explained that it was his exposure to other honors students that he learned about college in the U.S. and what kind of work was required to get to college, echoing the findings of other educational researchers who recognize that honors courses are the necessary pipeline to help students learn what to do to get to college (Oakes, 2005). He referred to his “regular” classes as a “joke” compared to the honors courses.

Nicolás and Diego were two young men who were aware that the system was working against them, and they knew that they would have to navigate further obstacles to their success if they wanted to persist—something they did, but knowing all along they weren’t expected to succeed. In Nicolás’s case, even though he had worked doggedly against the odds, he was not accepted into a four-year college. I helped him with his entrance essays and made sure he submitted his materials online. His parents expressed a debt of gratitude for my assistance over the course of about four long evenings of

working with him on his essays and listing his accomplishments on his application forms. He applied to two four-year colleges. His parents fretted over what they would do if he were accepted; how would they pay for it? What if he were accepted to Virginia Tech? They could never pay the tuition. At least if he went to nearby George Mason University, he could drive there.

I fretted, too. What would it mean if the former professor at George Mason, where I had worked as an adjunct faculty member, couldn't succeed in helping him get in? As the months dragged on, news of other students at his high school trickled in. Several had been accepted. We waited. No news came. First Virginia Tech sent the rejection letter. The parents were glum but held out hope. They knew Virginia Tech had been a long shot; I had explained that Nicolás's GPA of about 3.0 was probably quite low, combined with his low SATs.

For years Edith and Luciano had dreamed of sending their children to a four-year college. They had done everything they understood they needed to do. They went to each and every back-to-school night, each parent conference, each event where their child performed. They had followed all the guidelines the schools had given them. Had the schools ever explained about the need for their children to take honors courses and to get good grades in them? No. Had the schools ever explained that Nicolás should take some leadership roles and be heavily engaged in extracurricular activities? No. Nicolás had never had a major role in any extracurricular activities or outside work. While he had worked with his father in construction, he had not had any other "interesting" internships or experiences. Some of his classmates had already interned with Congressional representatives and worked in Europe. His essay carried important teachings he had

learned from working with his father in construction, but would that measure up against his savvy competition?

As April dragged on, the parents' hope was becoming distant. I wondered about the admissions counselors. Did his essays look coached? Could they tell my hand had been involved in his writing them? Was it my fault he wasn't admitted? Was it just that George Mason had become so much more competitive, especially after its recent ascent in the NCAA tournaments in recent years? Sure enough, Nicolás was rejected from George Mason. His parents retreated from their friends, from me. They were ashamed. I was sick, but not in the way a parent with a lifetime of hopes dashed could be.

Ultimately Nicolás enrolled in Northern Virginia Community College, a college system with a good reputation and reciprocity agreements with George Mason University, but the parents continued to feel ashamed despite that enrollment. Their years of work, of doing everything "right" in terms of what they had gleaned from the education system, their grittiness at trying to survive so their son could thrive, and he was not afforded the opportunity they had worked so hard to achieve.

Of a form of exception were the three Paredes siblings, who each had very positive interventions from Mr. Duke, a guidance counselor who advocated for them individually to place them in honors courses in Northern Virginia High School. An ex-Marine about to retire, Mr. Duke took a shine to these children, largely recognizing their underdog status as being of Mexican-origin and also following the logic that they each seemed to have the abilities to perform well in honors coursework. Each of the three Paredes students remembered their work with him fondly.

Despite these positive interventions, the siblings had had no aspirations to attend college. “I didn’t think college was for me at all; my parents said there was no way we could afford it,” Gloria, the eldest sibling, explained, also indicating her family’s underdog positioning. Her parents explained that in San Juan Diego, there was no high school there. Graduating from high school in the U.S. was a great achievement in their eyes, something that had been out of their reach for how they had grown up in Mexico. Furthermore, when they were youths, only people who had connections were able to get a university education, and this was a slim minority, only something they had heard about, not people they actually knew. It was only because several positive teachers and support staff intervened that she began to seriously consider the prospect of getting a university education.

Also informing this underdog sense was knowing how families had cheated the material circumstances they likely would have lived if their families had remained physically situated in Mexico. Youth especially had a sense of this, and it appears they believed their life chances were improved by living in the U.S. I use quotations from Diego Medrano and Lorena Paredes to illustrate this point.

When I asked Diego directly what he thought his life would be like in Mexico, he struggled to consider it:

I think it would be different than here probably, I don’t know, kind of hard to think about it, but it would be different, kind of hard to think about where we would live so kind of hard to think about like if we lived there with my grandma... I don’t know [what my parents would be doing]; there are not any job opportunities there so I don’t even know if they would probably be working so I

don't know it's kind of hard to think about if we did live over there. Probably we'd be poor just like everyone else.

Diego said it was “kind of hard to think about” three times in this short quotation. Behind that difficulty are a host of hesitations borne out of what he knew from his visits to Mexico and the stories his parents and community members shared with him. He understood that his extended family members did not have excess money to spend on items beyond basics. He had seen families slowly improve the construction of their homes, one wall at a time, expanding room-by-room when money was available for construction materials, and often finished by the hands of those who inhabited the dwellings. Diego explained that he did not look down on the poor in Mexico; he understood there were so few opportunities for work that they were consequently materially poor.

Lorena Paredes explained that she knew she had far more life chances in the U.S., especially as a woman. She understood that their lives in Mexico would have been quite different had they stayed there, and that her prospects were broader in the U.S., a sense an underdog often has—greater possibility than others who have a similar lot in life. She drew on how her mother had changed and on what her expectations were for life in the U.S. I quote at length from an interview with her to illustrate:

Our household has changed a lot. I think that my dad used to be stricter... when we were little kids, even with my mom and stuff like that, you know... and it wasn't only strict... Because in Mexico like older generations it's like, oh the woman stays home and the husband works and he brings the money...

My mom never worked outside. Like because that was kind of like my dad's idea and now, she works, she drives... back when we were younger my mom didn't know how to drive and it was like my dad took us everywhere... and because that's the way it was... like the man assured that everything was good... my dad has changed a lot, you know, in terms of that... and there's a lot of things that he's much more like open to... us doing as well, that I don't think that if we still lived in Mexico, it would not be that way...

Even like college, you know, I think that in Mexico... it would be more [important to focus on] finding a man and getting married, you know. Whereas opposed to here... they never mentioned anything like that, it's like, hey if you want to be a spinster, you can go ahead... where I think in Mexico... well, I think that my dad is a little bit more like that... I know in Mexico they have this thing when you're twenty-four and your not married yet, you're already a spinster, you know... and behind your back they'll start talking about it... in Mexico like, they call it a *cotorra*... that's what they call them, spinster, *cotorra*... when we're in Mexico sometimes at the town and there was a girl that was like twenty-five and they were like, oh *esa es la cotorra*, [that's the spinster,] they won't say to her face, but they'd say it...

And here it's like, excuse me, I don't want to get married... I want to have education, you know, a profession, and all, and then I might get married..., whereas over there... there's an age that if you're not married yet, then there's something wrong with you and you are *la cotorra*, because nobody is ever going to want that... Where in Mexico it's just like... everybody over there is just like

getting married very young... like my cousin who was here [visiting in Virginia], Liliana, she's younger than I am, she's twenty, I'm twenty one... her and her boyfriend already have plans to get married next year in December and like, I'm twenty one ... I'm not even thinking about that, you know what I mean?... I want to finish school, I want to... you know what I mean, it's so different and I think that, you know... I think that my parents would be like, come on, got to meet someone too and get married and blah, blah, blah... and my mom, I've got to admit, sometimes she'll mention things, you know, she'll be like, well you don't want to get to twenty-five, you know?

Lorena delivered this information with a tone of defiance in her voice. Despite her shorter stature of being about 5 feet and 2 inches tall, she came off as scrappy and full of fight, echoing that sense of fighter identity (Pizarro, 2005) which underlies the underdog's tenaciousness. Lorena recognized that her life was already likely quite different for having been reared in the U.S. than if she had lived in Mexico. She compared herself to her cousin Liliana, a year younger and already planning to be married (Liliana did, in fact, marry the man Lorena mentioned above). A component of that shift was that her parents had changed because of their time in the U.S., and they had conveyed those shifts in perspective to their children. They were more open to their daughters pursuing careers than they would have been if they had lived in Mexico, where they would have urged her to have been looking for a marriage partner if she hadn't already married by the age of twenty-one. Certainly she would have felt the pressure as the age of being considered a *cotorra* or spinster was nearing.

Lorena and Diego expressed how in some ways they were cheating their fates, something an underdog understands about his or her progress in achieving unexpected outcomes. They were circumventing expectations and circumstances that would have been theirs had their families not moved to the U.S. Because of their observations of life in Mexico during their visits, they had a keen sense of the differences in context. In Lorena's case, she understood how her parents changed because of their lived contexts in the U.S. and how this has played out in the ways they reared her. Lorena was an ambitious college student and then a graduate student at the time of my research. Her plans were to become a teacher, and later an administrator. These plans likely would have been very different had she lived out her life in Mexico as opposed to transnationally. Finally, I believe this sense of what one's life could have been and did not become is much clearer because of the transnational participation these families engaged in. Without it, youth, especially, might have had a sense of it, but they could *know* it much better because of what they had lived.

Matters of Life and Death Knowing

Families in my study were forced by circumstances to make decisions regarding the literal life and death situations of families on either side of the border. The deaths and health of their loved ones, and themselves were unavoidable circumstances. For the families in my study, there were a cascade of decisions they had to make regarding these most urgent of issues, and they were essential to the very survival of these families. The families also had to take measures regarding the maintenance of their own physical, economic, psychic and spiritual health as matters of life and death. In the face of microaggressions (Solorzano, et al., 2000; Sue, 2010) referred to in the underdog

mentality section which family members dealt with regularly, returns to Mexico could help edify themselves, their identities as Mexicans when they otherwise lived in a country where the hegemony is one of whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). The return trips would allow families to shed the potential for and everyday experiences of microaggressions by being able to walk among community members who looked like them. At the same time, return trips to Mexico could also be challenging due to the safety issues they had to navigate. The challenges regarding life and death knowing were often great—they presented issues which people who do not have a physical border separating their families do not have to negotiate. In the following sections, I discuss the physical issues of death and illness, the safety situations regarding travel to Mexico, and the economic situations which informed the very survival of families.

Illness and death—and the fears of how they could impact loved ones over the border—took on a different kind of urgency and embedded themselves in the knowing of families in this study. As mentioned previously, the border weighs heavily on people, and it impedes the movement of those who do not have the documents and finances to cross it. During my research, several family members in my study dealt with deaths and illnesses, and the problems were amplified because of the border. It was not merely the great distance but also the presence of the border itself which exacerbated the problems and embedded the knowing. I draw upon several examples to illustrate this point but comment on a kind of absence of knowing first.

There was an ambiguity or kind of not-knowing involved with families who lived on the other side of the border. Without being able to see first-hand and travel easily for visits due to the prohibitive cost of travel or lack of legal papers, families in the U.S.

often wondered about how well (or not well) a family member in question may have been. For instance, Edith Delgado explained that she didn't know how bad her mom's health had actually been until she arrived to Mexico for a previous visit. She explained that her mother's emotional health had declined, in addition to her overall vitality and that her sisters who lived in Mexico had resorted to rotating daily visits to make sure the household in Zapopan was in order.

Edith said her mother was often forgetful and troubled because she was burdened with caring for Edith's father, who had received difficult treatments for cancer and lost a kidney during my research. Her mother also cared for Edith's brother, a former drug addict who had lost a great deal of mental capacity due to his drug usage; he eventually died during the span of my research with the family. One of Edith's sisters had called her during the same day of one of my visits to her mobile home. She was shaken up from the call and the news that her mother had taken a turn for the worse—two months prior to the phone call. As she tried to describe what she found out, she began to cry, provoked by frustration, an inability to react as fully as she would have liked to. *“No, no me dijeron que estaba tan mal. Por eso siento tanta necesidad de llegar para ver como está, para ayudarla como pueda.”* “No, they didn't tell me that she was so bad. For this reason I feel such a need to arrive and see how she is, to help her however I can.”

Subsequent to that conversation with Edith, I visited Edith's sister's house in Guadalajara, Mexico, to interview her and her husband. Amada, Edith's sister, lived in a neighborhood that was on the edge of working class and bordering the *periferia* or periphery where the masses of poor had built homes and where the government had just barely retro-fitted their developments with basic services like running water and

electricity. Amada's daughter practiced dentistry in an adjacent office. Their home was a few decades old, of cement construction typical of the city, some of the seams between the ceiling and walls needing repairs, the floors angled slightly, either a result of shifting terrain or poor placement upon the initial construction. Amada commented during my interview that the family managed without Edith's help, "*Piensa que no podemos sin que venga ella para ayudar, pero si lo hacemos sin o con ella:*" "She thinks we can't do this without her coming to help, but we do it with or without her," she said. Amada's comments seemed to speak against her sister, a begrudging willingness to accept her sister's help. While present, Edith and her family could spend their time taking her parents to the doctor and providing extra domestic support; but they could not fully know how the family did upon their return.

One cold and gray morning, Edith called my cell phone and left a message that sounded desperate. "*Queremos pedirte un favor. Algo pasó y necesitamos que nos ayudes,*" "We want to ask for a favor. Something happened and we need you to help us," she said. When I returned the call that morning, I found out the worst kind of news; Luciano's brother had died in a tragic car accident in Guadalajara the previous night. His car had nearly completely burned up, and his brother had been inside it, unable to escape. They needed to get to Mexico for the funeral as quickly as possible. They needed to find more affordable tickets into Guadalajara so that all five of the family members could go, and they remembered I had shared information about how Gloria and I had gotten into Mexico more cheaply. I explained how to do a search for tickets from the Baltimore airport exclusively. They were all so distraught and needed to move very quickly, I wasn't sure if I should just join them to help them figure out how to purchase the tickets.

“Tal vez nos llevarías al aeropuerto?” “Maybe you’ll take us to the airport?” they asked. Of course, I assured them; I was likely one of the few people in their networks who wouldn’t mind driving the distance and who was not working during the daytime.

I later arrived to their white mobile home in the early afternoon to quickly drop off a plant as a token of my condolences; they had found a cousin who had a large-enough vehicle to take all of them and their luggage to the airport instead. The kids had stayed home from school that day; their bags were packed. They seemed disoriented and fatigued. When I saw Luciano, I was struck by his face. I’m not sure I’ve seen such grief worn on someone in my adult life in that way. His eyes were impossibly red and swollen, the lively and usually jovial countenance had escaped, hidden in some remote place inaccessible at the time. They had gone between learning there was a funeral to finding out there wouldn’t be one at all, from deciding to go, to not going, to getting assistance from Luciano’s employer to use his credit card to purchase the plane tickets, to going. Luciano had needed to depend on people to help him learn to very quickly navigate air travel on the same day of his need to fly while simultaneously living through his first sibling’s death. The incident was a reminder that anyone can die at any time.

In the Medrano family, in which the parents were undocumented, Lupita’s mother died during the time of my research. Lupita called me a few days after her mother’s death, crying. *“Hablé con el doctor, y me dijo que se iba a componer bien,”* “I talked with the doctor, and he told me that my mom was going to get better.” Despite such reassurance, her mother died the day after her phone call with the doctor. *“No sé si debo de irme o no. La última vez que la ví, me dijo que ya no quería seguir. No sé que hacer,”* she told me between sobs. “I don’t know if I should go or not. The last time I

saw her, she told me she didn't want to continue living. I don't know what to do." When I met her mother in Mexico, her mother had just returned from a doctor's visit to the state capital, limping and being guided by a family member from the car. I was struck to think that the woman I had seen a couple months previously was gone so quickly. Ultimately, Lupita decided it was for the better not to risk the return over the border she would have to make. She said she was also at peace with how she had seen her mother last, and that her trip would have been more about accompanying the survivors of her mother who remained in Mexico. Because of the border, she decided they understood it wasn't worth her risking the trip at that time.

Lupita's husband, however, felt differently about his own mother. After Lupita's mother's death, Santiago felt a burden that he should see his own mother, an even frailer-looking woman than Lupita's mother had been. Santiago's mother was thin, birdlike in stature, deeply veined legs worn from age peeking from beneath her aproned skirts. She took slow steps around her corner store, which she managed alone. Cataracts covered many parts of her eyes. Sure enough, Santiago returned just a few months after Lupita's mother's passing, and he spent an extended stay of a few months in San Gabriel. He dutifully accompanied his mother to several doctors' appointments, even when they fell on important festival days. For reasons that weren't clear, he felt it was time to return to the U.S. Quite possibly he felt the burden of wanting to be with and help maintain his family in the U.S. calling him back. He attempted to cross the border into the U.S., and, unfortunately, was detained by ICE for several weeks.

Prior to Lupita's mother's death (and Santiago's detention), she recounted several of the risks she had taken to cross the border so her children could know their

grandparents. She had traveled undocumented over the border by walking through the desert, being held in safe-houses between strangers, crossed by men carrying automatic rifles, in the dark of night. But she also defined the cost of not going as a kind of “not knowing” which was too high a price to pay to *not* take the risks to cross the border.

Todo eso es precisamente porque por decir precisamente un primo de Santiago, por mucho quince años se murió su papa y pues no, no fue. Entonces sus niños, nunca los conoció... entonces precisamente por eso porque digo no, pero él, me imagino que en su conciencia está de que su papá no los conoció y me imagino que su papá que en sus últimos se tuvo que acordar de él, entonces por eso mismo lo hacemos. Todo esto todos estos arriesgos y todo esto los hacemos por eso, que no se queden pensando, “Cómo es, cómo sería, cómo estaría?” Y así pues aunque se arriesga uno a todo eso para que los conozcan a ellos y que ellos conozcan a ellos. Pero es un buen pago. Ahora así como dicen en donde quieran se dice eso que si pues no vale mucho la pena pero verdad sí.

Siento que es feo decirlo pero siento que yo soy más contenta si me pasara que no quisiera que me pasara lo que le pasó a él, que tal vez tuvo la oportunidad de haber ido, y no fue por no quererse arriesgar por todo esto. Todo eso hacemos para unos días de alegría.

All that is precisely because, to explain it, a cousin of Santiago’s, for a full fifteen years his dad died and he had not been back. Well his kids, he never met them... so precisely for that I say no, but he, well I imagine that in his conscience is that thought that his dad never met them and I imagine that his dad, in his last [moments] must have remembered him. So for that we do it [cross the border for

visits]. All this all these risks and all this we do it for that, so they don't stay thinking "How is he, how would he be?" And this, even though one runs all these risks so that the grandparents know the kids and the kids know the grandparents. But it's a good payoff. Well wherever there are people who say that it's not worth it, but truth is, it is.

I feel it's bad to say it but I feel that I am more content than if it had happened that I didn't want to return, what happened to him [Santiago's cousin], who perhaps had the chance to return and he didn't go for not wanting to risk all this. All this we do for a few days of happiness.

The thought of Lupita's family's not knowing each other, her kids and her parents, was something not acceptable to her. She said, "*se arriesga uno a todo eso para que los conozcan a ellos y que ellos conozcan a ellos,*" or, "one runs all these risks so that the grandparents know the kids and the kids know the grandparents." This knowing is at the cost of the parents' possible incarceration, their possible death in crossing the border. But the knowing is a matter of life and death in that the community is given its vitality, its sustenance through the physical knowing of being present in the flesh, and the only way to achieve that is to take the family south to the loved ones who cannot make the perilous journey to the north. Undoubtedly, the return trips the Medrano family made to San Gabriel had made it much easier for Lupita to choose not to return for her mother's funeral. In this way, she did not end up like the cousin of Santiago's who had stayed away for fifteen years. In fact, she only felt the need to return so that she could accompany the family in Mexico who would be missing and mourning her mother. She

felt she could do her mourning in the U.S. in a way that would meet her needs, she explained.

Part of the need to return included maintaining the vitality or life source of the family members who resided in the U.S. as well. Life in the U.S. often challenging, especially in the face of the everyday experiences of race recounted previously as well as the challenges of economic survival. While no one claimed that return trips to Mexico were panaceas to life's ills or in any way unproblematic, they provided opportunities for the families to refresh themselves and in turn continue their lives back in the U.S. Family members in both countries spoke to this reality, a point to which I now turn.

Gloria Paredes's family repeatedly told her while she visited San Juan Diego to rest in her room and to relax, to not bother pitching in to help, although she wanted to help. One morning after a late night of walking around the town's main plaza, which was packed with townspeople and thousands of visitors from the U.S. and nearby ranchos, Gloria saw her aunt cooking eggs for breakfast and turning tortillas over the stove to reheat them. "*Ay, tía, déjame ayudarte preparar el desayuno,*" she said, hurrying to her side. Her aunt responded, "*No, m'ija, tú quédate tranquila y descansa. Toma asiento. Ahorita te doy tu desayuno.*" "No, my daughter, you relax and rest. Take a seat. I'll give you your breakfast in a bit." Time and again Gloria was reminded by her family members that "*Vienen a descansar,*" "You come to rest." Similarly, the youth in my research said they had fewer duties to attend to in their return visits and that they did feel relaxed. In, fact, they felt far freer in their visits to Mexico (despite the safety issues addressed above) than in their lives in the U.S. This finding about relative freedoms

echoes other researchers' work about transnational youth who return to their home countries for visits (Sánchez, 2004; R. C. Smith, 2006).

Alba González explained that the return trips to Mexico were a great break from all the hard work she and her husband Moisés did in their food truck businesses. “*Si, tomamos unos meses en el verano. No más dejamos de ir a los lugares donde vendemos y vamos a México. Pues sí, perdemos dinero, pero es necesario que vean a sus familiares y es un gran descanso.*” “Yes, we take some months in the summer. We just stop going to the places where we sell and we go to Mexico. Well yes, we lose money, but it’s necessary that the families see each other, and it’s a big break.” While the González family lived in a comfortable, brick, split-level house, they did not live extravagantly. Taking off work for months at a time was a sacrifice, but one they made knowing the payment they would receive in return was a sustaining break where they could enjoy the physical presence of being in their community among the family members who could not go to the U.S., at “home” in a very different and perhaps more fulfilling sense.

In the next chapter I detail some of the difficult experiences children in this study had because of their ethnic and linguistic identities in schools. The return visits for students were all the more meaningful because they helped restore the identities of students after they sustained such attacks. While Valenzuela writes persuasively about the ways schools subtract out the identities of Mexican American students (1999), such subtraction can also be reframed as attempted homicides on students’ identities. Some of the children had intensely emotional experiences upon return visits. These visits definitely reinvigorated Gloria, as she said on numerous times during our visit together,

“Siento que estoy soñando,” “I feel as if I’m dreaming.” She so enjoyed her return visits that they seemed to border on the unreal. Each visit was the fulfillment of an impossible dream—the dream of being with her family and community. It was at once impossible because she knew she would always live the rest of her future in the U.S., but possible by reconnecting in the flesh among her family in Mexico during these respites. When she was back in the U.S., she often commented that she’d rather be visiting back in Mexico. This wishing was always tempered by her knowledge that her life chances were greater by continuing to live in the U.S., the thing that anchored her and her family to the U.S.

Shortly after returning from our visit to Mexico, Gloria explained:

I’m feeling good, I mean I feel I learned a lot of things that I didn’t know um like about the town and the culture. Um I got to understand my parents a little bit better like where they were coming from because they would always—especially about the party um they would always talk about it but I never thought too much of it and now I’m like “oh wow that’s what they were talking about” you know so yeah and of course like little melancholic. I don’t want to be back I kind of wanted to stay there longer but it is what it is.

Gloria’s learning helped her know her parents better, which in turn helped her better understand from where she came, one of the deepest desires a person can have. Gloria was able to live the excitement of the fiesta moment by moment, from the intense preparations leading up to celebratory events to the lively discussions during the daytime where family members talked at length about what had happened the previous evening. She witnessed the very important courtship rituals which resulted in many of her extended family members’ marriages—and subsequent cousins. It makes sense that she

felt melancholic upon returning; she had left behind so much vitality, the life force of her vast, extended family so concentrated in the small pueblo of San Juan Diego, to have to return to the San Juan Diego community living in diaspora throughout the U.S., most of whom were working terribly long hours, spending extra time commuting to and from work, trying to shoe-horn themselves into a usually inhospitable dominant culture.

Diego Medrano described how excited he was to learn he was going to be able to attend the annual patron saint festival with his cousins. He first said that he had been wanting to go for over a year since seeing the film which chronicled the patron saint festival in San Gabriel. His attending the festival was also, in a way, the fulfillment of a dream.

I've been asking like "Can I go? Can I go? Do you think I can go?" and I guess since we moved here [from one Virginia town to another] and they think like I needed like a break or like something to make me happy... I couldn't believe it like my whole body was shaking... when I actually got news I could go I was like "oh my gosh," ... and it was awesome like I couldn't believe that I was going.

Diego's family had only recently moved back into a mobile home which fed into a different set of schools for the children. Previously, they had bought a three-bedroom house in a more rural location with brick exterior and hardwood floors. But as the economic recession which began in 2008 took its toll on the Medranos, they decided to abandon the house that had lost over half its value. Each family member had a large adjustment to make in the mobile home, sharing only one bathroom and much closer quarters and also having to go to different schools. As part of Diego's adjustment, his

parents knew a return trip to San Gabriel would help Diego on a host of levels, from both being able to relax to rejuvenating his spirit.

Diego compared the experience of life in the U.S. with what he experienced in Mexico. The trips to Mexico are a stark contrast to what is a kind of boring drudgery of life in the U.S.

Cause here the hours just like drag along like here I just drag myself I just go on the computer and pass time and watch TV to pass the time, over there I lived almost every single moment as much as I could. I try to go places as much as I could [in Mexico]. I would wake up early to do stuff and I would stay up late because I wanted to do all the stuff. I would go to town [in Patzcuaro] and I just wanted to do everything. Sometimes a day would feel longer than a day 'cause it was get up go to church, then go out and hang out with people, then the dance. The dance would feel like forever, I loved the dances, then [I'd] come back and I still didn't go to sleep.

Like after the dances, I hang out with my friends a little while and like if I find a girl that I really liked then I would hang out with her for a little while but then I'd come back and even back at my aunt's house... we would stay like three hours still talking.

And like especially throughout the night even though immediately I couldn't fall asleep so I would just be like "wow, another great day" and I couldn't wait till the next day there will be another dance and "oh ok, time for the dance tomorrow."

Diego's comparison of life in the U.S. and his visit to Mexico stand in great contrast. His time in the U.S. is life-sucking, where he merely "passes the time" and the hours "drag along." When we talked about what he studied at school in the U.S., he explained in way that showed he was just gritting his teeth through his studies. He cared very little about Euro-centric world history, the Euro-centric art history course he could not be released from as an elective, the Euro-centric texts he was forced to read in his English class. He only played along so that he could try to get his way into college, something he understood he needed to do. When the classes did not speak to his interests, it makes sense that time would "drag." His family lived in a trailer park where he didn't feel comfortable playing outside; mobile homes were tightly packed together and there was little space to explore and no recreational areas like basketball courts or soccer fields nearby. His time in Mexico excited as an opposite and a beacon of hope that life somewhere else could be different and life-instilling. While the days might have been long, it was only because they were so packed with activities he was excitedly drinking in—church, his time exploring in the nearby city of Patzcuaro where he was able to visit alone and assert some of his autonomy and maturity, the dances, and the social time with cousins talking into the wee hours of the night. He remembered his visits to Mexico and understood there was another way of being which could be deeply fulfilling, a source of hope for the drudgery of most of his time in the U.S.

Return visits for the children in particular helped them sustain a positive sense of their identity from the time they spent in Mexico, especially when they were equipped with language ability to communicate effectively. The children commented that they knew where they were from because of their ability to engage communities in Mexico.

They needed the language to be able to discuss engage these issues, however. Language skills were also a matter of life and death. What people knew in language either opened their lives or closed them to various possibilities. For instance, Daniel, the father in the Paredes family, explained, “*Sería otra nuestra vida si aprendiera el inglés.*” The very life of his family would be another if he had learned English, he said, meaning that they would have had greater life chances in the U.S. Parents expressed various amounts of shame regarding their inabilities with English, though some took pride in their skillfulness with the language, too. Generally, the fathers were more likely to feel embarrassment about their English (or lack of English skills) than the mothers. This may be because the mothers generally had acquired more English in most of the couples than the fathers during their time in the U.S.

In the families where the mothers became highly proficient in English, the González and Medrano families, the younger children in the families became increasingly less proficient in their Spanish. This may be because the elder siblings were highly communicative in English because of their schooling and because the domestic labor still fell more upon the shoulders of the moms in both cases. In the Medrano family, this meant increasingly limited communication between the children and the father, whose English was very limited. Daniel’s statement was true: their family’s lives would be different, and perhaps in some ways worse.

These younger siblings, when visiting Mexico, had greater difficulty engaging their family’s home communities because of their lack of Spanish. In a way, they experienced a death to the fuller potential of integrating with their extended families. Because Spanish is perceived as a lower status language (E. Johnson & Boyle, 2006) it is

likely the children also had a preference for speaking English. Unfortunately, this lack of Spanish likely not only worked against their learning of English (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Crawford, 2004), it also severed the younger children's participation in return visits to Mexico. While younger children did return, in these two families, the youngest kids participated less. Two middle school age boys, the sons of Edith and Lupita, both showed discomfort and mixed feelings about their return visits. Marco was derided by his extended family for only wanting to eat pizza on return visits and also joked about when it was time to participate in community festivals. He preferred to stay at home and "protect his grandmother" (who often stayed back to run her small storefront) rather than participate in community-wide events, he said. Following is an exchange I had with the elder and younger sons in Alba's family:

Sue: So how did you get the job of protector?

Marco: I guess when they leave.

Cristián: 'Cause he doesn't like to go out.

Marco: Yeah I do, it's just that...

Cristián: No you don't, yeah when we go somewhere far you're like "I don't want to go."

Marco: You guys don't trust me.

Cristián: He only stays in the pueblo or he goes to Patzcuaro to eat pizza.

Marco: Yeah right, you're mean.

Cristián: (laughing)... Like when we go far, you don't like to go.

Marco: 'Cause it's far.

Cristián: Exactly that's why you're the protector (laughing) everybody else goes but you.

Marco's grandmother needed no protecting, but it was socially less awkward to stay with his loving grandmother than to face a community whose language he could not speak, despite being the son of one of its community members. The further from the home pueblo Marco may have gone, the more danger he might have felt that he would be misunderstood when attempting to speak Spanish.

Marco's elder brother explained a traumatic incident that had happened to Marco when he was younger during one of his visits to San Gabriel:

Marco can understand it [Spanish] but he can't speak it as well 'cause um one time... we were in Mexico and (laughing) [he wanted] to say "wait," it's like "hold on" and over there he didn't know that and they didn't know English so he was like "wait, wait, wait" and in Spanish that's a bad word [meaning something like 'dumbass']... Yeah and somebody got mad at him and started punching him and then, and I was like "what are you doing?"

It is easier to understand why Marco resisted traveling away from his loving grandmother when he was beaten for using an English word innocently and being misunderstood as delivering an insult. He had his linguistic deficiency literally punched into him. In this case, Marco had a form of not-knowing beaten into him for his linguistic deficit, built out of the wrong-headed instilling of a preference for English-only from his school and the dominant messages of the U.S.

All family members in this study had a keen awareness of the need for English to survive and thrive in the U.S. By the time I met them, all the children were highly

competent speakers of English and competent in written English. Parents were aware of the need for their children to acquire English for school success and acted upon this with the resources they had available. Lupita Medrano took her first two children to Head Start classes where they had additional preschool exposure to English; by her third child, she said she preferred not to take her because she felt competent in getting her ready for school (and English) on her own terms, through reading books and speaking with her in English.

In Ernestina Paredes's case, she helped her first two children (only a year apart) by using a dictionary her husband bought her to decipher their worksheets word for word. Based on her account, this was a survival skill for managing to continue their lives in the U.S.

Las niñas lloraban, de que “'Amá, regresémonos a México,” porque no sabían decir ni thank you, ni cosas en inglés... y luego Gloria, se me hacía curiosa porque decía, “Ay, mis lágrimas, se me salen y yo no quiero que se me salgan, y se me salen, 'amá.” Porque pues, no se sentían bien... pues imagínese de venir de México, allá en las escuelas hablando bien su idioma, entendiéndose bien con los maestros, con sus compañeros y todo, a llegar aquí que no entendían nada! Entonces, ellas lloraban y lloraban, y yo le decía a mi esposo, “sabes qué? Yo me voy a regresar, con ellas...” Le digo, “a los niños les está costando mucho aquí en la escuela y nosotros no los podemos ayudar, porque no hablamos tampoco inglés...”

Mi esposo me compró un diccionario, grande. De eso me acuerdo, me sentaba yo en las tardes con ellos, en la sala, a hacer las tareas. A estar

sacando, pues, esta pregunta... qué quiere decir... viera cómo nos costó! Pero él me decía, "Cómo te vas a regresar, si renté el departamento, y que es el contrato por un año y cómo me vas a dejar aquí, y que no sé qué... no, no, pues échense ganas, de algún modo tenemos que salir..." Y pues, todas las tardes, ahí estoy... Me daban lástima, que, que batallaban bien mucho... Y por eso les digo, "Ay, mijos, pues todos aprendimos, eso tiene su recompensa", les digo, "algún día tienen que llegar a algo," edá?

The girls cried, about, "Ma, let's go back to Mexico," because they didn't know how to say even "Thank you" in English... and then Gloria, it seemed so odd to me because she said, "Oh, my tears, they come out and I don't want them to, and they come out, Ma." Because well, they didn't feel good... well imagine coming from Mexico, there in the schools speaking their language well, understanding their teachers well, with their schoolmates and all, to arriving here and they didn't understand a thing! Well, they cried and cried, and I told my husband, "You know what? I am going to go back, with the girls..." I tell him, "It's costing the kids a lot here in the school and we can't help them, because we don't speak English either."

My husband bought me a dictionary, real big. I remember about that, I would sit in the afternoons with them, in the living room, to do homework. To pull out the meaning of the question, this question... what does it mean... you should have seen what it cost us! But he told me, "How are you going to go back, if I rented the apartment, and the contract is for a year and how are you going to leave me here, and I don't know... no, no, you can do it, some way we have to

make it...” And well, every afternoon, there I am. They made me feel sorry for them, they struggled so much... And for that I tell them, “Oh, my kids, we all learn, and it has its payoff,” I tell them, “Some day you have to become something,” right?

Instead of suffering the desperation of not feeling competent in English, Ernestina managed by instructing her girls the best way she could, word by word through the use of her dictionary. She demonstrated a kind of gritty determination; how was a woman who had not been educated formally beyond middle school supposed to use a dictionary to help her children in a different language? When remembering her former struggle of following her husband with her children over the border so their family could live together all year round, it makes sense her husband was so adamant about doing whatever they could to stay. Ernestina’s efforts paid off in terms of helping her kids integrate into the usage of English, what had been a foreign language to them previously. It gave the children a lifeline to succeeding in U.S. schools; Ernestina provided whatever she could, using her grit to guide them along in their homework, a skill that would help the children find their own livelihood in the U.S.

Economic knowing was also a part of knowing regarding matters of life and death. Central to the knowing about physical survival and overall livelihood was the families’ senses about economic opportunity or lack thereof. Their transnational participation informed this knowing in terms of their working lives and in terms of weighing the prospects for their families’ futures. While the parents were the decision makers regarding geographic location for families, children had an economic sense about Mexico as well. Those who study Mexican migration acknowledge that the primary

driver behind the migration is economic, and I found the same in my research.

Furthermore, I want to distinguish my research findings from “household management” findings of the funds of knowledge approach (Moll, et al., 1992). While household management is essential for a family to maintain its financial vitality, my findings on economic knowing relate more to issues of desperation, hope, and enormous risks.

In Mexico, especially in the two sending towns of the families with whom I researched, there was a common refrain about why families migrated to the U.S., “*Aquí en este pueblo no hay trabajo*,” “Here in this town there is no work.” Similarly, the parents in the study echoed this idea when asked why they had immigrated to the U.S. Without work, there is no money to raise a family. Without work, it can be argued, there is little sense of contribution to the greater community or the community’s survival, either.

I quote at length from Victor, a man in his late-30s who had been to the U.S. to take care of his family economically. He related a careful portrait of the economic history of San Gabriel, and its lengthy inclusion here helps the reader understand a broader picture of the families from San Gabriel. He had an eldest daughter attending university in a nearby city at great expense to the family. Working himself close to real physical death in the U.S., he finally returned to Mexico for treatment. He had an undiagnosed lung issue in which he said he felt he was “drowning” for lack of breath and hoped that one of the alternative treatments he was using; he gasped several times during our interview for air. His eldest son was living in the U.S. and had started a family. Victor hoped he would get better so he could return to the U.S. to work, but he was adamant that he did not want his family to have to go to the U.S. with him. He was proud

to have enlarged his house from a couple cinder block rooms to several, though he referred to it as his “humble house” when I visited for an interview. The floors and walls remained unfinished, with naked light bulbs illuminating the rooms. Other homes were far more finished in their construction in San Gabriel. I imagined he would want to earn the money in the U.S. to help for the futures of his children in Mexico and to finish constructing the house in which he lived. Reflecting the agricultural nature of the pueblo, several chickens crowed throughout our interview, while donkeys brayed from the yard adjacent to his property. His wife worked in the informal sector, selling a corn treat out of plastic cups from the back of a truck that sold the treats in various nearby locations.

Aquí en este pueblo no hay trabajo, este, no hay trabajo en este pueblo. De aquí toda la gente, toda la gente anteriormente, como mi papá, la gente más grande, pues, este, se acaban al campo a trabajar y la artesanía a trabajar lo que es la madera, pero, este, mi abuelito se iba a Laredo, Texas, porque trabajaba la madera, de raíces, de figura, pero como se fue pasando el tiempo se saturó el mercado, ya la gente, ya no le pagaba, pos, este, todos los materiales se iban subiendo de precio... se hacían trabajos bien varnizados, pero ya no, ya no, ya no quedaba nada en la vuelta que hacían, ya no convenía.

Aquí empezaban a agarrar los que entraban a exportar... pero aparte la madera se empezaba a acabar. Ya no dieron permiso a sacar, pues la gente empezaba a salir a trabajar. Las muchachas también salen a trabajar. Salen a Patzcuaro, a Morelia. La gente sale a trabajar porque aquí en el pueblo no hay este, no hay este, trabajo. No hay trabajo en que trabajar. Y así socialmente pues empezaban a salir a trabajar en Estados Unidos. Toda la gente, pues

alguien jala y allá va pues entonces por las necesidades porque aquí no hay trabajo. Hay mucha gente de aquí en Estados Unidos. Como una mitad de la gente con familias está allá en Estados Unidos. Es que todos los más jóvenes se han ido a emigrar. Pues por ejemplo aquí en la casa de mi papá, tengo dos hermanos, tengo tres hermanos, son cinco que se han ido p'allá. Allá están, allá viven. Allá están, allá tienen sus familias. Ya no vienen pues para qué vienen? No hay nada. Y no tienen papeles. Lo difícil es cruzar. Uno se arriesga a todo. Son 4 o 5 mil dólares. El desierto es feo. Es peligroso. Y allí no sabes si vuelves a si llegas. He hecho tres vueltas allí... Pos no es bonito irse allá a Estados Unidos. No es agradable dejar a su familia acá. Pos allá uno vive lo que es doble vida porque tiene sus pendientes. Por ejemplo uno paga renta, todo lo que uno tiene allá, pero con los pendientes acá. Pues uno tiene doble vida.

In this pueblo there's no work, um, there's no work in this pueblo. From here all the people, all the people used to work like my dad, the people who are older, well, well, they went to the fields to work and the handicrafts to work what is woodwork. But, well, my granddad went to Laredo, Texas, because he did woodwork of roots, of figures, but as time passed on, the market because saturated. And the people didn't pay so much, well, well, all the prices of materials kept going up...but not now, not now, there was nothing that was left [in earnings] in the trips they made, it wasn't convenient.

Here for a while they got to work with those who came to export... but aside from that the wood starting running out. They stopped giving permission to take the wood out, well the people started leaving to go to work. Girls also go out

to work. They go to Uruapan, Patzcuaro, to Morelia. People leave to go to work because here in this pueblo there's no uh, there's no uh, work. There's no work in which to work. And socially, well they started leaving to go to the U.S. All the people, well someone calls and they pull people over because of the necessities people have here as there is no work. There's a lot of people from here in the U.S. About half the families from here are there in the U.S. It's that all of the youngest have gone to emigrate. Well for example here in the house of my father, I have two sisters, three brothers, they are who have gone over there. There they are, there they live. There they are, there they have their families. They don't come back, why would they come back? They don't have papers. How hard it is to cross back over. One risks everything. It's four or five thousand dollars. The desert is awful. It's dangerous. And out there you don't know if you come back or if you'll arrive. I have made three trips over there. But it's not nice to go over there. It's not nice to leave your family here. Well over there one lives what becomes a double life because one has all the things to worry about in both places. For example one pays rent, everything one has over there, but with the worries over here. Well one has a double life.

Victor demonstrated a life-and-death based economic knowing that many people had in the pueblos where I interviewed. Families in both pueblos estimated that half or more than half of the families had loved ones working in the U.S. to send back remittances so the families could survive. This was the only reason they went to the U.S., for, as Victor stated, "it's not nice to go over there," as one risks one's very life and pays several thousand dollars for the pleasure of what is hopefully passage made alive.

Victor commanded a good sense of how markets work, like many respondents in my study in both countries. This knowledge was shared as if it were common sense. When I asked the question, “Why do people immigrate?” none of the respondents in either country had any trouble answering. Almost as an innate reflex, they answered about the economy. It seemed almost as if they were being polite, as if I were asking what color the sky was during daytime on a cloudless day. A sense of how economic security impacts families, pueblos, and even an entire country was generally second-nature to the people I interviewed. The families on either side of the border knew the physical and emotional conditions that result from lack of job opportunities. On the Mexican side, the families lived the hardships of lack of material goods and lack of any sense of upward mobility in the towns in which they lived. On the U.S. side, the families heard about these conditions and experienced them in their bodily senses when they made return visits.

This situation reminds me of my own living in Mexico and the shift in my own knowing. My first trip to Mexico was in 1994 for a semester to study at the University of Guadalajara and work with grassroots popular movements who confronted their country’s systemic economic and social problems. There I befriended many Mexicans and studied their national economy. With the change in presidents from Carlos Salinas de Gortari to Ernesto Zedillo, the common occurrence of a full-on economic crisis occurred. I felt panicked about the repercussions on the people I had befriended, many of whom were just barely getting by economically. At the same time, I returned to an economics professor with whom I had studied prior to my living in Mexico. I had studied microeconomics with him first, and then after my first trip to Mexico, macroeconomics.

Midsemester during the macroeconomics course, he pulled me aside and said, “I don’t know what happened, but you have a much better sense for how economics works.” I knew what had happened; I had begun to care about the way real lives were affected from the dramatic impact the economy can have on people, especially when it nears collapse. My knowing is not the same as the families with whom I researched; but it approximates in some ways how they carry economic knowing, in terms of their continued living, in their skin.

Similarly, youth who resided on the U.S. side of the border in my study were aware of how the economic prospects limited their futures as they could imagine them in Mexico. Nicolás offered a nuanced understanding of the impact of engine behind the drug war as the demand coming out of the U.S., but that the money earned by drug traffickers often went back into the Mexican economy to support legitimate businesses. He realized that these businesses would also be adversely affected by the drug war on the re-circulation of drug money into the formal economy in Mexico. Nicolás explained that he had no plans of going to live in Mexico as an adult.

In fact, none of the children in my study planned to go to live in Mexico, though they all wanted to visit. Diego Medrano even wanted to become a teacher so he would have summers off and be able to integrate his children into the pueblo as he had been with his parents in his youth, explaining, “I want them to know where they come from.” Gloria Paredes discussed how her parents often tried to prod their three children into returning to Mexico to work, perhaps as English teachers in their pueblo. But the children routinely protested, “We have worked so hard, why would we go back there now,” implying that they would not be able to realize their career ambitions in a more

limited economy in Mexico. There were still a great number of families from the extended communities who split their time between the two countries, and oftentimes there was a great ambiguity about where the families would stay, based largely on their economic prospects for the future.

Family members' knowledge of and sense for safety in Mexico continually shifted and became an increasing source of life and death concern for participants in my study. Unlike foreign travelers to Mexico who worry primarily about whether their beach vacations would still be safe (Reid, 2011), families in my study worried about the literal survival of their families in Mexico. For decades, people both inside and outside the country have cautioned about traveling freeways in Mexico at night, though crime rates in Mexico have been lower than in parts of the U.S. (Hawley, 2010). Like most parts of the world, safety varies according to region and particular economic, social, and political contexts. Due to Mexican President Felipe Calderón's U.S.-supported war against the drug cartels in Mexico, the incidence of drug-related homicides increased dramatically (Llana Miller, 2012), setting off a chain of retaliations among cartels and directed at the government, sparking a new level of fear and intimidation of the Mexican people. The families in my study were aware of these occurrences and had to weigh them into their decisions regarding visits to Mexico, as well as their concerns for their own families who continue to reside in Mexico.

The four families in my study were from areas where there was reported drug-related violence. Michoacán, the home state of two of the families, was on the U.S. State Department's Travel Warning list (Affairs, 2011) due to drug-related violence of one of "Mexico's most violent TCOs [transnational criminal organizations], 'La Familia.'" The

other two families' home state of Jalisco had large regions of the state on the same Travel Warning list, and there were news reports of two shoot-outs in the last few years in San Juan Diego, where several people were killed, due to drug cartel violence. Also, in San Juan Diego, a man had been shot during an annual festival in front of hundreds of bystanders. Only rumors circulated surrounding his death, ranging from cartel violence to revenge regarding jealousy over a girlfriend. Similarly, the city of Guadalajara, where both Jalisco families had extended family, became the target of assaults allegedly related to cartel violence. During my first night visiting Guadalajara for a research trip, seven buses and automobiles were blown up in a coordinated effort throughout various parts of the city within an hour's time. While no one was killed, the residents were increasingly fearful, frustrated, and cynical regarding their government as a result.

Each of the four families had horrible stories with which they were familiar of families or friends who had had bad things happen to them while driving through Mexico, if not their own stories. Ernestina Paredes elaborated on her fears about driving into Mexico:

El verano pasado, se fue una familia de aquí, son amigos. Y estuvieron fuera de Guadalajara, ya llegando, y los orrilló lo que pareció ser un Federal de Caminos. Pero no, fíjate que no. Eran ladrones, que los hicieron bajarse del carro así de rápido, gritándoles fuerte, y se llevaron todo, el carro y todo lo que traían. La hija de tres años se quedó allí sin sus zapatos, hasta eso se llevaron, tu crees?

Last summer, a family from here went, they're friends. They were just outside Guadalajara, and arriving, what looked like a federal trooper pulled them over.

But no, look, it wasn't. They were thieves, and they made them all get out of the

car real quick, yelling loudly at them, and they took everything, the car and everything they had with them. The daughter who was only three was left without her shoes even. They even took her shoes. Do you believe it?

Edith showed a new knowledge about the safety of the roads on the interior of Mexico. This was one of many terror-inspiring stories she knew of. The stories were emerging with more frequency and becoming increasingly more violent. She had begun to take into consideration whether or not she would continue visiting her pueblo and with what frequency because of the security issues she heard about. When her daughter Gloria and I went together for the annual patron saint festival in San Juan Diego, she had reservations even then that something bad might happen to us and talked with us about her fears prior to leaving.

Several months into data collection, Edith Delgado described a new worry she had, the violence in the neighborhood where her parents and brother lived, in a neighborhood in the municipality of Zapopan, bordering Guadalajara. *“La semana pasada, se mataron a tres muchachos. No se sabe que hacían. Y mi mamá ni siquiera se fue al velorio, porque quién sabe, tal vez hacían bien, tal vez hacían mal?”* “Last week, three teenage boys were killed. It’s not known, what they were doing. My mom didn’t even go to the funeral, because who knows, maybe they were doing something good, or maybe they were up to no good?” Edith had two of her own teenage children. What would it mean if her children were mistaken while visiting her parents in Mexico and gunned down? A new series of fears had entered Edith—these incidents were unprecedented in her parents’ neighborhood.

These kinds of problems affected the knowing families have about the safety of their return trips to Mexico and the safety of their loved ones in Mexico. It led to an ambiguity of knowing regarding how much families could rely on their sense of believing their families were in stable conditions. It also led to different kinds of discussions between families, where, for instance, family members in the U.S. cautioned their loved ones in Mexico not to go out as often at night, one of the few ways they could respond to conditions so largely out of their control. Such warnings went unheeded in Mexico. I was generally told in Mexico that people felt they needed to continue to live their lives as they always had.

Children in my study were aware of the security problems in Mexico as well. They heard about them from their parents as they discussed the problems prior to return trips; they heard about them on the news they watched. Diego Medrano said that he wanted to learn, and in fact took several years of martial arts classes, to help protect himself should he need to while he was visiting Mexico during return trips. The safety issues did not dissuade him from wanting to return; however, he took precautions he felt he could in order to respond to any problems he might have. During one of his return visits, he told me he had seen a lot of weapons owned by one of the pueblo members. On his digital camera, he showed me images of all the guns he had seen at one house. Having grown up in West Virginia with brothers and a dad who hunted, my eyes could recognize BB guns and shotguns used for hunting; these were not hunting gear. These were a large pile of guns; most were metal, some even gold or gold-plated, some of which looked like they were automatic and could fire off several rounds without reloading. There must have been fifteen guns or more in the image; I was sickened to see

it and wondered what kind of impression it left on Diego. When I asked what the weapons were for, he said he was not sure—only that a friend of his asked him if he wanted to see the weaponry of a mutual friend during one of his visits to Mexico. He was not impressed in a starry-eyed way, more stunned, still, about what he had seen.

Nicolás Delgado was also aware of the swift shifts in security issues in Mexico. Part of his understanding was formed from his own observations, and another part was from the hearsay of people with whom he had been in contact during a return visit for the funeral of one of his uncles. He compared what he knew previously about the streets of greater Guadalajara with how he saw them in one of his most recent trips:

O sea, antes, como a las doce de la noche o una de la mañana, que no son horas de estar en la calle, pero de todos modos a esas horas se veía gente, al igual que aquí pasas a las doce de la noche y se ve gente en la calle. Y allá ya son las once o diez de la noche y ya no hay nadie, ni carros, entonces, bueno, por eso pienso que ha cambiado un poco. Sí, sí noté que ya no había gente en la calle... Todo se ve bien apagado. Gente con más miedo, se le ve en la cara.

Well, before, at like twelve or one in the morning, which aren't hours to be in the street, but anyway at these hours you could see people, just like here you are out at twelve at night and you see people in the street. Ando ver there it's eleven or twelve at night and there's no one, not even cars, then, well, for that I think it has changed some. Yes, yes, I noticed that there are no people in the street...

Everything looks so shut down. People with more fear, it shows in their faces.

Nicolás perceived that the people in the greater Guadalajara area had been impacted by narcos and drug wars. Based on his years of visiting Mexico, he had a

standard of comparison for how things were changing and knowledge about the country to understand why they were changing. He could accurately make interpretations only people with this transnational knowing would be able to do. He was able to literally read and know the faces of those around him because of his embodied experiences of having been to Mexico. This knowing was, not only social analysis. He, too, was intimidated by some of the stories which circulated, and he internalized some of this knowing as fear. It was hard to know which stories were true, but they were frightening nonetheless.

Following is one sort of urban legend regarding how the cartels “play.”

Escuché de algo... de una cosa de que, si viene un carro enfrente de ti y se para y tú le pitas al carro que se quite, te... Se salen del carro y te agarran a balazos. Y si no, es un juego que juegan los narcos, y si no le pitas, después de cierto tiempo, se salen del carro y te avientan dinero en la cara y se van. No habías escuchado de eso? Entonces, no por recreación, sino nomás... para qué hacerlo? Es como, es decir, vas al espejo, y como le gritas al espejo, tal cosa, con la luz apagada y te va a salir algo, edá?... Si sabes que a lo mejor, si sale, si es cierto, para qué hacerlo? Entonces, allá andábamos en México y si un carro se paraba enfrente de nosotros, para qué le pitamos?, mejor te esperas a que se quite... Eso fue lo más que escuchamos, lo más de los narcos. Y sí hubo varios que mataron ahí.

I heard about something...about something that, if a car comes in front of you and it stops, and you hit your horn for it to get out of your way, you... They get out of the car and they get you at gunpoint. And if not, it's a game that the narcos play, and if you don't hit your horn, after a certain amount of time, they get out of the car and throw money in your face (pause). You hadn't heard about that? Not for

recreation, if nothing else, why do it? It's like, to say, you go to the mirror, and you shout at it, something, and with the lights off something's going to come out of it, right? If you know that, more than likely, it comes out, it's true, why do it? So, we were there in Mexico and if a car stopped in front of us, why would we honk, better for us to wait. That's the most we heard, the most about the narcos. And yes there were many who were killed there.

Nicolás learned to take to heart the hearsay surrounding the power of cartels and to live with the ambiguity of whether these stories were in fact true. Not taking to heart these possible truths could result in death. This (real?) possibility of death is something that worked itself into how he knew the world. Nicolás was equipped to tune into hearsay regarding his trips to Mexico, regarding the security there, to protect his very life. This was true for all the family members. All the adolescent age children (and perhaps the elementary school age children) were aware of the power of the cartels in Mexico and the threats they posed.

The children—and the parents—in this study demonstrated a skillfulness in managing the ambiguities of the stories they heard about security. How much were the stories true; how much had they been embellished? From the U.S., it was common for the family members in my study to describe precautions they would take about traveling in Mexico and their fears about returning. But they returned to Mexico in physical presence, walked among their families and communities despite these very real fears. They did not go in armored cars, carrying mace and guns for protection but slipped into and among the bodies of those who live their daily lives among the increasing ambiguities surrounding safety in Mexico. These families were what Anzaldúa describes

as shapeshifters (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2000b), or those who could take a different form in different contexts, depending on what the circumstances dictated. Returning to Nicolás's story—the thought of not hitting the car horn to tell someone to move in traffic seems ridiculous. That's the point of the car horn, but the horn was silenced by this kind of hearsay in Mexico, and it was adapted in the shadowy hope of saving the family's lives.

The hearsay, the sight of lethal weaponry mixes together into something fantastical. It's evocative of the *narco corrido*, drawing from the long history of the *corrido* in Mexican populations that has told a dramatic, often heroic, tale in simple folkloric form. It has been taken up by groups who tell the amazing tales of narcos, or drug cartels and the lives of the poor. The giving away of money is part of the sometimes-positive and generous acts that cartels have done. The children in my study were aware of *narco corridos* and the messages they conveyed; the hearsay and real weaponry they knew about seemed to mix into this form of folklore in their knowing. This ambiguous, at times fantastical knowing, bleeds into the next form of knowing I describe, Nepantlera knowing.

Nepantlera Knowing

Nepantla is a state of being in-between. Nepantla is a Nahuatl term for the liminal space, the in-between, the “land in the middle” (Mora, 1993) and border-crossing where change happens (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999), a space “we all inhabit” (Pérez, 2005). Anzaldúa describes it as a “zone of possibility” where reality expands, contracts, and moves in fluidity. She says the person in nepantla is split in two and in a liminal state. This person can see double, from the perspectives of separate cultures. With that kind of vision, cultures become transparent to the person in nepantla, which Anzaldúa claims

becomes a kind of “home” (p. 548) for the knower. A person in nepantla is able to see other possibilities through this new, different awareness. The families in my study, because they engage these two very distinct spaces both geographically and emotionally, inhabit this nepantla state.

In nepantla, transformation occurs, and it is the in-between stage of Anzaldúa’s seven stages of *conocimiento*, or ways of knowing (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2002) described in Chapter 2. To date, transnational researchers generally theorize the “in-between” stages that transnationals experience (Hornberger, 2007) and the possible changes they help bring about (Basch, et al., 1994; Vertovec, 2003), though they seldom delve deeply into what it means to be in that in-between space. The concept is helpful in understanding the emotional, spiritual, and psychic shifts transnationals go through alongside the ways they can create social change. Anzaldúa gives the example of her own life of growing up Mexicana, living in the U.S., developing additional understandings from graduate school—to the point where the “old way” of framing the world no longer works. She invokes nepantla and explains that people in such states have re-framing to do (Lara, 2005). Nepantleras, for Anzaldúa, are those who work with others to cross these multiple thresholds to develop new understandings collectively (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 571). In many ways, the families in my study operate with a Nepantlera knowing by experiencing the liminal, creating Third Spaces, and building bridges, which I describe in this section.

Ana Louise Keating (2006), friend and contemporary of Anzaldúa, elaborates upon Anzaldúa’s notion of Nepantleras:

Nepantleras are threshold people: they move within and among multiple, often conflicting, worlds and refuse to align themselves exclusively with any single

individual, group, or belief system. This refusal is not easy; nepantleras must be willing to open themselves to personal risks and potential woundings which include, but are not limited to, self-division, isolation, misunderstanding, rejection, and accusations of disloyalty. Yet the risk-taking has its own rewards, for nepantleras use their movements among divergent worlds to develop innovative, potentially transformative perspectives. They respect the differences within and among the diverse groups and, *simultaneously*, posit commonalities. (2006, p. 6).

Keating shows that Nepantleras are able to hold a host of ideas and beliefs in tension. She also shows that Nepantleras are able to work effectively with and through differences among peoples. At the same time, she argues, the Nepantlera grows as a result of her efforts.

In this section, I highlight how the families in my study, because of their transnationalism, operate in liminal spaces with a knowing that understands and bridges differences among groups. These families were able to create Third Spaces (Bhabha, 2004) where new possibilities of framing understandings and discourses occur at the intersection of subaltern positioning and operating in the U.S.

Nepantlera knowing should not be understood romantically as fully capable of bridging all gaps of misunderstanding. Nepantleras, according to Anzaldúa, struggle a great deal with their unsteady positioning (1999). Participants unevenly and unpredictably vacillated in their bridge-building decision making. While return visits to Mexico are typically restorative for transnational youth (Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Urrieta & Martínez, 2011), the youth and adults in this study inhabited an often

unsettled form of being “betwixt and between” (Turner, 1969) despite their gratitude for and appreciation of their return visits to Mexico. This unsettling occurred, especially, when families considered returning to Mexico to live, in the ways the family members were understood in terms of their racial identity, and in how they navigated cultural norms between the two countries.

Inhabiting and Knowing the Liminal

Families in this study, because of their transnational participation, experienced a liminal positioning and knowing; they were “betwixt and between” (Turner, 1969) knowers in the U.S. and Mexico. The families in this study inhabited border spaces and traversed them, often skillfully. This was evident in their thinking about returning to live in Mexico as well as their understandings of how they experienced their identities in the U.S. and Mexico, particularly in terms of race.

The family members in my study were able to express both concrete comparative knowing and a not knowing about the right or best way of doing something. Commonly, parents in the study said, “*No sé si sea por bien or por mal:*” “I don’t know if it’s for good or bad” when referring to their final choices of certain behaviors when they compared aspects of life in the U.S. and Mexico. The parents in all of the families, with the exception of the González family, said they would prefer to be living in Mexico, yet they remained in the U.S. As mentioned above, this was largely an economic calculation, but still families were very aware of the comparisons between lifestyles.

Edith described the contrasts of lifestyles in the two countries:

Gana quizás si te pones a valorar así cuanto gano yo aquí cuanto gano allá pues si se te hace muy poco lo que ganas allá. En la forma de comer este, la gente allá

come o quizás no tiene en su casa tanta comida tanto no sé si es las costumbres tiene cualquier cosa pero se lo comen con una dulcera con un amor que en verdad que a veces aquí uno tiene su casa llena, pero se te hace falta ese, ese, ese toque. Ese toque de, de, de, de oír a la familia contenta que los fines de semanas se juntan. Ese estilo de vida es muy bonito. Algo que aquí vamos perdiendo por el trabajo, por todo, porque no tienes a tu familia o porque tus amistades, todo el mundo esta ocupados. Todo el mundo cuando no estamos en una pues estamos en otra. Y allá no se pero como que es más, mas este, valoran más todas esas, esas cositas. De estar más con la familia y aquí no o sea aquí es todo más, más solamente ser puro trabajo, tener tu lunch mas lleno de comida. Allá no...

One earns perhaps if you think about valuing how much do I earn here versus how much I earn there, well it does seem quite small there [in Mexico]. In terms of what you eat, the people there eat, or perhaps don't have in their houses as much food, as much—I don't know if it's the customs to have everything on hand but they eat everything with a tenderness with a love that in truth at times one has one's house full, but you lack this, this touch. This touch of, of, of, of hearing the family contented on the weekends they're together. That lifestyle is very nice. Something that we here are losing for work, for everything, because you don't have your family here or because your friends, everyone is busy. Everyone when we are not here we are in another place. And there, I'm not sure but it's more, more, well, they value all these little things more. Of being more with the family and here no, here everything is more, more just nothing but work, having your lunch more full of food. There it's not that way.

Despite Edith's sense of the differences, and the better lifestyle they might enjoy as an extended family and community in Mexico, they persisted in the U.S. Edith recognized the conviviality she was missing in Mexico, the appreciation of small details that were more part of everyday life there, the "tenderness" or "touch" in one's home. She was pulled toward that memory but persisted in the U.S. I recognize a liminality in knowing she enjoyed life more in Mexico, a sense that she could realistically return while choosing to stay on with her family in the U.S. There was always a sense of what her life might have been had she stayed, if she were to return at any minute. She said that her husband was the one who had insisted they live in the U.S., as his prospects for income were much greater, but she knew that prior to her marriage to him, she had done surprisingly well as an entrepreneurial seller of dairy products from her home pueblo and what she sold in the city where she had worked with a group of obstetricians in your youth. Where Victor from San Gabriel had spoken of a "*doble vida*" or double-life, for Edith there was always another life existing just beyond her imagination, and one where her family was living daily what she missed over the border in Mexico.

Two sets of parents spent a great deal of time considering returning to Mexico very seriously, the Paredes and Medrano families. This thinking sometimes seemed like an agonizing between choices. This agonizing is an aspect of the liminality, that state of being in-between. In this case, it was being in between countries and the family and community histories that were not to be written on the other side of the decisions. The Paredes and Medrano parents agreed, however, that returning to Mexico for good would never be the same for the families upon arrival, as things had changed there, and, more importantly, the families had changed. But in the meantime, because of their subaltern

positioning in the U.S. and the sense of being Mexican for having grown up in Mexico, these sets of parents understood they were not fully American, either.

In the Medrano family, Lupita considered herself to have been the most affected by her understanding the ways of thinking in the U.S. She had even been criticized for this thinking, she said, by Mexican family members. At the same time, she often didn't like American ways of thinking and being. For instance, she said that she attended a wedding of a Mexican family member in the U.S. She said she dressed somewhat according to U.S. standards but was criticized by Mexicans in attendance who were visiting for Mexico for looking too American. In another instance, she said she didn't do the same things Americans liked to do for recreation in the same ways, but she wasn't a big fan of the Mexican ways of doing them either. While she said she wasn't extremely excited to spend a lot of the summer visiting local museums (something she said her American work colleagues often talked about), she also didn't want to spend her vacation times in a Mexican way, which she identified as being taking vacations with the extended family. She said she preferred to go alone with her nuclear family for a night at the beach to being with up to ten other extended family members. Ultimately, she said she couldn't really be comfortable either way. This kind of discomfort is a sort of perpetual liminality, always hanging on at the threshold between ways of knowing.

Lupita believed she was the reason her family remained in the U.S., and she attributed it to the mixing of her thinking, with some of the thinking having been Americanized, though never fully:

Porque si no, si [yo] no pensara... si no pensara como los americanos o si no conviviera yo con esta parte, tal vez sí ya nos hubiéramos ido, porque tal...

porque si yo le hubiera dicho a Santiago hace, no sé, dos años, tres años, vámonos... yo sé que ya nos hubiéramos ido. Pero como yo no lo.... Como yo no le he dicho que no estoy a gusto o que me quiero regresar, tal vez por eso no nos hemos ido.

Entonces sí está en mí como... el que no va a ser lo mismo. Pues no me gusta el no estar libre, porque pues, claro estás aquí y puedes salir a donde quieras, pero... a la vez te sientes como... sólo aquí, y de aquí no te puedes salir. Pues también no me gusta exactamente la vida que tienen mis hijos, que sé que, por decir, los de México no... pero también me pongo a pensar y digo, pues si estuviéramos allá y hubiéramos vivido allá, tal vez ellos de aquí a dos o tres años ya se quisieran venir, como los demás o como uno mismo... entonces, no, no, no me gustan las cosas que hacemos aquí o que vivimos aquí, pero también sé que si estuviéramos allá no nos gustarían algunas cosas.

Because if not, if I didn't think... if I didn't think like the Americans or if I hadn't lived with this part, perhaps we would have gone, because that... because if I had told Santiago a couple, three years, ago, "Let's go," I know that we would have gone back. But as I have not... As I haven't told him that I'm not feeling well here and that I want to go back, perhaps it's for that we haven't returned.

So then yes it's in me as... knowing it's not going to be the same. Well I don't like not being free, because well, of course you're here and can go where you want, but... at the same time you feel like, alone here, and here you can't go out. Well also I don't exactly like the lives that my kids have, as I know that, those in Mexico have, but I also think and I say, well if we were over there and if

we had lived there, perhaps having been born here two or three years after being there they'd want to come here, as all the others do, as I did... so, no, no, I don't like the things we do here or live here, but I also know that if we were there, there are some things we wouldn't like.

Lupita was among the most liminal of the participants in my study. She was aware that she was behaving and thinking as an American at times and at other times as a Mexican, a sort of uncomfortable shapeshifting (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2000b), while she also described having great doubts about her family's decisions. On several occasions she asked my opinion about the security situation in Mexico and if I thought it would make sense for her family to return, as well as the economic decline in the U.S. At the same time she was attempting to raise her children in a hybrid fashion. Her children were schooled in the values she had grown up with in Mexico in terms of respecting the family and community, but she was also quite willing to consider letting her children leave home to attend college, and to move to another city should they need to for their work, a point to which I return later.

Lupita highlighted the ambiguities and ambivalences of being caught in the middle of the two places and yet being forced to physically be located in one. Weighing the factors that might have an impact on her children if they were to relocate to Mexico, it seemed to her better to just leave them here. van Gennep detailed the "post-liminal" rites of passage of incorporation into a group, which presumes there is an "after" for the person experiencing the liminal (van Gennep, 1960); for Lupita, there was no post-liminal moment possible with either her legal status or her racial identity. Especially with her being undocumented, she was "not free," not free to identify fully as one who

can make a full claim to the rights granted U.S. citizens, especially in an anti-migrant climate, most especially in Prince William County, Virginia, one of the first places in the country to deputize police officers to enforce immigration law, starting with reading people phenotypically in order to enforce those laws.

Lupita also described how the “American part” of her was at odds with her Mexicanness. Like most of the parents, she felt herself to be far more Mexican than American. However, she offered great insights into why she did not want to return to Mexico to live.

Sí quisiera regresar, sí quisiera regresar porque quisiera... quisiera que mi vida se cambiara totalmente a ser mexicana, quisiera... pero a la vez, también se me viene a mi mente de que... por decir, aquí sé que.... Como te digo, mi trabajo no es muy bien, que digamos, no es lo que yo quisiera.

Pero, por decir, me pongo a pensar en México.... Digo, “Qué haría... qué haría...” no sé qué haría y si haría algo, volveríamos a lo mismo, sería por corrupción, tendría yo que buscar... por decir, lo que hago aquí, quisiera hacerlo, siempre... entonces tendría yo que ir a... no sé, a comprarme una, porque allá eso se puede, a comprarme una plaza, para ser, no sé, algo de lo que estoy haciendo aquí... entonces, tal vez la parte americana, mía... es lo que me ha detenido a no irme.

Yes, I’d like to return, yes I’d like to return because I want to... I want my life to change to be completely Mexican, I’d like it. But at the same time, it also occurs to me that, just to say, I know... as I’ve told you, my work isn’t so good, it’s not what I’d really like.

But, say, I think about Mexico. I think, “What would I do? What would I do?” I don’t know what I would do, if I’d do anything. We return to the same thing. Maybe it’s for the corruption, I’d have to look, well, what I do here, I’d like to do there, always... So I’d have to go to, I don’t know, pay for my station to work, because there you can, buy your occupation, to be, I don’t know, to do something like what I do here. So, perhaps the American part of me... is what has stopped me from going back.

“What would I do?” was a common question for the women in this study as they considered their possible returns to Mexico. The four mothers in my research had become different women than who they would have become in Mexico, and returning to Mexico would have meant leaving activities which had become second-nature. For three of the women, that meant leaving formal, paid work. For Edith, that would mean leaving behind her close associations with her children’s teachers, acting as a daily school volunteer at her youngest child’s elementary school.

In some ways the mothers had developed “Americans parts” of themselves, especially in terms of how they had entered the U.S. labor force. On the other hand, that is too simple of a read. Even Lupita qualified her statement of what stopped her as “perhaps” being the “American part” of her. When pressed, the mothers acknowledged that they knew their lives would be quite different if they were to locate to Mexico at this point, or even later, in their lives, and activities they enjoyed and valued would be likely vanish. At the same time, three of the mothers continued to claim to want to return to Mexico. This wanting to return butted up against the loss of activities from which they derived meaning. This conflict was one they didn’t seem tortured by in their knowing; I

believe it exemplifies a tolerance for liminality precisely because the women were used to this sense of liminal existence.

The liminal positioning of family members also manifested itself in terms of understanding and experiencing their identities based on experiences they had while in the U.S. and in Mexico. Participants in my study were (mis)read differently in different spaces. Common to the embodied experience of racism, family members at times knew when it was happening overtly, but at other times they wondered if what they were experiencing was related to race. They also wondered about their children's positioning in schools among other non-white children or as the exceptions among whites. Furthermore, identity shifted at times, based on where one was and how one was located by others' perceptions.

While in the U.S., most participants understood that non-Latinos thought that the Latinos they met were Mexican, despite the large numbers of Latinos from other countries, especially El Salvador, who reside in the Washington, D.C. area. Nicolás Delgado expressed it this way, "*Aquí no sé por qué piensan que todo mundo son mexicanos. Todo el tiempo me identifican, aunque sepan que sí o no soy mexicano, de todas maneras asumen que soy mexicano,*" or "Here, I don't know why everyone thinks they're Mexican. I'm always identified as Mexican, even if they do or don't know I'm Mexican, they always assume I'm Mexican." Nicolás indicated that the way he was perceived was through a limited definition of what it meant to be Mexican, a large gloss that served merely as a label, one without room for considering who people really were. However, there were times when participants were truly misread. For instance, Ernestina Paredes said that people often thought she was Chinese because her eyes "*parecieron*

chinos,” or “appeared Chinese.” Ernestina said she didn’t try to correct people but just went with it, another aspect of her liminal positioning where she was able to shapeshift and just be inside that mislabeling without acting on it.

When asked by others “What are you?” participants explained that they answered differently, depending on who was doing the asking, and where. Most reported that when white people asked, they expected they had little background to understand the differences among cultures and just said, “Hispanic,” or sometimes, “Mexican.” In so doing, they reflected an ambivalence but also an expression of agency to answer in a way they wanted to (Holland, et al., 2001); it was not incumbent upon them to be the educators of all their white inquirers. They said that among other Latinos who asked, they always identified as Mexican, where they knew their identities would be received with greater comprehension of their backgrounds. In the case of the González boys, they usually said they were Mexican unless they were around other Latinos and they would then explain their identities as having parents from two countries. When visiting pueblos in Mexico, the family members were usually recognizable as belonging to their families. For instance, Lorena explained that people would see her and say, “Oh, that’s the daughter of Daniel and Ernestina,” so she was seldom or never forced to identify herself. She already belonged. This was true for the other family members, except when they were visiting in larger urban areas. At times, the children said they felt they were detected as being on a visit from the U.S., and they were occasionally challenged as to whether or not they were *really* Mexican.

While identity is often ascribed upon a person, there was sometimes room for experimentation among the youth in terms of identity (a point I examine even further in

the following section). Gloria Paredes said that she was often misunderstood as white—that she had the ability to pass (Ginsberg, 1996) as white—and recognized this gave her some additional flexibility in terms of her identity, a flexibility not as easily experienced by most of the other participants. However, her experience is indicative of some of the particular dynamics of the area.

I feel like, well, especially like being from this [metro Washington, D.C.] area, I feel like, anybody can be from anywhere, you know, really. So I feel like, I don't really have to explain myself, and most of the people I know, like in my job, some people can't tell that I speak Spanish, some people can tell, I don't even know how they can or they cannot... And some people are just straight and ask me, "Hey, are you from, such and such, or you from such and such place?" And I'm like, "Wow, you actually know, you know..." And other people if they hear me talking Spanish, they look at me weirdly, like, wow! You know, like, "Do you speak Spanish?" And I'm just like, "Yeah... Yes, I do." I've always got in that mixed, um... I guess that's why I don't feel like I have to explain myself too much or I don't feel... Like, sometimes I feel like I'm not, like, culturally defined or whatever.

A lot of people couldn't tell if I spoke Spanish like, if I was Hispanic or not, so they assumed I wasn't and I thought this is kind of cool, though, because I get to see what people have to say about an idiom that they don't know... Or even, like here, sometimes it was bad, because I would hear like negative, stereotypes and stuff like that, like, "Hello! I'm sitting right here," but they don't, it was because they didn't know that I was, and I don't want to speak up or

anything because I've always felt that... it was interesting to hear what they have to say, even if I thought it was stupid.

There's both guesswork involved in Gloria's identity performance at how she was perceived and some pleasure, even, in watching people either accurately or inaccurately understand about her background. Because of the great diversity of people in the Washington, D.C., area, it was generally complicated to take guesses as to where people were from. For those aware of that, it did afford a sense of play and possible assumption of trying out different identities, for, as Gloria said, "anybody can be from anywhere." That being from "anywhere" also demonstrates her sense of liminal positioning, where she sat back while waiting for others to try to (or not) locate where she was from and position her. It's as if she used "bifocal" (Rouse, 1992, 2004) lenses to make sense of the people around her, but these lenses weren't merely two types of knowing as Rouse's concept of bifocality suggests. Rather, there was a different kind of knowing where Gloria layered her understandings as a Mexican, Spanish-speaker, English-speaker, passer of whiteness, who knew to expect a host of interpretations from how people perceived her.

It was also distressing for Gloria to directly witness the ugly stereotypes people spoke. She also sat back and took the time to learn about how others express their thoughts about people who speak Spanish, absorbing and learning from this. Gloria explained that she felt she was in the middle, most of the time, in terms of her identity. It helped her in some ways as being a skill, and it added layers of complexity to her life.

Third Spaces Created

As part of the Nepantlera knowing of participants in my study, participants created various forms of Third Spaces (Bhabha, 2004) out of the interstices of their circumstances and life situations. In an interview, Bhabha elaborates on how these Third Spaces come into creation:

Something opens up as an effect of this [collision of realities], something that will not be contained within it, that cannot be returned to the two oppositional principles. And once it opens up, we're in a different space, we're making different presumptions and mobilizing emergent, unanticipated forms of historical agency (Mitchell, 1995).

Nepantleras are agentic individuals who create spaces that are new, emerging from former historic contexts. These spaces are not merely a mixing of two cultures, such as Mexican and American = Mexican American. Rather, these spaces exist differently on different thresholds, a sort of liminal positioning. The spaces I identify next are spaces that cannot be shoved away after their emergence; though this does not mean the spaces are permanent. The spaces stand in relief against the hegemonic spaces of whiteness and hegemonic notions of Americanness. The knowers and creators of these spaces are forever changed because of their participation in these spaces.

Participants in my study had their embodied experiences of being Mexican and living in the U.S., their physical visits to Mexico, their knowing from two geographic and at times metaphoric locations. They then created a host of Third Space locations—real, virtual, and metaphoric, which I describe next.

Physical Third Spaces.

In the physical space, participants created something similar to what Anderson calls “cosmopolitan canopies,” (2011) which I believe are also a form of Third Space. Anderson defines them as places where people of difference races, classes, and backgrounds know they can meet and treat each other with civility, at times learning from each other’s differences and then carrying the message of difference (positively) back to their home communities which are often inhospitable to the “other” (p. xiv). The difference I find is that these cosmopolitan canopies were *created* by the participants, not merely mutually constituted spaces where people of multiple races and backgrounds met.

The G3n3zalez family created its own mobile Third Spaces. They engaged in the business of selling Latino food out of food trucks, and they had been selling for over a decade in separate trucks. They sold in multiple spaces, primarily for construction workers who were Latino, but, Alba explained that “*Hay de todo,*” or, “There are people of all kinds” who ate at the truck, including manual laborers and the overseeing managers. She said that people talked with each other at the truck, people of various Latino origins, Mexican, Honduran, Salvadoran, and white and African American people. She said that customers usually spoke with her at the truck and developed a kind of friendliness, speaking English and Spanish. The parents in this family joined a force of these *lonchera* trucks that catered to construction workers long before food trucks became a hip trend among “foodies” (Nield, 2011).

The *lonchera* trucks resembled recreational vehicles; they were blue and white, one with a hand-painted Mexican flag, the other without. “G3n3zalez Catering” was displayed in careful cursive across the top of each truck. When they served customers, they pulled out a signboard with all the foods available, including: burritos, tortas,

pupusas, quesadillas, and tacos. The side doors opened, offering a several sides, condiments and *refrescos* or soft drinks. Alba showed me the trucks with great pride. She gave me a tour and even prepared meals out of the trucks for me. The grills were shining clean at the end of each day, the floors equally clean. She told me that it takes a lot of work to make the *loncheras* serviceable, and she also described some of the dangers involved with the driving. At about five feet and two inches tall, she single-handedly navigated the Washington, D.C. traffic daily, “*Siempre con mucho cuidado,*” she said, “Always with great care,” even when impatient city drivers attempted to cut off her large, heavy vehicle on fast-moving roads. She said she had never had an accident in all her years driving the *loncheras*.

Alba explained that she and her husband enjoyed working and owning the *loncheras*. They were their own bosses and had an agency about who and when they served. If they wanted to take two months to return to Mexico—as they often did—they simply closed their businesses. If they needed to relocate their trucks, they could. As residents of Prince William County, they used to sell at nearby locations. However, because of the anti-immigrant laws the county had instituted in 2008, they were forced further out to sell to people in Leesburg, an extra 30 miles away from where they had previously sold. Alba said that the laws forced out both documented and undocumented immigrants, a trend also documented by the *Washington Post* (Aizenman, 2008). It seems unfortunate that the canopy space she and her husband provided was forced out of Prince William County as well.

To understand more why these *loncheras* were Third Spaces, one has to understand the context of the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area. There are few spaces

where Latinos have appropriated the physical landscape to make it their own, unlike other major U.S. cities with a distinctly Latino feel, such as parts of Los Angeles, Miami, or Chicago. While there are occasionally a few store fronts in the same strip mall with Latino businesses, they are still rare. Rarer still were the businesses where Latinos and non-Latinos mixed. That the Gonzálezes were able to achieve this in the Washington area is a new trend, one that may inspire others to also create spaces that have distinctly Latino characteristics. I caution that this trend may not necessarily increase. In light of the Prince William County anti-immigrant crackdowns, several businesses, Latino and non-Latino, were forced to close. They had, in fact, opened a Mexican restaurant in the county that had to close because of its ill-timed opening, which was only months from the crackdown by local authorities.

Virtual Third Space.

Facebook, the online, interactive social media platform, served as a Third Space for transnational families. The participants in my study were able to participate as actors on multiple stages in multiple imaginings. A cousin in the Paredes family, Guillermo, friended me on Facebook after we met up at the patron saint festival in San Juan Diego. He was also a former student of mine, so the familiarity was not odd. I saw him repeatedly post about how he would have preferred to be in Mexico, especially with his girlfriend there. Family in both countries responded in both teasing and warm ways. His pictures showed him more in Mexico, despite the fact that he resided in the U.S. and worked as a manager at a well-known café chain in the U.S. Several days he posted the scores of the Mexican Chivas soccer games, highlighting their real-time accomplishments, with comments like, “*Golazo!*” or “Big Goal!” I never saw him post

any U.S. sports information. Another day he posted a YouTube video of himself dancing at the patron saint festival a year previously; with his hand on his black sombrero and boots keeping the time, it was hard not to feel the contagion of his smile and glee from the memory of that moment. Friends and family responded to his post with, “*Cuando regresas?*” or, “When are you coming back?” and he responded, “*Pronto, ya veran!*” or, “Soon, you’ll see.”

Similarly, Gloria Paredes wrote longingly about her desires to return when she posted on other family members’ Facebook pages, and even her own. It was common for cousins in Mexico and the U.S. to post on her wall and encourage her when she complained about her worries about school, for graduate instance. But family members also used the virtual space to open new conversations that could not otherwise be created. An uncle of Gloria’s posted a picture of her with her sister and among several cousins from when they lived in Mexico. She and her sister wore identical dresses, black and pink floral, knee-length dresses, white tights, and lace, with small gold hoop earrings dangling above their shoulders. They sit among three other cousins on a highly varnished hand-made, wooden bench abutted against a peach wall. In the foreground is a small dresser with a pink and green hand-crocheted doily, likely knitted to fit the dresser. Without comment, he posted the picture and sent it to her page directly. She responded, “*Ya hace muchoooooooooo tiempo de esto... Jaja...*” or “That was sooooo long ago... haha...” While the photo had been taken nearly two decades ago, it was revived and took on a new life and a new form of communication, reconnecting the family members across the border in that new space, one where the physical border did not limit them.

Family members encouraged each other in their major life events and communicated with few impediments, especially as the world becomes increasingly wired for Internet access and with the increase in cell phone Internet access. For instance, Liliana Paredes, who I met in San Juan Diego, moved later to the U.S. to marry her sweetheart, a man she had met from San Juan Diego who was living in Virginia. Shortly after their wedding, she was pregnant, and she announced the pregnancy via Facebook. Scores of family from both sides of the border wrote in over the course of several months, following the news of her expected daughter. While previously such news would have traveled via phone and word of mouth, it crossed borders instantaneously, a virtual and real-time form of the simultaneity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004) of transnational participation.

Liliana also commented on the political situations of her hometown. Her aunt had been the Municipal President previously, the first woman to be elected to that post ever. Her work had been admired by many of the townspeople as honest and productive, including the renovation of the central plaza and the installation of an attractive archway at the pueblo's entrance. She was unhappy with the most recent candidates for the election in San Juan Diego of their new municipal president, commenting that the townspeople had preferred to propose someone less prepared, leaning toward voting for their buddies over who could lead them. Seven people commented on the post from both sides of the border, consoling her, agreeing with her, encouraging her to worry more about her coming baby than the dirty politics at work. We cannot know the impact of political postings might have on political participation on either side of the border; but we

can see how the Internet serves as a Third Space where such dialog can be generative and create a new place for this kind of dialog.

Bridge Building Work and Nepantlera Knowing

Many participants were positioned and positioned themselves as bridge building Nepantleras, people who lived in-between, managed the tensions of inhabiting that in-between space, and were generative in the ways they reached out to disparate groups by bridging differences. This was due in large part to their transnational simultaneous participation in various social worlds (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Family members, with their Nepantlera knowing, were able to maintain the lenses of understanding based on the community and family norms surrounding them, including a form of bifocality (Rouse, 2004) where understandings overlapped. They also created new lenses, bridging forms of understanding, often rooted in creative resistances (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) based on their understanding as being positioned as an outsider or “other.”

The youth and some of the parents in this study befriended others who were not co-ethnics, ranging from immigrant/transnational students from other continents, to African Americans, to whites; they often said this happened because of their ability to shift between contexts based on their transnationalism and the vast diversity of backgrounds of people they found in the Washington region. Also, they worked against gender and racial stereotypes, often successfully, to create spaces of opportunity from their teachers, family members, and peers. This was not typical of all youth in the Washington, D.C. area. Even the children’s co-ethnic peers were not as likely to have as many non co-ethnic friends. I believe it was because of their flexibility as bridge builders that they were able to make these friendships work.

Several of the children in this study had participated in honors classes, despite the institutional racism which creates barriers to their entrance and success in such courses (Oakes, 2005). Among them, they often said they were glad to “prove” that Latinos were not part of the stereotypes that surrounded them about, stereotypes that suggested Latinos do not caring about school and that they “aren’t smart,” as Diego Medrano put it. Diego, who agrees he “looks Spanish” (which in the Washington, D.C. area is used by people of Latino origin to describe people of Latino origin), said he was frequently questioned by other white students in his high school honors courses, “What are you doing here?” He said the students came to like him, but that he knew he was bucking the system. He said he was glad to do it, and that he also facilitated friendships between racial groups, especially whites and Latinos. He said he wanted to be at the head of this trend of building bridges, even though some of his teachers, he felt didn’t understand him or expect him to perform so well in school. Generally, however, he felt supported in his academic efforts by teachers, though he was certain few of them could understand his cultural background, especially his return visits to San Gabriel, Mexico. This lack of his teachers’ understanding is what made him a true bridge builder, for the bridge only needs to be built when points-of-view do not already meet.

All but one of the children I interviewed had close relationships with people who did not identify themselves as Latino. For instance, Jessica Delgado explained, “*Tengo más hindús, de Pakistán y eso. Pos ya que entré en middle school, en elementary eran no más de Pakistán ahora ya tengo blancas, mexicanas y gringas,*” or, “I have more Hindu friends, of Pakistan and stuff. Yeah since I entered middle school, in elementary they were only from Pakistan but now I have white, Mexican, and gringa friends.” It is

interesting to note that Jessica lists Mexican friends in the middle. Co-ethnic peers were not among the most important friends in her life.

While participating in a regional science fair competition, I noticed Jessica's elder brother, Nicolás, spoke comfortably with friends from multiple racial backgrounds. He introduced me to a Korean friend who never made eye contact with me nor reciprocated the introduction. In Spanish, Nicolás attempted to explain his friend's behavior, "*Casi no le gusta hablar con la gente. Es un tipo un poco raro, pero es bueno.*" "He hardly likes to talk with people. He's a little odd, but he's good." Nicolás was careful to attend to my feelings, but chose Spanish so as not to offend his friend. Nicolás later talked several times with a group of three girls who appeared to be white. His father, who also attended the event, looked at my husband and remarked, "I didn't know he had white friends." Nicolás connected with a host of different kinds of people, even despite the expectations of his parents. He also demonstrated his skill at remediating a failed attempt at bridge building in how he managed the failed introduction of his friend.

I return to Jessica for a moment to demonstrate her bridge-building tolerance for ambiguity and measuring out decisions. She discussed how a good Muslim friend of hers struggled with her parents about wearing the headscarf.

Mi amiga de Pakistán me platicó que sus papás se enojaron con ella porque no traía la bufanda en la cabeza. Yo estuve mas del lado de los papás o sea eres musulmán y tienes que tener eso o sea por que no? A mí no me gustaría traer bufanda pero si ya es así pa' que te lo quitas? Yo quiero mucho a Dios si yo creo en eso lo estás ofendiendo es su cultura tanto como la mía pero si estuve mas del lado del los papas pero no se me hace bien que se tengan que tapar. Pero le dije

así [gestures that she didn't know with her hands] porque si le contestaba como yo lo pensé tal vez se iba a molestar tal vez conmigo y tal vez no tenía la razón yo.

My friend from Pakistan told me that her parents got mad at her because she wasn't wearing the headscarf. I was more on their side because you're Muslim and you need to have that I mean why not? Personally, I wouldn't like to wear the headscarf but if that's how it is why you gonna take it off? I love God and if I believe in that then you're offending God, in your culture as much as mine, but yes I was on the side of the parents, but it still don't seem right to me that they have to cover themselves. But I told her like this [gestures that she didn't know with her hands] because if I told her what I thought maybe she'd get upset with me and perhaps I wasn't right.

Jessica decided not to weigh in with her opinion for two reasons—not wanting to anger her friend and recognizing she might not be right. The recognition that maybe her opinion wasn't the only right one indicates her sense of understanding that things can be different than how she sees them. In this example, she took into consideration several positions—that of what it means to be a person of faith, what it means to obey one's parents, and what it means to demonstrate physically what one believes. There appears to be a heteroglossia of thoughts, and instead of choosing one “right” response, she deferred, while preserving her friendship. By being able to maintain the friendship, she preserved the bridge she had built toward her. It was not terribly common for Muslim students to be friends with Latino students in the Washington, D.C. area; it is possible Jessica had a sense for that as well and prioritized the friendship over the possibility of speaking up.

Bridge-building work is complicated and sometimes yields ambiguous results or even negative ones. As such, Anzaldúa recognized that there is a great deal of pain involved in the messy work of being a bridge (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2002). I wondered about the effectiveness of bridge-building at the “Multicultural Night” festival held at a local elementary school. Lupita’s daughter dressed up to represent her family’s home culture in traditional clothing which was representative of the indigenous peoples where they were from in Mexico, the P’urhépecha. Dressed in a black pleated skirt, an embroidered shirt, with her hair elaborately braided with ribbons, she mirrored the traditional dress of women in the region where I had visited. However when the white teacher MC described her dress, she couldn’t come close to accurately pronouncing the name of the native people of Mexico that Lupita had carefully written for them (and there was no written program, either, for the audience’s reference). While the family was all proud of how the daughter looked, the audience members heard a butchered pronunciation of a native people in Mexico and saw a girl walk forward on stage, smile, and return to her place among children in traditional dress from all over the world. At the same time, there was space for representation, even if only a minimal moment where symbols were presented, though misunderstood. On one hand, there was representation—any representation at all was a victory, in some way. On the other, the symbolic value of Virginia’s dress was misidentified.

Commonly, schools and even the parents in this study missed cues they could take up from their transnational students in their bridge-building work. Children often had their attempts thwarted by these voices of authority. Several students described how they had shared that they had returned to Mexico for holidays, especially after summer breaks

when teachers asked the traditional question, “What did you do this summer?” Not one student said they had a teacher impressed that they had been back to Mexico or had the teacher probe deeply into their experience. Despite their being world travelers and the knowledges they could share in schools, the students correctly interpreted the message that their knowing was not highly valued in school.

One final area that exemplifies the challenges of bridge-building was the positioning of the youth in this study regarding their coming into adulthood while living in the U.S. Parents and children all understood that if they lived in Mexico, their children would likely continue living with them after the age of 18 and on into adulthood until they were married, following a cultural norm of the importance of family’s residing under one roof. Similarly, both parents and children, however, understood the expectations that many children in the U.S. would move out after graduating high school. Nearly all the parents in my study expressed a fear of losing their children to this U.S. trend, and the children closest to the age of 18 and their parents made interesting efforts bridging the cultural expectations of living in the U.S. They had not adapted a strictly U.S.-based narrative about how children should develop their own independence upon the age of 18. Both parents and children built bridges toward each other across the generations and arcing over the cultural norms at play. These bridges were often in flux.

The youth said they were often interested in enjoying the “freedoms” of living in the U.S., but the ways they were raised, and their transnational participation tempered this interest. The older kids, male and female, had all been permitted to move freely in the pueblos their families were from on visits to Mexico, even into the late night. Parents understood that their children were in safe hands, among family and community members

(so often synonymous). Such participation was usually multi-generational, including a great deal of social festivities, especially when children were visiting for religious festivals. In fact, the youth were encouraged to stay out late and enjoy themselves, and they would sometimes bump into each other at the festivities. While boys in the families were afforded more freedoms in the U.S. to go out at night, the gender made little difference when families were visiting Mexico, as both were allowed out until late. Also, parents were open to and encouraging of their daughters and sons pursuing university education and careers.

As a parent, I can see why these parents allowed their children to move about so freely; they were cared for. The children were all recognizable by nearly any community member, and community members took care of each other. For instance, while walking through San Juan Diego, Gloria met a host of family and community members who said hello to her during the patron saint festival we attended together. She was open about responding, joked back when teased about whether or not she had found herself a boyfriend during her visit, and she participated well in the general banter of people enjoying a good time. That said, the youth weren't as eager to experience the sense of independence often associated with youth in the U.S. by staying out late with similar-age peers. They had already experienced a differently fulfilling sense of mature social interdependence among community in Mexico.

The children in the four families were interested in attending university, but they approached it differently than the traditional narrative of attending college in the U.S. as a great adventure far from home. For their undergraduate work, only Diego seemed interested in moving far away from his family. I believe this was because his mother,

Lupita, was the most liminal of the parents and that she wielded a great deal of influence on him. Her higher tolerance for experiencing liminality allowed a flexibility of possibilities that were perhaps larger than the other parents. The other children said they were glad to stay at home and save the money by living with their parents. They also weren't anxious to go away from their parents. They said they felt connected to their other siblings and parents and enjoyed the support they received from home.

In the Paredes household, where all three children were attending university, Ernestina said she was glad to provide the meals and help the three children with their laundry so they could devote themselves to their studies and the jobs they held to pay their tuition. She somewhat jokingly but also realistically had told the children, "*Si se quieren ir, que se vayan, pero yo no sé quien les va a ayudar con su comida y pagar su renta.*" "If they want to leave, they can go, but I don't know who's going to help them with their food and pay their rent." The children's father, Daniel, also said he was glad to assist the children somewhat with paying tuition from money he earned in construction. He was proud that none of them had to go into any debt for their studies. Both parents were proud of their progress in the university. Their youngest child, Daniel, was the only boy in either of their families who had gone to university either in the U.S. or Mexico, and he stood as an example to the other boys. The sisters were also referred to frequently to families on both sides of the border as examples who the other family members might aspire to.

The bridge building in the above examples highlights how the children were willing to meet U.S. expectations about succeeding in formal schooling while also enjoying the family aspects of their home lives. I do not want to overstate their level of

happiness; certainly there were times the children already in university wanted to move out and be on their own. The families at times had had heated arguments about these points with their children near to and after the age of 18. Each of the children who turned 18 agreed they willingly stayed at home, not bowing simply to family and cultural pressures.

The example of Gloria Paredes illustrates this point. From high school, she went to George Mason University, a nearby school to which she could drive. She finished her undergraduate degree and then applied to three universities for school counseling. She labored over where to apply, and she finally included a school where she would not be able to commute but would have to move to the town to attend. She told me that her father in no way wanted her to move, but that he supported her if she felt she needed to go to the school where she'd be forced to move from home. Her father was willing to bridge his investment in having his children live under his roof for the goals his daughter would make for herself. Allowing her to move out on her own as a woman could possibly cause speculation and gossip locally and among family in Mexico. But Daniel was so committed to supporting her—while holding in tension his disdain for her moving—the day she had to interview for the program on that campus in Maryland, he volunteered to miss the pay of one day's work to drive her there for the interview so she would not be nervous. He drove her to campus, spoke during the drive with her, encouraging her through the entire process. Admitted to all three schools, Gloria ultimately decided on the program she believed to have the highest emphasis on multiculturalism, which turned out to be her alma mater, George Mason University. Gloria said she struggled when she considered the future; she wanted to move out, but

she also wanted to stay in the Washington, D.C. area and work with local youth. She did not want to “abandon” her family, but she was eager to live on her own. She said she would work toward a solution where she could accommodate her life goals and her family’s needs. She lived with those ideas held in tension—typical of the *Nepantlera* bridge builder.

Conclusion

The four families in my study had unique ways of knowing the world, based out of their transnational positioning as Mexican-origin, working class people who crossed the border literally and metaphorically with frequency. They demonstrated orientations which allowed them to skillfully navigate the challenges of their lives in both worlds. These families had three kinds of knowing: chained knowing, being chained to the border and being chained among their transnational networks of community members; *sobrevivencia* or survivalist knowing, including a gritty underdog mentality and daily dealings with matters of life and death; and *Nepantlera* knowing, borrowing the Aztec Nahuatl world of being “in-between” to describe the ways families create new spaces of meaning out of that in-betweenness. These ways of knowing acted in concert with each other and often bled into each other as the families understood the world and the ways they acted in it.

The families’ experiences showed a chained kind of knowing where they were chained to the border and to each other in community, crossing that border. The border figured prominently into how they saw the world, as it had dramatic impacts on the people in those chained networks. The border limited life chances, and, if crossed, often expanded them, though at great costs. The families were chained to each other as *an end*,

not as a means to an end. This chaining was rooted in the value of respect, something exhibited over borders, inside families, and among the communities across generations.

The *sobrevivencia* knowing of family members spanned their approach to surviving and persisting through often adverse circumstances. They exhibited a grittiness in their facing the world, one I call an *underdog mentality*. The families knew they were not expected to succeed but made enormous efforts to do so despite expectations. They also had an orientation rooted in matters of life and death, both literal and metaphoric. Families often had to confront serious life-threatening matters that spanned borders and physical deaths, as well as threats to their identities while living in the U.S. Some of those threats included safety in Mexico with the increase in violence due to drug cartels and the Mexican government's war on those cartels as well as economic calculations involved in determining survival.

The final way of knowing families exhibited was *Nepantlera* knowing. The families often inhabited a liminal positioning, based on their being situated between the two countries and the communities located in those countries. They used that often uncomfortable positioning to build Third Spaces of acting on the world, both physical and virtual. They also were able to build bridges, managing the tensions of what it means to be in the liminal, such as through navigating cultural expectations of passage into adulthood and making sense of racial positioning.

Closing Scenes

The Lady of Zapopan is in San Juan Diego in late January, on the same feast day the saint has been celebrated for hundreds of years, regardless of the day of the week in which the day falls. The Lady will spend the night there, where she'll be prayed to and

venerated by the townspeople. I remember receiving her visits at the Catholic girls' school where I worked in Mexico over a decade ago in Guadalajara and my own visits to her basilica in Zapopan, where the Día de la Raza (Day of the Races) parade culminated in her courtyard in the larger metropolitan Guadalajara area. Millions had given thanks, begged her, and probably millions more will continue to do so.

We're at Gloria's grandmother's house with bellies full of homemade pozole, sharing gossip about the local townspeople, the vast extended family. We hear the church bells ringing adamantly, ceaselessly. A few boys from the church roof, only a small block away, pull-and-give, pull-and-give, on the woven cords of the bells. The Lady is coming. I hobble out on a third-degree sprained ankle because I wouldn't miss the chance to see her, to see the townspeople among her. Besides, a *sobadora* has rubbed at my ankle for over a half an hour, so I have my own faith that it must be better. And better to expose it to the Lady's passing in case she wants to help in the healing. Or at least help with the fortitude to help continue data collection on a ankle that is otherwise supposed to be "impossible to walk on; the pain is excruciating."

Lila, Gloria's ten year-old cousin, bursts from the doorway and greets some townspeople who have walked a bit ahead of the procession. A distant cousin sweeps her up in his arms and she squeals with excitement. There's a sizzle in the air of expectation for the procession to pass. People's voices quicken in anticipation. The streets are full of a special greenery that will be quickly swept up—to honor the path on which the Lady of Zapopan will arrive. Fireworks start to explode overhead; there's a boom every four or five seconds.

At the end of the block the head of the procession arrives. There are at least fifteen charros, wearing the traditional dress of the state of Jalisco, who arrive atop their horses. Some are men and women, and the women are in colorful dresses with ribbons, the men in fine boots, cowboy hats, and fancy charro dress shirts. Four of them ride their horses with small children in their laps, some nodding off from the long procession, others smiling and waving. The sound of seeds and rice working in rhythm as instruments pulses just behind them, as a group of ten adolescent boys and girls dances in rhythm in honor of their Aztec heritage, wearing cloaks that resemble what the Lady of Guadalupe appeared in emblazoned with images of the Mexican flag. They move their legs which must be tired with determination and in tempo with their counterparts.

A fully dressed mariachi band processes behind them, instruments down. They will be playing the music for the mass that will follow. Just behind them comes the town's patron saint atop the shoulders of several pueblo members. The priest accompanies them in his vestments. Behind them is *la visita*, or the visiting one, the Lady of Zapopan. She is inside a clean white truck, looking out the back window, something like a Popemobile to protect her journey, as she is made of corn and fragile after her hundreds of years of visits.

Then the townspeople follow. Their skin appears to be a bit more bronzed from their pilgrimage under the daytime sunlight. Hundreds of people follow, some very well dressed, others in their daily clothing, scanning the bystanders on the street, like me, who have not joined the procession.

None of this is unexpected for Ernestina, who watches the amateur video I captured from my laptop in her home, atop her couch, about a month after the date of the procession. What is new are the people she sees. She comments to Daniel, her husband, who watches more quietly, about so many of them. “Oh, look, Ofelia is getting a little thinner,” she comments, and “Hey, Juan made it from California for the fiesta!” They are so relieved that their daughter has finally made it for the annual patron saint festival, after over 20 years of not taking her and her siblings so they would not have to miss school. Ernestina’s eyes are joyful; these are the people she knows from home. Her daughter has now witnessed in the flesh what this event means. Gloria watches the video again, remembering parts of the procession she had already forgotten had occurred; the procession had gone by so quickly. She thinks to herself, “I understand so much more about what this fiesta means, about who my family is, about where we come from.”

Back to that day in January, the procession continues. A brass and percussion band of male and female youth plays a medium tempo song at the end of the procession. The onlookers from the streets start to shift to the middle of the street as the excitement dies. Three Wixárika (also known as Huichol) Indians, dressed in their regular daily clothing of blue embroidered blouses over white canvas pants and *huarache* sandals follow behind tentatively. They carry their stringed instruments, which they will play to serenade the Lady at night. These Indians have only recently left the nearby highlands to earn more money around the town. And mass begins from inside the neatly painted yellow church, marking the beginning of the three days of fiesta for their patron saint.

Chapter Five: Implications for Schooling

In Chapter Four, I explored the three ways of knowing which emerged from my research: chained knowing, sobrevivencia knowing, and Nepantlera knowing. In this chapter, I draw from these three key areas to explore the implications for schooling. I provide additional examples and draw from Chapter 4 to demonstrate these implications.

First, transnationalism remained largely invisible in schools. Like any nonhegemonic cultural practice or way of knowing, the children—and their families—were left on their own to navigate schooling while actually hiding these parts of their selves. This hiding, I argue, led to a missing of several opportunities upon which schools could connect to better educate transnational students—and all students—and weave their transnational students' families into the complicated textures of the fabric of U.S. cultures.

I also found that students' transnational identities and language backgrounds were usually negated in schools, echoing the work of many scholars who have researched immigrant and transnational children in the U.S. The transnationalism of the students in my study was felt as a responsibility by the children, something they wanted to convey to their peers and teachers. Cultural markers from transnational participation were also negotiated in varying and sometimes contested ways by children at schools. Most of the children experienced negation of their heritage language, as well. This occurred by omission but also through concrete messages provided by adults in official capacities.

Family connections to schools were tenuous at best. In terms of what the schools provided as parent outreach, I argue the schools operated along a “continuum of the

comfortable,” stretching only within the limits of what was comfortable for their Whiteman ways of knowing. Parents were often ignored, which by default allowed teachers to operate in the ways they already knew and with which they were comfortable.

Finally, the children often operated with their *Nepantlera* knowing in schools; they did this despite the hegemonic norms of their schools and sometimes against the expectations of their parents. They assumed difficult roles. In an increasingly globalized world, this *Nepantlera* knowing could be encouraged so that they could use the tools they already had in order to navigate the multiple ways of knowing found throughout the world.

Hidden Knowing in Schools

Even though the children in this study returned to Mexico nearly every other year (or even more often), they were almost never able to tell their teachers about their return visits; they had a sort of “hidden knowing” where their experiences were never validated by the schools they attended (Sánchez, 2007). The U.S.-based youth in this study would mention their summer return trips when teachers asked about what their students had done over the summer. The students said their teachers never seemed in any way impressed or probed any further about their return visits. Otherwise, they did not mention their visits in school to official staff members. When they needed to inform teachers about a return visit that occurred during the academic year, if it was for a visit for their patron saint or religious festival, they seldom attempted to explain this. The students understood the large breach in understanding between their Whiteman teachers and their own understandings was too large to bridge. Following, I provide

some context specific to one of the schools where two of the families had attended high school.

A visual read of schools can give an indication of the climate, at least symbolically, for those who enter the building, particularly the students who attend it every day. I was able to visit Northern Virginia High School, where two of the families' students attended and also watch a YouTube lipdub posted on Facebook under the name of the school and completed by the Class of 2012. Prior to entering by car, there is a large signboard with announcements that change from time to time, including, "Back to School Night," "Welcome back to school," and others. Rarely, if ever, are there announcements on the signboard in any language other than English. The exterior is red brick with gray and dark blue trim, a series of three buildings on a small grassy campus. The main entrance has a small grassy knoll in front of it, with a large rock that is painted by students. At times it says, "Class of [insert graduating year]" at others it is painted in celebration of a sports team, or perhaps graffitied over.

Inside, the walls are a light gray and lined in some areas by blue tiles midway up the walls. There are school spirit type paintings on some walls, to include a large face of the animal school mascot sporting the school's colors and logo. The gym is painted the school's colors (gray and blue) and includes hanging banners celebrating titles its teams have won. There is a hallway full of trophy cases also exhibiting sports titles. The front entrance, where parents would most likely come in, opens immediately to a hallway and closed doors to the main office which doesn't have glass windows to see through. There are also two vending machines selling drinks and food. All signs are in English. There is a laminated poster representing the school's behavioral objectives as part of its Positive

Behavioral Interventions and Supports. A few other posters and flyers are posted announcing school functions, from Homecoming games and dances to clubs. Student work is rarely posted in the hallways. The library entrance has a glass showcase at its entrance including featured Young Adult and Adult fiction, some of it including protagonists of color. The library has a few posters with famous stars smiling and encouraging people to “READ” with books in hand. The cafeteria has the same gray walls and blue tiles and mostly blank walls.

Visually, the school looks like a place where you have to work to learn what the cultures of the students are. Clearly, there is an attempt to allow for the informing of official school events, and these events seem to circulate around the Whitestream events which mark schooling in the U.S., such as homecoming and school athletics. I am not arguing that those events are bad. I am trying to highlight how little, visually, there is to indicate to students or their families that their heritages are in any way pertinent to schooling.

I interviewed two teachers from Northern Virginia High School to learn what they knew about the knowing of their transnational students. Both were nominated by students who participated in the study as good teachers; both taught Spanish. I quote and then translate Mr. Schneider at length, a Venezuelan-American who chose to do the interview in Spanish. Mr. Schneider offered a lengthy analysis of the problems at Northern Virginia High School and extended his analysis to other experiences he had in other school districts, locally, and in another part of the U.S. about the negation of the identities of transnational students. Mr. Schneider taught Spanish for fluent speakers

courses for five years, and I asked specifically if he had received any training to work with transnational students.

Aquí voy a soñar como increíblemente frustrado, y es que lo estoy. El condado [school district] no hace realmente un coño para reconocer a esta comunidad, lo dicen en palabras y lo hacen a veces en gestos mínimos como por ejemplo, “Vamos a traducir los papeles y vamos a tener un padre comunicador en las escuelas,” pero ahora, llegar a que los profesores tengan conocimientos sobre de dónde son estos niños y por qué tienen que irse estos chicos y por qué se van tantas familias, en vez de simplemente tener unas ideas superficiales, o que los mismos profesores no les interesa tanto pero... O quizás les parece interesante de vez en cuando, pero esa es la tarea del condado: concientizar, sensibilizar a los profesores a la situación de sus alumnos...

De nuevo, ese es el papel del condado, de concientizar a los profesores para que ellos tengan simplemente una... un conocimiento de que estos niños vienen de países subdesarrollados... a veces subdesarrollados por su propia corrupción, los políticos inútiles o los políticos corruptos, pero muchas veces también por política explícita de Estados Unidos, que le conviene también que sea así...

Pero hablar[les] la verdad... que los chicos lo anhelan, lo anhelan como una planta en el desierto anhela agua, estos chicos también quieren saber qué ha pasado, por qué estamos aquí tantos... Así que regresando a la pregunta, lo que debería de hacer el condado y lo que yo quisiera... como tú Sue, me preguntaste si he recibido entrenamiento, y yo tendría que no, el condado, el sistema, en todos

los condados en que yo he estado, [he names a couple], este... estuve dos años dentro de una escuela privada en... Pensylvania, en Filadelfia... todos hablan muy bonito, pero cuando realmente hay que repartir esa información o esa sensibilidad... el ser sensibles sumamente en cuanto a estas comunidades, que cambia vidas, el dar ese conocimiento a los profesores... no lo hacen... porque al hacer, de nuevo tendrían que salir de la negación de que... “ah, estos países están fracasados por gusto,” y no hacer caso.

Here I'm going to sound like incredibly frustrated, and it's that I am. The county [school district] doesn't do shit to recognize this community, they say it in words and sometimes in minimal gestures like, for instance, “We're going to translate some papers and we're going to have a parent liaison in the schools,” but now, arriving to the point where professors have knowledge about where the kids are from and why they have to leave, these kids, and why there are so many families, instead of having a few superficial ideas, or maybe the same teachers aren't even so interested, but... O perhaps it seems interesting from time to time, but this is the district's work: consciousness raising, sensitizing professors about the situation of their students...

Again, it's the job of the district, to raise the consciousness of teachers so they have a... a knowledge that these kids come from less developed countries... sometimes less developed for their own corruption, useless politicians or corrupt politicians, but many times for the explicit politics of the US., for whom it's convenient that they are less developed.

But to speak to them with the truth... the kids want it, they want it as a plant in the desert longs for water, these kids also want to know what has happened, why are so many of us here? So going back to the question, what the county should do and what I would wish, as you Sue, you asked me if I had received training, and I'd have to no, the county, the system, in all the counties I've been in [he names a couple], I was in a private school for two years in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. They all talk real pretty, but when they really have to share this information or sensitize... the being exquisitely sensitive to these communities, that changes lives, that giving of knowlege to teachers... they don't do it... because doing it would have to [be] the negation of... "Oh, these countries are broken because they want to be," and not pay attention.

Mr. Schneider was frustrated, having done his own research to understand the social and political contexts from which his students came and to which they arrived in the U.S. He had a level of analysis not common to many teachers, based in his readings of theorists like Eduardo Galeano and Noah Chomsky. Because he had experienced many of the conditions to which he referred from his visits to Venezuela and had grown up with his Spanish-speaking, Venezuelan mother, he had lived many experiences similar to the transnational students he taught. He explained he had grown up being called every sort of racial epithet while growing up because people consistently confused the ways they read him phenotypically, as African American, Middle Eastern, or even Indian. Having experienced it in the flesh himself, he had a high level of sensitivity regarding how the children he taught were misunderstood in schools, corroborating the sense that transnational students' ways of knowing were hidden.

Mr. Schneider recognized an apathy on the part of the teachers to get to know the real-world situations of the students and where their families came from. He was more frustrated, however, with the district leaders who he blamed for not offering any real professional development to help “*concientizar*” or raise the consciousness of the teachers. He saw that the children wanted to discuss and hear the truth about their lives, but how would they ever, in their curriculum, if it wasn’t common discourse among district officials and teachers regarding their circumstances and experiences? A large part of that reality, he said, was that administrators and teachers would have to recognize a system of privilege that they benefitted from, instead of believing the sending countries of so many students weren’t simply “broken because they want to be.”

This not paying attention by teachers and administrators appeared to be the norm for the students in my study. Schools knew how to do the business of schooling based on their Whitestream norms of knowing, and they did not deviate or bother themselves much to accommodate families that did not comprehend or adhere to these Whitestream ways of knowing. During my research, Diego Medrano was able to return to Mexico for the patron saint festival. I asked him what he told the school and his teachers. He said that he told nearly all of them that, “I had a family issue to deal with.” Only one teacher probed, and she was the one Diego had the most trouble with, one who taught art history from a largely Greco-Roman and European perspective. She seemed angry, Diego said, that he would miss her class. Diego explained:

I mean they wouldn’t understand why I went away for a week [they’d be] like “Why during school? Why, why you go?” and I’m like, “Yeah, it’s ‘cause there’s a party there that I need to go to.” And they’ll be like “A party? Your parents

would let you just go for a party?” and I’ll be like, “Well, there’s other stuff.” I mean I don’t really feel like explaining it to them because they couldn’t relate to anything of it, like kids who haven’t gone out of this state probably could not relate to it.

In Chapter 4, I showed Diego’s unbridled excitement about the possibility of his attending the patron saint festival. While Diego had an excellent opportunity to educate his teachers about this event that was central to his family’s and community’s knowing, the teachers did not show the disposition to understand it. He correctly read their reactions, not attempting to tell them any more about the fiesta if he wanted to preserve his status in their eyes. Diego said his world history teacher seemed to understand a little more about Mexico than other teachers, but his questions were about the dangers of visiting there. Even this more likley of teachers wasn’t safe or seemingly open enough to tell about the fiestas Diego had so deeply enjoyed. Instead, the history teacher’s response was a reflection of what a news- and media-consuming Whitestream knower in the U.S. would think about—drug cartels and violence in Mexico.

Lorena Paredes also described her teachers’ lack of understanding about her background and why Lorena didn’t disclose her transnationalism much at school. She also said that teachers rarely took an interest in her background, let alone any transnational practice.

I think it might depend on the teacher, you know, if the teacher is actually one of those people who’s interested in other cultures, they might ask you, but the majority of the time I don’t think it would, it would just be like, you know... when you come back to school like from summer break or something, all kids are

suppose to kind of give a description of what they did and you know... because I had that, you know, like experience in classes where you would tell, "I went to Mexico," and it'll be like, "Ok, moving on, next person," you know what I mean?

Yeah, so I think... I mean... I can think of one instance... like *el doce de diciembre es el Día de La Virgen* [the twelfth of December is the Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe] and like, in church they do a... *las mañanitas* [birthday celebration] and all that... I do remember there was one other girl in my class, and she was Mexican too, and she told me, like you can go and if you're late the school is going to excuse it... and I didn't know that, and I think that it was only in a way... you know, I didn't think that you could that, but I was like, oh wow, I guess that's like they're being a little bit more... but then they kind of did that with all religions, not only just with Mexican like culture, but... I don't think they'd appreciate it... If the *Cinco de Mayo* comes around nobody is like, well, let's talk about why el *Cinco de Mayo* is this or anything like that, you know... but I guess it's not necessarily a part of them... I don't know, I mean... But yeah, I've got to admit that whenever I came from Mexico I never had teachers asked me like, "What did you do?" or anything.

Lorena remembered having a sense of being encouraged that the school system was beginning to develop a sensitivity to her cultural background when she learned that the school would allow her absence to observe the day's celebration in honor of the Lady of Guadalupe's. Yet once she discovered the school system allowed for absences for any religious observation, she realized there was nothing new about what the school knew about her or her background. Similarly, she explained that no one inquired about what

the *Cinco de Mayo* celebration was when she was at school. It's interesting to note that she says "it's not necessarily a part of them," recognizing that her background isn't pertinent to the knowing or being of *them*, in this case the hegemonic *them*, which would be the white knowing and ways of the school. Finally, despite her having traveled to a different country for the summer, Lorena understood that the specific country in question was not worthy of further questioning by her teachers. Her travel to, negotiating language, culture, and experiences in Mexico became as important as, or less important than, someone's beach trip or camping vacation. Her sister Gloria recognized the tragic irony of this lack of recognition of globalized experiences. She asked in frustration, "Why is diversity valued in college but not noted in schools before getting to college? In college, students get so excited about study abroad, and I've already lived it." Gloria was right to be frustrated; it was because a certain kind of diversity was not valued in her K-12 schooling experiences. While many teachers laud the students and their families who travel to Europe, for instance, travel to Mexico was seldom recognized as anything generative.

Some parents laughed about the thought of trying to explain what the fiestas were about and why they would want to take their children to them. It seemed comical to them, the idea of speaking to teachers who were otherwise ignorant about these cultural practices. Families understood that their knowing was something to keep from school personnel, they had received the message that their form of diversity was not important. For the most part, the families in my study avoided taking their children out of school to return for religious fiestas. For the same reason, the Paredes family never once took their children to the festival which occurs at the end of January, the very time school in the

U.S. is in session. I continue to remember Gloria's descriptions of how much better she understood her parents once she was able to visit for the patron saint festival in San Juan Diego, "Now I understand what they were talking about, I know better who they are," she shared. How many children don't have this kind of knowing because their parents are worried about what the schools will say about their not making these return visits for festivals that fall during the academic calendar? Even her two siblings have never returned; what is it they don't know as a result?

There were only rare positive experiences students remembered having where their cultural heritages were valued in the classroom, and there was only one time a student could recall a teacher understanding his return visit to Mexico and valuing it. Cristián recalled this moment fondly. The teacher made a highly appropriate instructional suggestion which allowed Cristián to see that at least one official from the school was inclined to learn about his experience:

It was in 7th grade, uh, I told him, my social studies teacher, I was going to go during December. And he said, "Instead of making all this work up, take this journal and write each day of what you did and stuff," and then he read about it. I took the journal, and then I guess it was a diary. When I brought it back I gave it to him and that was like my makeup work. When he wrote comments, he was like, "Oh I wish I could be there," or, "One day, I'll probably go to Mexico and experience that." I don't have it now, but I wish I did.

Cristián said that he would have liked to have had more opportunities to talk about his experiences in Mexico, but it generally seemed almost unthinkable to him. It is regrettable to have to write about imagining what it would be like for the inclusion of

these students' experiences, skills, and ways of knowing, to be included in the curriculum and in the discourses of what happens in school. The students had deeply internalized that their transnational experiences were simply not to be mentioned during school.

I conclude this section with an event hosted by the elementary school the Medrano children attended. Lupita explained that she had seen a great deal of change in the school, from not employing any Spanish speakers to having several personnel who either were fluent or at least attempted some Spanish while working with families. She was pleased to see that the school was in the process of changing (a point I return to in a following section).

The event was the annual "Multicultural Festival" held between 6 and 8 pm on a school night. It was free and open to the public. Hundreds of people waited in line outside in the cold to be given a ticket to eat something from the festival, which showcased a host of foods that families had prepared in their homes in large quantities to serve at the event. The main attraction, however, was the set of performances of students representing their heritage cultures. Lupita said she was glad to see the school make such a gesture, and she liked seeing the range of cultures represented at her daughter's school. It took a lot of work for the school to set up the event, with coordination from teachers, parents, children, and administration.

Inherent to the problems of packaging multiculturalism as one event, instead of weaving it into overall curriculum and ethos of a school's functioning is the danger of "tokenism" where each culture is reduced to being understood as a quick glance of traditional food and clothing (Gorski, 2007; Steinberg, 2009). It is consumable and even makes people in the dominant culture feel like they are doing something *right* by

participating in such events when there is a lot more to learn from other cultures. I do not condemn the school for coordinating the event; instead, I attempt to highlight some of the problems I found regarding its inarticulation of transnationalism. Knowing the Virginia Standards of Learning, there is little discussion of transnationalism or any sort of transformative multiculturalism (Banks & McGee Banks, 2010) that would create an openness within the school community to embracing such transnationalism.

The formal event began with a local dance troupe of children, some of whom may or may not have attended the elementary school, performing Irish dance numbers. All but one of the children appeared to be white, and the one who was likely not white did not have a coordinating costume with the other children. They performed several dances together, and then afterwards, there were a series of choral numbers and pom pom dances performed by children and led by school staff. The final event was the fashion show, which lasted twenty minutes and highlighted the clothing, as modeled by children from the school. This resulted in a great amount of cheering from families in the audience when they saw clothing that they either liked or represented their own backgrounds. Several times I saw the MC, a local white teacher, struggle with pronunciation of the names of peoples and places, including the indigenous group Lupita's daughter represented (as described in Chapter 4). During the performances, the food was provided in the gym, and it the teachers serving the food were not well-informed about what they were serving. It was unclear which country was being represented, though it looked like there had been signs representing countries earlier in the evening. I wondered how vegetarians or people who abstain from pork would discern what to eat.

There were a host of different demographics of people in attendance, from parents of the children who participated to white and African American parents whose children may only have participated in the brief dances on stage. I wonder what, exactly, families learned, from this multicultural gathering. On one hand, I see this event as a cosmopolitan canopy (E. Anderson, 2011); people of diverse backgrounds were able to share the same physical space and celebratory event together. They could observe each other and even communicate briefly as they ate, waited in line, or watched the performances. On the other I see it as a missed opportunity for highlighting the transnationalism of children with the skills to navigate an increasingly globalized world. Rather than offering the clichéd image of kids of multiple colors holding hands around a globe, a multicultural festival could be an animated event of kids transversing it. What I mean is that children could share stories or artifacts about their lived experiences returning to their home countries, communicating with loved ones in home countries, and their language skills. They could compose work in their home language and read it with a running translation by them, or share music and dance from their home countries and contextualize it. Granted, this would require a great deal more work, but is it any less than transnational students deserve? Remembering Lorena’s statement about it not being “part” of them; perhaps this is the kind of event where the differences of others become new “parts” of the larger school community.

Language and Identity in Schooling

Language and identity are inextricably linked (N. González, 2005). The students in this study knew they were understood as “different” at school—that their identities were sometimes under attack, especially by people who did not even know them well at

school, from other students to administrators. The students in this study also expressed a host of ways their identities were linked to their language usage when they still had relatively strong Spanish skills. Maintaining Spanish for the students was a way to preserve positive forms of identity in light of the negation of who they were.

As Anzaldúa says, “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language,” (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 81). Just as language usage is fluid, so is identity. Like identity, language is also a site of contestation, especially under the pressures of English as a “prestige language” (González, 2005) in the U.S. and throughout the world. Identity is a site of struggle, and identity manifests itself as the history a person lives, or the history-in-person, resulting in multiple identic positionings which sway and remain in flux (Holland Herring & Lave, 2001). González (2005) explains that the ambiguity which occurs alongside the language socialization of Mexican-origin children helps create an “emotion of minority status” situated in a social context, what she refers to as “subalternity.” While González’s Tucson-area families used Spanish as a response to maintaining a subaltern sense of knowing through music and film, for instance, the context was different for the families in my study, creating a different set of language socializations, which I explain below.

Students in my study understood themselves as the children of their parents (especially when making visits to Mexico, as mentioned in Chapter 4), as Mexican, in some ways American, and at times as Latino. Despite the pressures of assimilation, none of them expressed ever having attempted to claim “American” as their only way of self-identification. When they did claim it, it was always in concert with other senses of who they were. Transnationalism plays into this nexus of identity and language in the ways

transnational participation, especially return visits, helped strengthen students' Spanish language skills and identification. In this section I further highlight the negation of and attacks on students' identities as well as isolated cases where students had edifying experiences with teachers as an example of how teachers can facilitate transnational students' linguistic and identity formation toward their academic success and understanding where and how they belong in the world. I also show the students' language positionings, their sense of how their language skills and identities were understood and enhanced (or negated) in schools, and their feelings about language as well as how they identified.

On some occasions teachers asked students about the knowledge they had as Mexicans to inform the class about an issue for clarification or a point in the curriculum. These questions were often what I consider "Mexican fetishes" surrounding issues such as the Day of the Dead, how "exotic" markets operate in Mexico, and cultural events. While these issues are real, generally only the carnivalesque or oddity was asked about, what I gather is a reflection of the portrayal of Mexicans in the dominant culture. What teachers did not seem to consider was that the students did not and could not know everything there is to know about Mexico. They often positioned students as repositories of all-things-Mexican, a common experience of people with non-hegemonic identities represented as a minority in a group (Burns, 2000; Koshy, 2006). Lorena Paredes described how one of her high school AP Spanish language teachers put her in awkward situations.

She [the teacher] was also one of those people who asks. We did like a Día de los Muertos like a little thing, like the second of November I think it is... and so she

would ask me, but it was more like oh right Lorena blah, blah, blah... you know, but for the rest of students was like, oh yeah she's Mexican, she's from Mexico, she should know... you know what I mean? Or she would ask me if she wouldn't understand, like why do Mexicans such and such... you know, like she would ask me and you know, I'd answer... but I can't really remember after class her asking me questions like so how's Mexico when you go down there, she never really asked like how were things over there...

I got a little scared sometimes, because I wasn't sure that I was giving the right information ... You know, because it's like, yeah my parents talk about it but to me but I really don't know what is like, you know... Like, *por ejemplo* (for example), *un Día de los Muertos* (a Day of the Dead)... I've never, you know, my mom described it to me about going to the cemetery and bringing flowers to the person who you want to go and see and I think they also have like *misa* [mass] or something, but I've never really been there to know, so I just gave kind of what I knew but at the end of the day I was like I hope that that's actually what they do, because that's what my mom told me, you know. I know during Christmas they have what they call *posadas*, [a form of Christmas festival] I have no idea of what that is, you know... So, I feel bad sometimes because it's like, and especially in my class because it's like I was expected to give the right answer and at the end of the day it's like, well, I'm not really sure about this or anything.

While the AP Spanish language teacher's questioning might have been considered thoughtful on some level, after all, she knew that Lorena was from Mexico, her line of questioning consistently went in the direction of the carnival aspect of being Mexican,

never the day-to-day, and certainly never about her return visits. Like so many people of non-dominant groups, Lorena was positioned as the repository of all-things-exotic about her culture, as if the culture were one monolithic, static thing (Cruz, 1995). This put her in the awkward position of hoping she was representing correctly, and, because of the power differential of questioning-at-the-student, it never occurred to her to try to insert information about her knowledge as a transnational into the discussions or to contest *why* the teacher was asking her those questions the way she asked them.

Students could not know every detail about the width of all things Mexican and all cultural practices in all regions. In fact, several students reported that it made them somewhat uncomfortable that they were expected to be the spokesperson for all things Mexican at times. Aware of the country's underdog status, they wanted, of course, to portray it accurately and for others not to form additional prejudices about the country and its people. While it could be affirming that teachers who inquired about students' knowledges knew the students were from Mexico, they only focused on certain aspects. Culture, of course, is also the everyday actions of people, not only the exotic (Spradley & McCurdy, 1990).

The young men in this study generally expressed a greater awareness of being positioned by school authority as possible troublemakers than the young women. None of the children in this study had any sort of criminal record or history of major behavioral problems in their families or communities. However, the boys were sometimes treated as threatening, a situation which corroborates the findings of other researchers about the positioning of Latino and African American boys as potential criminals (Katz, 1997; Wald & Losen, 2003). For instance, Nicolás was regularly followed by the mostly

African American security guards at Northern Virginia High School, he said, and questioned frequently about possible gang activity and theft. This struck me as surprising, because Nicolás did not wear any of the “traditional” clothing which may have made him appear to be affiliated in these ways, and his peers were not involved in gang activity. He was enrolled in honors courses and planning to attend college at the time. This aligns with findings where Latino boys, alongside their African American male counterparts, have been directed toward what has been called the “school-to-prison pipeline.” I wonder if Nicolás was questioned this frequently and did not “appear” to have any of the attire of gang-members, what was happening to the children who did choose to wear clothing that may have looked more “gang-like?”

Cristián González fit the image of being more “gang-like” in that some of his pants were slightly baggier than Nicolás’s, and he wore more over-sized T-shirts (though only some of the time). He also was darker-complected than Nicolás, and he attended a high school that was further away from Washington, D.C. than Nicolás’s. Cristián was the only student in this study to have ever been suspended. One day at school a white student told him, “Go home, wetback.” In retaliation, he hit the student who called him this undignified and pointedly racial slur. He received a greater punishment in number of days for the suspension, because, he was told he “threw the first punch.” It’s understandable that having an underdog mentality, one would quickly react to such a slur by throwing a punch. The underdog, by definition, has to be more resourceful and literally fight harder to earn his station. In this case, Cristián already knew his positioning was of a lower status, and then it was compounded and named in such an ugly and intentional way. As part of the meting out of Cristián’s punishment, there was

no talk of the racial nature of the slur and how offensive it was, he said, from the administrators—just the knowledge that his punishment was far greater than the other boy's.

Cristián also encountered the message that he was a “troublemaker” for wearing a symbol of his identity and an artifact of his transnational participation—a rosary his grandmother had given him during a return visit to Mexico when he was in 9th grade.

When I went to Mexico, my grandma gave me this wooden rosary and I put it on my wrist. My grandma said it would protect me or like nothing bad would happen to me. It was a big one.

I took it to school and then the principal was like, “Can you come here?” and he didn't tell me anything. He took me to the office, and asked me, “Why do you have that on?” And I was like, “Cause my grandmother gave it to me.” And they were like, “You can't have it on here 'cause it's gang symbol,” and I never knew that. And I was like, “Well I can't take it off because it was wrapped around.” and it was all burned on like the little tip. And then I couldn't take it off 'cause my hand was too big and he [the principal] was like “Alright, I'm going to have to send you to um to like home or something.” And I was like, “But, if I could take it off, can I stay?” He was like “Yeah.” Then I was like “Alright, I'll take it off by the end of the day,” but I never did 'cause I couldn't. I took it off once I got home. I don't think it was fair.

They shouldn't assume something, they should ask before they make um, before they make an action. 'Cause he already had the detention slip, I guess he was threatening me to take it off or something and um that I guess they shouldn't,

I don't know if I'm using this word right, what's it, prejudice? Yeah they shouldn't be anything like bad, they should just, even if they don't like someone they could at least... show that they do even though they don't really mean it. I rarely see the principal and he assumes that I always go there [to his office] but I never do and that's what makes me mad. He'll be like, "I've seen you here for the tenth time this week," and I was like, "What are you talking about? This is my first time."

What happened to Cristián with his rosary was not a unique circumstance. Latino youth, in particular, were regularly told they could not wear rosaries in the Washington, D.C. area for the same reason the principal stated. It's tragic to think that this one symbol, given to him by his grandmother—a woman I met in San Gabriel who in no way was involved with gangs—was misconstrued as a marker of his possible affiliation with criminal gangs. Cristián indicates a sense of a structural analysis about the racial profiling he endured, referring to the "prejudice" of the principal. Children are not normally told they cannot wear religious symbols to school in the U.S. Jewish youth are free to wear their yamakas; Muslim students can wear the head scarf in schools (though the latter has been contested in some cases). Yet Cristián was reminded that he was troublemaker for appearing for the "tenth time" in the principal's office, when it was really his first that week.

Cristian's parents were surprised by the incident but supported the school by telling him, "Just don't do anything that gets you in trouble." Rather than be oppositional, they wanted their son to get through school without "trouble." What they may have traded, however, was their son's engagement of his right to claim his ethnic,

religious, and transnational identities. In fact, they may have been trading one sort of trouble for a historic kind of erasure, or what I referred to in Chapter 4 as “attempted homicide” on identity, a different and far more damaging kind of trouble.

I return to Lorena to show how language and identity are linked, and how English language training can help undermine the ways a child perceives herself. Lorena was eventually placed in gifted and talented classes, despite her ESOL designation in her school district and having come to the U.S. for the first time as a first grader. She recognized the need to have had support from ESOL classes, but she also felt a stigma for having been placed in them, especially relative to her gifted and talented peers. She developed a strategy to enrich her learning that developed partly from the negative impact of her positioning as an English Language Learner, one incident of which she described:

I'll probably say middle school is where I learned to take everything home and reread it to make sense of the material, maybe like fifth grade... Um, maybe when I was in middle school I was in the ESL classes and the majority of the kids were like I noticed that the vocabulary was much more advanced than my own, because at home I don't hear this stuff, you know what I mean? And so, it was like I don't want to look dumb in front of everyone, you know, I don't know how I took the ESL classes, to begin with, you know, but I was in there, so I felt a little more like, childish... I felt like... well, in a way it's like, I have to do better, I can't just, you know, settle, and so I think that was like the middle school, it was around that age that I decided, like, you know, have to... I don't get it at school, and just my shyness I know, not willing not raise my hand and ask a question,

kind of forced me to go home and do it on my own, I think...I had bad experiences when I was a little kid so I guess that's why, they just kind of stuck with me.

Um, I remember... we had to go up there [to the front of the room] and make a poster of yourself, things about yourself, so for me it was harder, because I was scared of people, like, what would they think I'm telling that I'm from such and such, you know what I mean? And things like that... and then, once I sat down and I heard other kids like laughing about it and just since then, I guess it's just traumatic for me... I don't know what they were laughing at, the fact that I sounded like I was going to cry. No, the teacher didn't say anything to me... I think that's, you know, as a teacher I would have say something like, "Hey, guys, that's ok, you know, we all at some point got to get comfortable with things." Nobody said anything to me then, so I kind of just like...felt bad about it and kind of stuck with me.

Lorena shared a backwards excavation of how she developed her study habit of taking everything home and rereading it to study it harder, a skill she continued to use even as she began graduate school to become a teacher. She traced it back to being shy, something she said resulted from the way she was positioned as a child. She was permitted to be laughed at by her teacher—which she came to know as unpardonable, but not something as a child she could make sense of, especially through the hurt she felt. Lorena connected her identity about where she was “from” as part of what might create the ridicule she feared as a child. Perhaps mimicking her mother's resourceful use of the dictionary to do the extra work to make sense of the formal school curriculum, she took

her materials home and re-studied them, though no one told her to do so. Had she not had the exposure to the gifted and talented classes, however, she probably would not have realized that the vocabulary to which she was exposed was any different. Lorena was, in many ways, fortunate, because she had access to gifted and talented courses which helped to track her toward honors classes. Those courses—and the exposure to peers who were college-bound—helped her get into the university from which she eventually graduated. But much of her academic success was despite the negative experiences she had and the misunderstandings surrounding her identity and her own struggle to know who she was in school.

In the same way that Lorena felt she didn't understand how and why she was placed in ESOL classes, Marco González was living a similar experience at the time of our interviews. Despite having been born in the U.S., he was still receiving ESOL services by 7th grade in science classes, as far as he could tell. He wasn't entirely sure which classes were ESOL, though he knew for certain his science class was designated as ESOL. English was his dominant language; he could scarcely speak in Spanish and understood it as a listener. He spoke with some resentment about his continued placement in ESOL courses:

I don't like the ESL classes 'cuz the teachers are mean. They um, well they, when you go ahead and you really know the answer they still, you know, they still tell you to do it and then if you, like when they're still reading and you read like you read it and you answer it, they'll yell at you because they say "You have to listen to me," and stuff so... They really bother me, they don't listen they don't like when I tell them I already know, they still say, like they told my [mainstream]

teacher that I have a like a good average and they still didn't take me out. They just said, "You're just going to stay."

Marco had also been designated as a special education student in elementary school, and he had been released the year prior to my meeting him. His mother said that she only understood that they said he didn't need the support anymore, and she trusted their judgment to do their jobs. She was unclear about why he was still in ESL classes but trusted the school, as the parents in my study tended to do, similar to findings about other Latino families in U.S. schools (Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). While I am unfamiliar with the testing that was done and the way the school had placed Marco in special education and ESOL, I wondered whether Marco may have been misplaced, especially in special education, mirroring the misplacement of students of color, and especially ESOL students in special education (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 2002).

Most of the children in this study did speak Spanish fluently. There are a host of implications regarding schooling and identity which are bound together from that Spanish. First, the children who returned to Mexico *con ganas*, or quite excitedly, were always the ones who had fluent Spanish. In their return visits, they were able to use almost exclusively Spanish in their everyday lives, and this meant their Spanish skills were further solidified. As research shows, when students have strong skills in their primary languages, they are able to perform well in learning the target language (in this case, English) (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Crawford, 2004; Cummins, 2005; Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2006). These children also were able to see who their families were based on return visits in the fullness of community participation as they lived their lives in Mexico while communicating in Spanish. All of the children who were fluent in

Spanish either graduated from high school or were on track towards meeting the requirements for graduation.

These fluent children also participated transnationally through their consumption, production, and sharing of media. As previously noted, videos of the patron saint festivals were customarily sent back to the U.S., and children sometimes saw these videos with their parents. Their parents often watched the news in Spanish, often the award-winning program, “*Primer Impacto*” or “First Impact” on the Spanish-language cable channel Univision. Fathers especially spoke with their children about what was happening in the world, formed largely by this television program. The Spanish-speaking children both actively and passively watched the program and learned both more about Mexico and a different perspective on world politics and the immigration debate in the U.S. from this channel’s news programming. Sometimes children posted videos online; other times they downloaded music from Spanish-speaking musicians and even shared it with their parents. I note that for all of the children whose Spanish skills were lower, this participation in enriching their language through media was consequently, and unfortunately, also lower.

Diego Medrano was able to maintain a generally positive ethnic identity by self-identifying as “Mexican,” and some of this was rooted in his Spanish language usage. During his return visits to Mexico, he spent time among many generations of family and community members, and in the U.S., he had worked with his father in roofing and spent time around his father’s friends, using his Spanish to be with them:

I mean I just feel better in Spanish like if I was speaking Spanish someone would think better of me than if I would talk in English. Like I sound more adult in

Spanish, more manly, so I feel like more adult I guess when I talk Spanish. In Spanish I would talk to adults, like even here I would talk to my dad's friends or my parents because I don't really speak Spanish in school. When I'm talking to other Spanish [speaking] people I guess I just use it in more adult situations so I feel more like I have to use in adult situations.

For Diego, he felt a maturity only *because of* his Spanish abilities. It is interesting to note that Diego felt more mature in Spanish, as the first language of many children who speak a language other than English is often considered the more immature language. Because of how Diego was socialized—including his transnational participation—he felt confident in his Spanish. That maturity would have remained latent—perhaps never flourished—had he not had this linguistic ability. Such maturity, it seems, would necessarily translate into his behavior in English speaking communities if he were given the opportunities to manifest that maturity. As he hoped and planned to attend college, and was supported by his parents in that plan, he hopefully would be able to enact that maturity. Though it seems a pity he would likely have to wait until he was older to do so.

Diego said he felt a sense of pride during his late elementary school years when during two of those years, he had teachers who prized his Spanish language skills. Neither teacher did anything extraordinary; simply, they asked Diego to translate the occasional word in the basal reader from which his language arts classes read. This, in turn, led to his peers' interest in his Spanish abilities. "The [students] didn't say anything mean. They were interested, they wanted to know what it meant, like 'what is this word?' It felt cool!" These acts of positioning a student as a holder of knowledge send a strong message to the student—that his knowledge has value in the eyes of his teachers

and subsequently in the eyes of his peers. Such positive valuing of his language at the least could not hurt his continued usage of Spanish and could likely encourage his further experimentation and appreciation for his heritage language.

Similar to Diego, Nicolás also felt better speaking in Spanish, and he felt enriched by being able to speak it throughout the day without stop during his return trips to Mexico.

No sé, es que me siento... para mí, hablando en español diario, es que en la escuela casi no hablo español, sí, a veces no hablo nada de español y siento que al llegar aquí a la casa y empezar a hablar español es como llegar a casa y ponerte la ropa de dormir, es decir, te sientes más cómodo. Y, o sea, me voy allá y diario estoy hablando español y no sé, pero me siento más cómodo hablando en español.

I don't know, I feel... for me, speaking in Spanish everyday, it's that in school I hardly ever speak Spanish, yes, sometimes I speak no Spanish and I feel that I come home and starting to speak in Spanish is like putting on your pajamas.

That's to say that it feels more comfortable. And, well, I go there [to Mexico] and everyday I am speaking it and I don't know, but I feel more comfortable speaking Spanish.

Nicolás's comment has resonance with Anzaldúa's quotation about language—Spanish is like pajamas, or the closest thing to his skin, the most comfortable, a safe cover, perhaps. His sister, Jessica, also felt more comfortable speaking Spanish. This may be because their home was a very safe space for them, and they had a great deal of intra-family communication, especially with their Spanish-dominant mother—all this in

addition to their visits to Mexico. Nicolas's family spent approximately two months each summer in Mexico, and they communicated with a host of people of multiple age ranges. Part of his confidence in Spanish is likely the result of this multi-generational usage of Spanish and the prolonged periods of time using the language in a Spanish-speaking country.

Unlike Diego, Nicolás was not encouraged to use Spanish in school. I believe that because he had such extensive transnational participation and parents who were so adamantly pro-Spanish language that he maintained a sense of strength about his Spanish. Nicolás was often at odds with his Spanish language teachers. He took advanced Spanish, the most advanced courses available at Northern Virginia High School, including Advanced Placement Spanish courses. First, he found it aggravating to have to learn the subject pronoun "*vosotros*" form of verb conjugations in Spanish (not used in Latin America), though he accepted that the knowledge did count, at least for people who were going to deal with Spaniards. But, worse, he said, was when his teachers tried to correct his Spanish, and they were wrong.

Both Nicolás and his father explained how frustrated he was with his teacher, Mrs. Greenfoot, who swore she knew the "right" Spanish. Mrs. Greenfoot had had a Spanish grandparent, but her Spanish had not been learned with that grandparent but through schooling. Nicolás had the kind of personality where he often spoke up when he observed something he thought was wrong. There was a preservation of dignity involved in his speaking up during his heritage language classes.

In one instance, Mrs. Greenfoot was using the word "*huerto*" in class, which means a field, often an agricultural field. In Mexico, the word is often used as "*huerta*"

to mean precisely the same thing. Because Nicolás had always heard the word used by his family as “*huerta*,” he asked the teacher if the word wasn’t being mispronounced. The teacher, however, refused to acknowledge this as even possibly correct. She insisted, in front of all the other students, that the word was, “*huerto*.” This was an explicit denial of Nicolás’s language skills, and perhaps also to be understood by the surrounding students that “Spain Spanish” was more proper than Nicolás’s “Mexico Spanish.”

In another instance with the same teacher, Nicolás attempted to correct the teacher’s Spanish. During class, she tried to tell the students a life lesson by saying, “*La vida es como una moto, no hay reverso*,” or, “Life is like a motorcycle; there’s no reverse.” Nicolás tried to correct her usage of the word, “*reverso*,” as it is normally used to describe an opposite or the back of an object. In this case, Nicolás knew the word should be “*reversa*,” which would change the gender of the noun to the female—the noun form which is used explicitly to describe the reverse gear. Again, Mrs. Greenfoot refused to acknowledge what was in this case an accurate correction and stood in adamant opposition to his correction. It should be noted that Nicolás did not correct the teacher at every turn, only on some occasions when he felt she was obviously wrong.

Nicolás said that Mrs. Greenfoot had a good reputation among students and he knew she generally knew her Spanish well. Nonetheless, she was not willing to accept his corrections. Had she been able to, she could have elevated his status as a knower of the content she was attempting to impart, drawing directly from a linguistic fund of knowledge (Moll, et al., 1992). Luciano, Nicolás’s father, recognized, “*No sé, si la maestra se cree muy española o qué, pero así no es*,” or, “I don’t know, if the teacher thinks she’s real [Spain] Spanish or what, but this is not how it [the language] is.”

The fluent Spanish-speaking children also recognized, however, that their Spanish had limitations relative to the registers in which they could engage in English, particularly academic English. This comes as no surprise, as the state of Virginia does not authorize bilingual education programs from which these children could have benefited. Despite some students' participation in Advanced Placement Spanish classes, they knew their academic Spanish was more limited than their academic English. Though Nicolás had a greater comfort level in Spanish, he recognized his writing skills were better in English, "*Ahorita porque he estado estudiando un poco más el inglés, creo que mi inglés es mucho mejor, pero... hablando, yo creo que están casi iguales, escrito, sí, el inglés es un poco mejor,*" or, "Now because I have been studying a bit more English, I think my English is much better, but... speaking, I think they're almost the same, writing, yes, the English is a bit better." It is unfortunate that because the working class families in this study had less formal schooling, they did not have this register of Spanish to pass on to their children.

Because Spanish is not considered a "prestige language" as English is in the U.S. (N. González, 2005), it seems likely the shame around not having the breadth of registers and its lower status could contribute to less usage of Spanish and a lower likelihood of passing it on to the next generation. While local school districts did offer courses in Spanish for heritage language speakers, they were only offered beginning in middle school, and usually high school. According to Mr. Schneider, a teacher of these courses, the classes come far too late, as the students have already developed a shame regarding their limited abilities in Spanish. Actually making it all the way into AP Spanish language courses was the apex of formal Spanish opportunities for heritage language students; a

slim minority of heritage language speakers actually made it into those classes. As evidenced by the students in my research, these courses were not enough for the students to feel their Spanish skills were on par with their English.

In contrast to the additive skills of the fluent Spanish speaking children, the two middle school aged boys who had limited Spanish felt more ambivalent about their return visits to Mexico. While they recognized that it was a privilege to be able to return and that there were fun aspects to return visits, they were so *apenados* or ashamed about their lack of skills in Spanish that they participated far less in community activities and in turn were less able to practice their Spanish. Inside Mexico, people of Mexican heritage who cannot speak Spanish are often met with disdain. While it isn't entirely rational, the response inside Mexico seems more a frustration of the stripping of identity (including linguistic heritage) of the Mexicans in diaspora that gets wrongly directed at people who don't learn the language, usually through no fault of their own. In this sense, the lack of Spanish language skills may help support a vicious cycle of not wanting to return to Mexico, and consequently, opportunities for transnational identity exploration are stifled.

Generally, the students in this study did not receive many positive messages about their linguistic or ethnic heritages in their formal schooling. Mr. Duke, a guidance counselor at Northern Virginia High School, had strongly encouraged the three children in the Paredes family to take Advanced Placement Spanish language courses, but only as a gateway toward college access, not as one of maintaining or increasing cultural and linguistic heritages. While these heritages weren't hidden, as their transnationalism was, the schools were generally ineffective in helping maintain or strengthen them.

It is important for school officials to consider the cultural and linguistic heritages which teachers bring with them into their work as world language teachers and generally for their work with the students they teach—all students. I am not arguing that teachers of Spanish who have ties to Spain should be neglected for hire, but that a consideration of whose Spanish and cultures are represented should be considered when making hiring choices. Furthermore, just because a teacher is Latino does not make that teacher one who will transmit Latino cultures successfully. Mr. Schneider expressed his frustration at Northern Virginia High School about the school's Spanish teachers:

Habían profesores en el departamento de idiomas, que era donde yo enseñaba, pero sí me di cuenta que había unos cuantos otros que tenían rasgos hispanos, pero sobretudo más esos profesores que tenían rasgos hispanos, se los ocultaban y... o nunca llegaron a reconocer su raíz hispana... en nombre solamente.

There were teachers in the foreign language department, I realized there were some who had Hispanic traits, but above all those teachers who had Hispanic traits, they hid them, and... or they never were able to recognize their Hispanic root... in name only.

Mr. Schneider's comments reiterate the point that one's ethnicity does not indicate one's cultural and political positioning. What school officials do need to consider is the sensitivity teachers will have about who they work with and their abilities to weave meaningful approaches and curriculum into the ways they teach.

Daniel Paredes was a student who said he changed when he entered high school, thanks, in part, to the sensitivity and cultural positioning of his teacher, Mr. Schneider. Daniel said that when he started high school, he wasn't interested in performing well in

school. He said that the person who changed his approach to thinking about how he behaved in school, who he was, was Mr. Schneider.

He really impacted my life... He was a great person. When I got into high school I was kind of in that, you know when you first enter high school you don't know who you are... I was trying to figure out who I was. I was kind of in the in-crowd, you know, oh we wanna be bad and do things. I had my Spanish for fluent speakers class with [Mr. Schneider]. He was like, "You guys shouldn't be this way. We gotta change this, not just for yourself but for the whole community. So people won't stereotype so bad about the whole community." He showed us videos and told us stories and stuff. Pretty much after I took his class, you know me and him became really cool. Pretty much that pushed me to say I don't think I want to be with these other bum guys. I wanna do something different.

We saw some movies, like we learned a lot about our own country, and how we're in the USA to do something better and for us to just sit her and waste it is a dumb thing to do. He tried to get in the students' lives, and in the end he was able to get some students' lives and impact their lives.

Daniel was able to internalize the messages from Mr. Schneider about learning where he came from and about representing the Latino community, as problematic as it is to have stand for an entire people inside the skin of one person. He said this did not work with all students, but that it did make an impact on some. Importantly, he and Mr. Schneider developed a relationship, one where he felt cared for, where they "became really cool" together, echoing a form of authentic caring (Valenzuela, 1999). He said he studied with Mr. Schneider in 9th and 10th grade, and that he continued to visit him between the

passing of classes to check in and say hello. While those visits were informal, they helped Daniel know that the same caring teacher was available when he needed him.

Daniel also pointed toward help he received from a white chemistry teacher, beginning in his 10th grade year as helping him succeed in school.

Mrs. Cook helped me out with my college applications and applying and stuff. I had her 10th grade year, but she was always on my case though. My junior year she saw us outside during [study hall] and was like, “Get in the car! We’re going right back to school!” I had detention with her afterwards for a few afternoons. But she was just looking out for me. She knew I was a senior and she was like, “Daniel, you’re goin’ to college!” And then she told me to come back to her room after school and work on my applications and financial aid.

It’s important to note that Daniel’s behavior in school, even after his deciding to succeed at schooling, was not that of the “perfect student”; his skipping class with a friend indicates that. More important than Daniel’s slip was Mrs. Cook’s response. She held him to a high standard and personally held him accountable through what was also a caring relationship. The correct protocol would have been to have written a referral; in fact, putting the boys in her car was probably something legal advisors for the district would discourage. That the boys got in her car shows the kind of trust they did have with her, if not also perhaps their fear of what might happen if they did not get in. When I asked how Daniel had impressed her, I noticed a Nepantlera at work in Daniel:

She saw me help out these ESOL students who didn’t really talk English, who sat in the back. The way I helped them, she saw I was bright, and she was like, “You need to be doing really well.” And she started to help me out more.

Daniel's work as a facilitator of the ESOL students was the very thing that Mrs. Cook noticed as his strength. Where other teachers have yelled at students for speaking Spanish in class, she recognized his strength and felt compelled to help him navigate the system toward college.

I have concluded this section with positive examples of how teachers can be effective with transnational students in schools, though there is still more work they could do. Daniel, for instance, said that he didn't remember discussing much about his engagement with Mexico in his life, that he discussed more the experiences of the past history of Mexico, as if it was in the back of his life forever. To be clear, all the students had far more negative experiences about their identities as Mexicans in schools, and some remembered having not one positive one in terms of the responses of their administrators and teachers. I expand on this point in the following section.

Transnational Family Connections with Schools

The kind of disconnect between Cristián González's parents and his school was fairly common. The underdog mentality I described in Chapter 4 of the four families was pitted against the hegemonic approach of administrators in schools, one which, in the cases of these four families, sought to assimilate them and inadvertently dissuaded them from meaningful transnational participation. The parents and children all recognized that the schools did make some outreach efforts to the families who were not Whitestream, or, in this case, families who were immigrant and/or Latino. However, the outreach was only on the terms of the school's, mirroring the problems of schools who attempt to follow "best practices" approaches of one-size-fits-all forms of outreach to all families (Olivos, 2009). It was along, what I call, the "Continuum of the comfortable." The

continuum may creep toward further outreach as long as the school finds itself in a generally comfortable position to do so, though this position is sometimes borne out of its demographic imperative of shifting racial compositions. Participation in this continuum may revert in the opposite direction. My research echoes Olivos's findings about how schools do not effectively engage Latino parents because they generally ignore the structural problems which have made schools generally inhospitable places for families of color (2006).

At one end of the continuum is practically no contact with "others" in the school community. At the other end is fully embracing points of difference from "others" in the school community in a way that all points of view were woven into the larger fabric of daily life and cultural practices in schools, one which unsettle the hegemony of schooling as we know it today. I have yet to see such practices in the U.S. and cannot fully articulate what that would look like. The school has domain over the continuum, and it shifts participation in ways so that its hegemony continues to maintain and further assert itself. Some engagement with "others" in the community takes place insofar as reaction needs to happen in order to contain the "others." That is, for instance, when a larger share of student population becomes "other." For example, Northern Virginia High School began to have "Latino Parent Nights" in school-directed efforts to share with Latino families what kinds of expectations the school had for its students (such as attendance policies) and opportunities (such as AP classes). These events, however, were not designed with any assistance from the parents and top-down in their approaches, usually with only a minority of parents attending. But in this way, the school could

report, for instance, that it was making a “good faith” effort to address the “achievement gap” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) between white and Latino students.

Lupita’s awareness of her children’s elementary school demonstrated this point well. In her child’s elementary school, she recognized that the school had begun to hire more Spanish-speaking personnel since when her two boys had been there several years ago. Previously, no one had spoken Spanish. During the time of my research, she said, several teachers spoke some Spanish, and one administrative assistant was fluent in Spanish. However, the curriculum remained US/Euro-centric, following the state-mandated guidelines of Virginia Standards of Learning. While Lupita was pleased to see that some things had changed in the elementary school, I believe they had changed just enough for the school to “manage” its response to the local population along the hegemony of the day, one which had shifted to not appear completely insensitive and clueless to the local population, one which had shifted from being a slim minority of Latinos to a much larger share of the overall student population. Along the continuum, this school had moved a couple pegs away from absolutely no contact but was still within its hegemonic comfort zones.

Still, school officials often blissfully ignored parents, a practice that is of utmost comfort for school officials—why tax oneself if one needs not do so? Only when the parents were insistent (and even then, sometimes, the families were ineffective in getting the schools’ appropriate attention), did things change for their children. For instance, Ernestina worked in the cafeteria during the last three years of her kids’ attendance at Northern Virginia High School. Day after day, she prepared the food, fed masses of students, and cleaned up afterwards in her tidy, pink, district-mandated polo shirt. She

was on time every day, and she rarely missed work, if ever. Ernestina was a completely untapped resource for the school. She could have been consulted by faculty and/or administration about a host of issues which would have allowed them to improve upon their delivery of the service they attempt to provide—education. She could have served on school committees, such as the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports committee at Northern Virginia High School, which is supposed to have parent representatives. Ernestina had plenty of ideas and opinions, and she was also the parent of honors-course children, an aberration for the Latino students at the school, like most high schools in the U.S.

Some might argue that schools cannot be aware of the status of their of its personnel as parents, that faculty and administration are too busy tending to other matters. But in the case of the Delgados, Edith, the mother, made it her business to be present at her children's schools. For instance, she said she approached her eldest son's guidance counselor several times, by physically visiting the school. She said she asked the guidance counselor, "What do I have to do to get my child into college?" The guidance counselor in that case told the mother, "I am glad you are here, but the person I really need to see is your son, Nicolás, if he's really interested in going to school." While this latter statement is important; the son, in fact, should want to attend college himself, not just his mother. Nonetheless, the mother could have been guided along in the kinds of discussions she might have had with her son to help him consider his options. The counselor could have directed the mother to resources to help her engage her son in such discussions. The counselor could have invited the mother to participate in school events or parent groups. None of this occurred.

What schools were reported to have done, however, was assimilate parents with disregard to their cultural backgrounds, seemingly completely unaware of any transnational participation the families may have had. For instance, Nicolás's family had learned well how to behave at school events, down to what to wear, as described in Chapter 4. When I saw them at their son's regional science fair, their sweaters and wool blend pants could have come directly from the racks of any mid-level department store in the area. They wore the "right" kind of clothing so as to be taken and seen seriously, though they privately confided that they knew they were always seen as Mexican first. They had learned the way to code themselves as middle class in dress in their attempts to blend with the dominant culture.

Lupita Medrano described her frustration at the attempts schools had made to assimilate her and her family as she considered the twelve years she had been involved in her children's U.S. schools.

Pues, es que ellos, por decir, había un evento, había algunos que teníamos y nos exigían, bueno no nos exigían pero que teníamos que participar, y entonces esto era como si me estuvieran diciendo, "Pues esto hacemos aquí. Tú lo debes de hacer, no hacemos lo que tú hiciste, pues no tenemos por qué hacerlo." Entonces yo más bien sentía como que obligaban a hacer sus cosas, sus tradiciones, entonces yo sentía, pues bueno, porque aquí estamos pues entonces nos tenemos que acostumbrar a lo que ellos hacen o dicen.

No, no era que hicieran un evento o por decir, el cuatro de julio tenemos que celebrarlo... más que nada, por decir, paseos de ellos que pues uno va y no tiene nada que ver con lo que uno quisiera que, bueno no ha visto uno eso, o sea

que no es precisamente que hayan hecho ellos un evento que participemos y todo eso sino que, pues simplemente son cosas que uno no hacía. Sí, pues por ejemplo en Navidad, más que nada de los regalos, de que Santa Claus te va a traer algo, entonces por decir, nunca mencionaron, no ves... el nacimiento de Jesús, ni los tres reyes, por ejemplo. Nada de eso, entonces este, pues son cosas que uno nunca miró. Tú ves la falta de ellos, de no saber la cultura de uno, entonces pues es, es como.... Pues ellos piensan que uno es igual que ellos, que las tradiciones son iguales que las de ellos, no se ponen a pensar que no... en que pues no fuimos iguales y todo esto es nuevo para nosotros.

Well, it's that they, to say it this way, there was an event, there were some that we had and they demanded we be there, well, they didn't demand it but we had to participate, and so then it's as if they were saying to me, "This is what we do here. You have to do it. We don't do what you did. Well we don't have any reason to do it." So I felt like they obligated us to do their things, their traditions, so I felt, well, because we're here we have to get used to what they do or say.

No, it wasn't that they had done an event or, to say, the 4th of July we have to celebrate it... it was more, than anything, fieldtrips they took and one went and it had so little to do with what one would like, not exactly that they had done some event where we participate and all that except that simply they were things they did that we didn't do. Yes, for example at Christmas, more than anything the gifts, that Santa Claus is going to bring you something, so, to say that, well they never mentioned... you don't see... the Nativity of Jesus, or the Three Kings, for instance. Nothing like that, so, well, they're things one never

saw. You see the lack of these things, the not knowing one's culture, so well it's like... Well they think that one is the same as they are, that the traditions are the same as theirs; they don't stop to think that no... that we were not all the same and that all this is new for us.

Lupita explained the lack of understanding of her culture and the sense of isolation she felt. The school communicated that they "had to" participate in certain events, and that she felt obligated to do so. What's as important as what the school did is what they did not do; they never asked what Lupita or her family did as their own traditions, "the lack of these things, the not knowing one's culture." As such, she felt the isolation of not having any markers of her heritage present in the school. She was never at odds with participating in U.S. culture, and, in fact, had several U.S.-born friends who she related with well. She adopted several U.S.-based cultural practices, such as the opening of gifts on Christmas day and the enrollment of her children in after-school classes such as Karate. In San Gabriel, her family and community seldom opened gifts on Christmas but rather on the 6th of January, the day of Epiphany, and those gifts were more symbolic than expensive. There was pain in her description of the lack of attention to her culture and where her family was from, their identities being worn down in a hegemonic schooling system that cared little for their backgrounds.

My research also indicates that there was racialized and class-based engagement with these families from the hegemonic, Whiteman positioning of schools toward the families in my study. Despite the multinational composition of many of the student bodies in the region, these families all described having had negative racialized incidents (that also seemed to be coded with their working-class status as well) in the schools (and

in other spaces in the U.S.). These incidents, alongside their underdog status, often left them wondering if subsequent incidents were also racialized. True to the nature of microaggressions, they spent extra energy trying to decipher incidents and make sense of the pain inflicted by racialized experiences (Sue, 2010).

Edith Delgado explained that her youngest son, Taylor, had been mistreated a great deal in his Kindergarten class. She said that day after day, he was hit by an African American boy in his classroom. Finally she went to the school to find out what had happened, and the teacher simply said, “Oh, kids will be kids.” Edith left after that meeting and went the next day to meet with the school principal. Eventually, Taylor was placed in a different Kindergarten classroom, but Edith was convinced that the teacher and other teachers at the elementary school had that attitude about her son and the other students because they weren’t white. She understood they had low expectations, because, she said, they wouldn’t let their own white children be treated that way.

Ernestina Paredes also described early experiences which were directly related to their positioning as Latinos in schools. When she first established her family in the Baltimore area, prior to moving to Virginia, her eldest daughters were enrolled in school. She recounted the negative event and also an event in the community. I relate them both because they were so deeply interconnected in her memory—an indication, I believe, of how race is so insidious in practice and how it can carve itself onto the people who embody the positions of race which are understood to be inferior.

Gloria, una vez hasta me llegó con un zapato roto [in second grade]... Con un zapato roto porque dice que cuando la formaban, un niño siempre la pisaba, un niño americano. Siempre la pisaba y le pisaba sus pies... entonces, yo le decía,

“Mija, díle a la maestra,” y decía “Amá, ella no me hace caso.” Yo le digo y le digo, y ella, haga de cuenta, como si yo no le estuviera diciendo nada... Y nosotros, nosotros cuando vivimos en Baltimore, vivimos un año, el primer año que nos vinimos, este tenía, el townhouse donde vivíamos estaba en una esquina y había unos jueguitos, era como un parquecito para que los niños fueran ahí y una americana vivía en la otra esquina, de la otra línea de apartamentos, y traía a su perrito, lo traía a hacer sus necesidades, ahí al parque, ahí... Y nos hacía mala cara, o sea, ahí lo llevaba a hacer sus necesidades, como veía que ahí mis niños jugaban.

Entonces, como le digo, yo no generalizo, o sea, hay gente buena que son de aquí o donde sea. Pero sí he visto rechazos, o sea, de parte de ellos hacia nosotros, o sea, edá? Y uno no dice nada, pues digo, bueno, quizá tendrán razón, les estamos invadiendo sus espacios, edá? Su país... No sé, este, pero sí se me hacía mal, porque, o sea, uno no los está tratando mal, ni... edá? No les está dando, pues, el motivo para, para eso, porque no, no la tratábamos mal, no le decíamos nada, no? Y ella siempre llegaba ahí donde estaban las resbaladillas, y resultaban ahí la necesidad de su perrito, y eso como que ella lo hacía adrede, me entiende?

Para que mis niños... edá? Y siempre nos, nos hacía mala cara, pues... notábamos que como que nos decía cosas, pero pues nosotros no le entendíamos pues, porque acabábamos de llegar y no sabíamos inglés ni los niños ni yo... Nada ni nada, pero con su expresión de su cara, pues nosotros nos dábamos cuenta que no, que nos quería, verdad? Que nos... que nos rechazaba, pues! Sí,

sí porque pues nosotros no nos metíamos en su... en su espacio, para nada, en su vida, en su casa, ni nada, verdad? De todas maneras son, somos seres humanos, o sea, si no le estamos haciendo un mal a ninguna persona, para qué tratar así, verdad? Ey...

Entonces, le digo, pues a lo mejor, sí saben lo que es la educación pero rechazan la gente porque no son de su... edá? Pues estaban pequeños, la verdad, ya hace tiempo, ni lo recuerdo, pero ni creo que se hayan dado cuenta los, los niños, que la persona nos... Pues, no, le digo, hace mucho tiempo y no recuerdo si a los niños les comenté o estaban pequeños, Lorena estaba en primero, Gloria en segundo... No recuerdo si les comenté algo a ellos, pero, pues lo que hacemos a veces, es mejor no salir.

Esa vez, esa vez de Gloria, porque Gloria, pues siempre fue también una niña bien tímida... O sea, bien tímida, a lo mejor, no sé, a lo mejor los compañeritos... pero sus maestras y todos, siempre los trataron bien, no, no tengo que quejarme de que... Solamente en esa ocasión, que, que ella me decía, pues que la maestra, no... pero nunca se negaron a ir a la escuela, porque los maestros los trataran mal, no? O sea que, que sí me decían ellas a veces, que, que ellas sí veían diferencias, pues, como eso que le acabo de comentar de Gloria...

Que sí, sí veían ellas diferencias así... cosas pequeñas, pues, no, no, no tan graves... Sí me decían, “Amá, que la maestra es de este modo” y que “yo me fiijo que como nosotras somos hispanas no, nos toman mucho en cuenta o no”... pero, bueno, qué le vamos a hacer... Pero, bueno, seguían... Pero, no, no son cosas así graves, graves, que a ellas las hayan hecho sentir muy mal o algo, pues

no, yo pienso que... Y luego, porque, pues ellas también siempre fueron bien portadas y las maestras nunca me dieron quejas de ellas ni nada... Ey...

Gloria, one time she came home with a broken shoe [in second grade]... With a broken shoe, because she said that when they lined up, a boy was always stepping on her, an American. Always he stepped on her feet... then, I told her, “Daughter, tell the teacher,” and she said, “Ma, she doesn’t pay any attention to me.” And I tell her and I tell her, and she, realize this, it was as if I wasn’t saying anything. And we, we, when we lived in Baltimore, we were there for a year, the first year that we came here, there was a little park for the kids to go to and an American woman lived on the other corner, on the other line of apartments. And she always brought her little dog, she brought him to do his business, as she saw that that was where my kids played.

Then, as I tell you, I don’t generalize, but there are good people that are from here and anywhere. But I have seen the rejections, on the part of them toward us, right? And one says nothing, but I say, ok, maybe they’re right, we are invading their spaces, right? Their country... I don’t know, but it seemed very bad, because, well, one isn’t treating them badly, nor... right? It’s not giving them the motive to, for that, because no, we weren’t treating them bad, we weren’t saying anything, right? And she always came there where the guardrails were, and always the need for the little dog to do its business, and like she did it on purpose, you understand me?

For my kids... right? And she always made a bad face, well... we noticed that she said some things to us, but well we didn’t understand then, because we

had just gotten here and we didn't know English, not the kids nor me... Nothing of nothing, but with the expression on her face, well we realized that, that she didn't like us, right? That she... that she rejected us then! Yes, yes because we weren't in her... in her space, at all, in her life, in her house, nothing, right? In any event they are, we are human beings, well, if we aren't doing anything bad to anyone else, why treat others this way, right? Oh.

So, I tell you, more than likely, they know what education is but they reject the people because they aren't of their... right? Well they were little, the truth is, it was so long ago, I don't remember, but I don't believe that they had realized, the, the kids, that the person... Well, no, I tell you, it was so long ago and I don't remember if I commented to the kids or if they were so little. Lorena was in first grade, Gloria in second... I don't remember if I told them, but, well, what is sometimes better is just not to go out.

That time, that time with Gloria, because Gloria was always a timid child... Well, very timid, and probably, I don't know, probably her classmates... but her teachers and everyone, they always treated them well, no, no, I don't have any reason to complain about it... Only on that one occasion, that, that she told me, that the teacher no... but they never said they wouldn't go to school, because the teachers treated them badly, right? Or that, if they told me sometimes, that, that they saw some differences, well, as I just told you about Gloria.

That yes, yes sometimes they saw some differences like this... little things that, no, no, not that bad... Yes, they told me, "Ma, the teacher is like this," and that, "I realize that we as Hispanics aren't, they don't take us very seriously

or,”... but, well, what can we do? But, yes, they kept going... But, no, they’re not very grave things, grave, that they felt so very badly or anything... not that I think... And also, because, the girls were always so well behaved and the teachers never sent me any complaints or anything. Uh huh.

Ernestina’s account is painful and also resonant with the *sobrevivencia* knowing that the families had. The children “*seguían*,” they kept going to school, so they were still doing what they needed in order to survive. They did this even though they sensed the teachers didn’t take them as seriously as Latinos, even though the teacher didn’t correct the boy who ruined Gloria’s shoe in 2nd grade. Relative to having someone’s dog foul Ernestina’s children’s play area, school wasn’t nearly that bad. Ernestina was fully aware of the indignity involved with the way the woman who allowed her dog to relieve himself. The survivalist in her allowed her to cope enough to persist, despite all the indignities they suffered, including having her daughter literally stepped on at school and the teacher’s ignoring of the situation. Despite understanding that Ernestina did not belong to “*ellos*” or “them,” she reserved a sense of managing to *not* generalize—again a way to survive. On the teachers’ sides, this ignoring is again part of the school’s blissful ignoring of situations by not attending to the girls, even when Gloria brought her broken shoe to the attention of her teacher. Even as little children, they sensed they were being neglected because they were Latino, a clearly racialized neglect, situated at the farthest end along the continuum of the comfortable.

Along this continuum of the comfortable where schools engaged “othered” families, schools had taken some preliminary steps to engage Latino families, such as the Latino parent nights held at Northern Virginia High School noted above. These steps

were clearly within the margins of what the institutions were comfortable doing, nothing that disengaged the institutions from the Whitemain frameworks within which they operated. I offer some examples and conclude this section with some suggestions from the families about how the schools can better engage these families.

First, the schools often recognized their demographic imperatives of having high proportions of students of color who were not performing as well as their white peers in terms of grades. Northern Virginia High School placed their engagement with the “others” in the community on the shoulders of the staff members who “knew” the othered members of the community. For instance, despite Mr. Schneider’s not being of Central American origin (the predominant origin of students he worked with), the school tasked him to be the go-between for many of their “outreaches” with the Latino community. He expressed his accumulated years of frustration of having been the “exotic” one to work between the school and the Latino community, similar to the experience of tokenism (Burns, 2000; Cruz, 1995) that Lorena discussed as a student in the school.

Sí, yo me siento como el representante elegido o voluntario de la comunidad hispana. Sí... Cosa de nuevo que me ha frustrado del carajo, como una especie, otra vez, una especie de “extrañismo,” sabes.... “Qué cosa más extraña, de exotismo, el señor Schneider, qué exótico, el señor Schneider puede hablar el español y el inglés y él es totalmente este, acultural a ambas culturas, que cosa más chévere...” y yo he querido decirles, “Mira, vayan a limpiarse esos traseros, porque ustedes todos...” no, es como decirles, yo estoy en Vietnam, y no quiero aprender cómo es la cultura de los vietnamitas... qué cosa más prejuiciosa y racista, etc, etc...

Yes, I feel myself to be the representative elected or voluntarily of the Hispanic community. Yes... Something that again has me frustrated out the ass, as a species of, again, of “otherness,” you know... “What a strange thing, an exoticism, Mr. Schneider, how exotic, Mr. Schneider can speak Spanish and English and he is well, acculturated to both cultures, what a cool thing...” and I have wanted to tell them, “Look, go wipe your asses, because you all...” no, it’s like telling them, I am in Vietnam, and I don’t want to learn how the culture of the Vietnamese is... what a prejudiced and racist thing, etc., etc.

Mr. Schneider recognized that he, too, was “othered,” though in a different way from the way Ernestina’s family experienced being othered when they lived in Baltimore. Mr. Schneider understood he was considered “exotic” and treated like a pet, receiving pats on the back for being bicultural, when, really, the school needed to do some of the work of getting to know the cultures of their students instead of compartmentalizing everything “Latino” onto the shoulders of a teacher who was not receiving any additional pay for his extra hours of outreach within the community, merely cheap words that to him signified the systemic racism which positioned him as Mr. all-things-Latino.

With the systemic racism at work in the schools through their general neglect of Latino families, it’s no surprise that parents in the study were often confused about what the school wanted to communicate with them. Parents said that the schools sometimes sent information home in Spanish via mail. Sometimes they received auto caller calls in Spanish that they largely ignored. The communication was understood as part of a maze of information. However, part of that knowing included knowing what to ignore among the deluge of information given in this country. Aware that schools usually only contact

home when there was a problem, most of the time, parents said that if the school did not call about their children to report a problem, they felt comfortable that things were ok.

Parents attended school events, as mentioned previously. For instance, the Delgados attended numerous school events for their children at all grade levels. They attended their eldest son's regional high school science fair, an orchestral concert in which their middle school daughter participated, and the multicultural day-time festival of their second grade son, among others. The families tended to attend fewer functions the older their children grew. Parents generally enjoyed the multicultural events hosted by schools. Alba expressed how the mini-graduation elementary school ceremony of her youngest son became a sort of multicultural festival:

Ahora que salieron de su sexto le hicieron fiesta a todos y nos pidieron a los padres que todos teníamos que participar con comida tradicional de cada país y creo quieren incluir a todos los países y hacer más tradicional la comida. Yo llevé pupusas y tacos de México y El Salvador. Se nos hizo bien bonito.

Recently when they exited sixth grade they celebrated all of them and they asked us, the parents, that we all had to participate with traditional food of each country and I believe they want to include all the countries and make the most traditional foods. I took pupusas and tacos from Mexico and El Salvador. It seemed really nice for us.

Alba and Lupita each expressed how much they enjoyed the multicultural style events at the school. Having attended one of them with Lupita, I could see some of the appeal.

The schools were actually celebrating something, anything, and they were finally recognizing that the other cultures had something positive to offer. Having something so

small for the parents which embraces their identities serves as both a relief and an opening of possibility—it conveys that the schools *do* have some small sense that they know other communities exist and have value. However, they stayed close to the continuum of the comfortable by merely celebrating the superficial instead of attempting to understand more in-depth what these various cultures represented. For instance, the school relied on the community members themselves to provide the food. The schools still need to work toward understanding what the challenges were of integrating the multiple cultures in the space of school and community.

Participants in this study had strong opinions about what schools should do differently to include their families in schooling more effectively. All of the parents suggested something that sounded like a Funds of Knowledge approach (N. González, et al., 2005; Moll, et al., 1992), where faculty members should meet with families in their homes and learn about who they are. They said they felt comfortable with me, and that they liked talking about who they were and what they thought about the education of their children. Ernestina compared how she wanted parents to get involved with families to how she had become involved with life in the U.S. Her sentiments show how, ideally, there would be a give-and-take, or exchange of ideas, *not* a patronizing, “Let us tell you how to raise your child” approach to help teachers understand their students.

Pues que se involucrara más en la comunidad para, para que aprendiendo, para que fuera viendo cómo... porque si no saben nada, cómo la va a aceptar, edá?

Tiene que involucrarse más con esa gente, edá? Involucrarse más como, por ejemplo, usted, usted ya le entiende más porque, porque usted ya ha estado...

Pero como, como digamos, una maestra americana, nueva, pues... llegar así, de

pronto, no va a entender, no va a saber ni qué, porque no está... no se ha ido involucrando, pues es irse involucrando poco a poco. Para que lo vayan entendiendo, vayan sabiendo cómo es y la pueda aceptar, si es que le parece bien, porque a lo mejor le va a parecer mal. Porque en cada familia, cada familia es diferente, edá? Aunque seamos del mismo país y todo... Las familias, cada quien, como le digo yo, los papás, cada quien educa a sus hijos de diferente manera, como ellos creen que es la mejor manera, me entiende?

Entonces, necesitaría de involucrarse para que vaya conociendo, la cultura, edá? Y saber cómo, porque, de qué otra manera? Edá? Yo pienso, no sé. Porque, porque no ve uno, uno como se va involucrando, cómo nos vamos sintiendo, como en este país, nosotros que somos de fuera, cómo nos hemos ido sintiendo poco a poco. Yo, al principio que llegué, pues todo me daba más miedo, todo. Como temerosa de todo, y como los años han ido pasando, uno se ha ido sintiendo más un poquito como en su casa, un poco más, un poco más...

Porque ya vive uno aquí, y porque ya está uno bien involucrado, aquí en el país, o sea, edá? Y ya ha ido uno, un poquito sintiéndose, eda? Como con más confianza... Como con más, eda? Como que.. pues, yo pues, al principio todo, o sea que... Uh, no, o sea, que yo pensaba, uh, yo cuándo voy a manejar. Uh, yo tener una licencia de manejar, uh... yo creo, nunca, o sea, todo eso, eda? Al principio, y es como todo, o sea, todo va evolucionando, eda? O sea, entonces, ya ahorita que ando entre el tráfico y todo eso... que le doy para acá, que le doy para allá... Hasta yo misma digo, "Dios mío, yo nunca pensé que iba a poder

conducir un carro.” Andar entre toda esa multitud de carros. Y ahora, mire, donde ando!

Yo pienso que las familias mexicanas si quieren que vengan a visitar. Pues no tienen nada que esconder, y luego aparte, este, como le digo, ya, ya estamos aquí y entre más se vaya uno involucrando, ellos con uno y uno con ellos, pues qué mejor, verdad?

Well she should get more involved in the community, so, so that learning, so that she would be seeing how... because if they don't know anything, how will they accept it, right? She has to involve herself more with those people, right? Involve herself more as, for example, you, you understand more because, because you've been... But as, as we say, an American teacher, a new one, well... arrives there, suddenly, she's not going to understand, she's not going to know what's up, because she's not there... she has not been involving herself, well it's going and getting involved little by little. So that they go on understanding, they go on knowing how it is and they can accept it, as long as it looks good, because maybe it'll seem back to her. Because in each family, each family is different right? Even though we're from the same country and everything... The families, each one, as I say it I, the parents, each one educates their children a different way, the way they see is the best way, you understand?

So, she would need to involve herself to go on knowing, the culture, right? And to know how, because, what other way is there, right? I think, I don't know. Because, because one doesn't see, as one gets involved, how we are feeling, as in this country, those of us who are from outsider of it, how we have been feeling

little by little. I, at the beginning that I arrived, well everything made me afraid, everything. Kinda afraid and everything, and like those first years were passing, one has felt a little bit more at home, a little more, a little more...

Because one now lives here, and because one is here and very involved, here in the country, right? And one has gone, feeling it a bit, right? Like with more confidence... Like with more, right? Like well, well, I well, at the beginning, well. Well, no, I wondered when I would drive. Me, having a license to drive, uh, I thought never, not all that, right? At the beginning, and this is how it all is, everything goes on evolving, right? So then, I am driving in all the traffic and all that, I go this way and I go that way... Even I tell myself, "My God, I never thought I was going to be able to drive a car." Going all over among these multitudes of cars. And now, look, where I go!

I think Mexican families do want them to visit us. Well they don't have anything to hide, and moreover, as I tell you, well here we are, and the more that one gets involved, them with oneself and oneself with them, what else is better, right?

Ernestina, who had previously described being largely ignored by school personnel as a cafeteria worker, showed a genuine openness to working with school members to help them learn about who they teach. She wanted the teachers to go to "involve themselves" by visiting families, as she thought that Mexican families "had nothing to hide" and could in fact teach their cultures to the teachers. She showed how this would be cyclical, how each family would have something different to offer, as each family "educates their children in a different way" and how she believed there is a

progress involved in that getting to know families, as “everything goes on evolving,” just as she had in her own life in the U.S. by, for instance, learning to drive and navigate city traffic. She also showed that there would be a new kind of knowing involved for the teacher who would be willing to engage Mexican families in these “involved” encounters. Youth in this study echoed this idea, that teachers should get to know their families in order to better work with them. They suggested everything from home visits to special courses about their home cultures for both teachers and for students. The children were actually proposing ethnic studies, which has been under attack in Arizona, despite its reported effectiveness for those who take ethnic studies courses (Ochoa O’Leary & Romero, 2011). It was clear that the families were eager for the schools to recognize who they were and what they could offer from their backgrounds, if only they would ask.

Families also expressed a disposition to help their children “*salir adelante,*” or “keep moving forward.” Alba González explained it this way: “*Siempre hemos estado trabajando y los niños siempre han estado estudiando. Están pequeños pero si ellos quisieran seguir estudiando ir a la universidad sí los apoyaríamos todo es que ellos quieran y los apoyamos,*” or, “We have always been working and the kids have been studying. They are young but if they want to keep studying to go to university yes we would help them, it’s all about what they want and we help them.” Taken together, teachers and schools have a lot of work to do to move down the continuum of the comfortable to engage families so that a new kind of mutually-constituted comfort can be created between families and school personnel.

Transnational Students as *Nepantleras* in Schools

As described in Chapter 4, one of the ways of knowing of transnational families is their Nepantlera knowing, or their ability to understand and bridge differences between groups and create Third Spaces while also inhabiting liminal spaces and experiences. Through their agentic actions, students were able to transgress the boundaries of the continuum of the comfortable for schools and boundaries established through cultural norms as well.

In a theoretical essay, Koshy (2006) argues for the transnational person to work as a Nepantlera, recognizing what she calls the “criticality” of the “pivotal role transnational experiences play in a globalized world, for they can frame and challenge international politics” in order to work against the perpetuation of Euro-centric ideology which “maintain systems of power and privilege” (p. 148). Echoing Anzaldúa’s call for transformative action through *conocimiento* (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2002), Koshy argues that the work of the Nepantlera occurs in four possibly simultaneous and not necessarily linear stages: 1.) understanding situations through the eyes of an “other;” 2.) “(re)claiming ‘guiding myths’ for our times; 3.) risking the personal, political, and spiritual; and 4.) making alliances” (2006, p. 150). In the following examples, I show how the students worked in school as Nepantleras who did the difficult work of allying themselves with those who were not necessarily popular (such as recently arriving immigrants to the U.S.), understanding their points-of-view, and creating Third Spaces. If the students had “guiding myths,” they were the stories they had about their identities who could shift back-and-forth between so many cultural contexts, though I never heard them refer to these myths as such.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, students in my study had friends from a host of racial backgrounds. These students sometimes dated across ethnic and racial lines, as well. While they acknowledged that they felt pressure from their parents and local and transnational communities to date other Mexicans, some of them dated outside their group. While Lorena and Gloria Paredes dated young men from other countries (Peru and Colombia), their brother Daniel dated a Dominican young woman. In the U.S., based on how she *looked*, she was understood to be African American, despite her cultural and linguistic heritage. Daniel said he knew he crossing his parents' and community's expectations about who he should date, but they came to accept his dating the Dominican young woman, as they came to accept the dating partners of their daughters as well.

In Chapter 4, I described how several students pushed the boundaries of expectations regarding their placement in honors classes, classes where Latino youth typically were not present. The students in my study who participated in these classes all knew they weren't "supposed" to be in those classes, sensing the deficit thinking many of their teachers had about Latino students (Menchaca, 1997; Valencia, 1997). For Nicolás, his ninth grade science teacher told him he couldn't handle the material in honors chemistry. For Diego, he knew that the academic expectations for Latinos were low. For Gloria, she knew she would feel different and as an outsider. These students, in their own ways, pushed boundaries by participating in spaces that were not designed for them, inhabiting that liminal space of knowing you were somewhere you weren't supposed to be. Unlike other research where Latino students have described themselves as accepting and digesting a myth that they were somehow better or different from their co-ethnic

peers (Urrieta, 2009), these students instead maintained a *Nepantlera* strength not rooted in a myth about how they were better than the others in their ethnic group.

The students managed their relationships with co-ethnic friends—most of whom were not in their honors classes—while also succeeding in those classes. Daniel Paredes, for instance, did not completely drop the “bum” friends he had when he started high school and shifted toward performing well in school. He still was “cool with them,” he said, but he spent less time with them and managed to bridge his identities as a “good student” and Mexican. Diego Medrano spent time with co-ethnic friends, but he parted ways when he entered his honors classes. Nicolás Delgado encouraged a couple of his Mexican friends who were undocumented to move into advanced technical courses such as architectural drawing and pre-engineering. Had he not mentored them, they would not have joined him in those classes. He helped them with their homework, he said, but at times they helped him along, too.

The transnational participation of students was a piece of why the children mentioned succeeded academically (in this case, succeeding in honors courses) and socially. As described earlier, the students who were fluent in Spanish were the ones who most fully participated in return visits to Mexico. In turn, they had a better sense of who they were and where they came from, a sentiment they agreed to when asked directly, something like the “guiding myth,” Koshy describes (2006), though more an internalized sense of confidence than a myth. The students also had the opportunity to *descansar* or rest among the attentive community members when they visited Mexico, as mentioned in Chapter 4. That resting was a kind of break away from the stereotypes about Latinos and pressures of being the underdog in the U.S. It’s also likely that

because of their ability to shapeshift—what Anzaldúa referred to as a way to navigate ambiguity (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999, 2000b)—from their identities in the U.S. to their identities in Mexico, they could transmit that skill to shapeshifting in U.S. schools, like the way Daniel maintained friendships with his “bum” friends while excelling in honors classes.

I also recognized a willingness among the U.S.-based children in my research to work as shapeshifting *Nepantleras* among co-ethnic peers who they helped guide along in schooling and adjusting to the U.S., similar to the “risk-taking” and “alliance building” Koshy argues for while seeing through the eyes of an “other” (2006). For instance, Nicolás Delgado described regularly working with the newly arriving immigrant students who spoke Spanish to direct them in school. He did this spontaneously and sometimes with students at lunch and neighborhood meetings, saying he remembered how hard it was for him to adjust to U.S. schools. He said that when he happened upon students who looked lost in the school, he talked to them about how to find their way. Nicolás talked with students about how to figure out how to set up their course schedules, how to meet with and talk to their guidance counselors, and how to take the courses they would need as state-mandated requirements for graduation. He felt compelled, he said, to share with others what he had been able to do for himself as an immigrant to the U.S.

Daniel Paredes took time as well to help the newly arriving immigrant students at school, such as the way he behaved in his chemistry class with Mrs. Cook. Both youths had been enrolled in ESOL until late elementary school; they were able to journey back to their memories of how it felt to not fit in to life in the U.S. While it could have been tempting to oppress the newly arriving youths, they, instead, took the risk to build the

bridge between their own memories and feelings of anxiety to help smooth the journey for the ones who followed behind them. They did this at a risk of not-knowing at times; for instance, Daniel knew that teachers did not always approve of talking during class, especially in Spanish, but he risked that anyway while helping the ESOL students in the 10th grade chemistry course.

Similarly, when Lorena Delgado was at Northern Virginia High School, she also did bridge-building work, and her work spanned into the creation of Third Spaces (Bhabha, 2004) within Northern Virginia High School. As a participant in the school's Latino Leadership Coalition, directed by Mr. Schneider, she helped recent arrivals in a group that met once a week during school hours called, "Programigo" (or Program Friend). She talked with the students about how to navigate the school and also how to get along with their teachers and complete their assignments in order to graduate. The other students, in turn, described the ways they related to the U.S. and how they remembered their experiences in their home countries. These students were able to bridge knowings—uncovering the hidden curriculum (Apple, 2004; Giroux & Purpel, 1983), while using Spanish for meaningful purposes. Dialog occurred in both Spanish and English, whichever language the students were more comfortable speaking. Programigo was a space where students were agentic, set the agenda for discussion, and used language other than English in an officially-sanctioned capacity—three things that seldom occur in U.S.-based schools.

Lorena Delgado also helped organize and present at the school's first ever celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month as part of her participation in the Latino Leadership Coalition, where over 1,000 students participated in a during-school assembly

of various Latino-oriented informative and entertainment presentations. The students also initiated and planned the activities that filled the hour-long presentation. They were sure that part of the program was educational, not just entertaining. Students prepared short talks and PowerPoint presentations highlighting issues relative to the Spanish-speaking places their families were from, including Bolivia, Mexico, and Puerto Rico, for instance. A group of youths danced bachata, demonstrating what they had learned after several weeks of preparation from one of their parents, an expert dancer. A local group of Bolivian dancers performed several dances as well. The students who planned the event were quite proud of themselves, having created a successful and meaningful event which had never existed previously in the school. Unfortunately, the event was never repeated, a possibility of Third Space creation. The space does not have to physically continue to exist—though no doubt it exists in the students’ memories, as it did in Lorena’s.

It is important to note that the students’ bridge-building activities were not easy to accomplish and required a great deal of strength. As described in Chapter 4, students built bridges in their friendships, in their classes, and in extracurricular activities, even at times to the surprise and even dismay of their families, who at times preferred their children to stay closer to their co-ethnic peers. Much as Anzaldúa and Koshy call for, the students forged alliances and worked toward transformation. They did this out of an organic sense of knowing it was right to do, sensing they had the abilities to do so, without, however, having a map of steps to follow toward transformation. While Anzaldúa’s and Koshy’s frameworks are helpful toward interpreting and moving toward

social transformation that de-centers power, these students were able to achieve steps toward these ends without having these guidelines to follow.

Finally, I am frustrated at the lack of responsiveness of the schools the families had their children enrolled in, I am more hopeful about the sometimes surprising turns of events created by the transnational children themselves. I believe the transnationalism has helped the students in this study be additionally agentic in their transgression of boundaries in and outside schools.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I highlighted the experiences of the U.S.-based transnational youth and their families in my study in their K-12 schools. I showed how their transnational knowing is hidden and how their language and identity as transnationals are connected in ways that edify the students. I then showed how schools miss the important opportunity to connect with the transnationals families and only do so on a limited basis, insofar as it is convenient for the schools. Finally, I demonstrated how U.S.-based Mexican-origin youth in my study worked as *Nepantleras* in their schooling contexts.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research began in 2009 when I first attended the annual patron saint festival in San Gabriel, Michoacán, among a mass return of community members from the U.S. who filled the pueblo to visit the patron saint and participate in the festival as well. Despite my having previously lived and worked in Mexico for five years bilingually, I found the experience remarkable in terms of the sense of community I witnessed as well as the festival events themselves. Through repeated visits, I sensed there were ways of knowing of the families that made return visits from the U.S. that I didn't understand, and that would have helped me in my years as a teacher of immigrant students if I could begin to wrap my mind around those ways of knowing. I set out to learn the ways of knowing of transnational, Mexican-origin families in the Washington, D.C. area and the implications for K-12 schooling.

Most research about transnationalism has been situated in the field of anthropology (Appadurai, 2008; Basch, et al., 1994; Farr, 2006; Foxen, 2007; A. Miles, 2004; Orellana, et al., 2001; R. C. Smith, 2006; Stephen, 2007). Rich accounts of individuals' and families' journeys back-and-forth between host and sending countries tell stories of loss, change, and transformation. Some key concepts have been described and added to what social science understands and can describe about the phenomenon of transnationalism. These concepts include: bifocality (Rouse, 2004), simultaneity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), and power dynamics at work in the creation and maintenance of borders (Khagram & Levitt, 2008), transnationalism from "above and below" (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998), and emotional transnationals (Wolf, 2002). Some have argued that the

term of transnational is too fluid and loose to be an effective descriptor (Guarnizo & Smith, 1998; Zúñiga & Hamann, 2009).

Who is Transnational?

The question remains: who is transnational? I offer an analytic device based on my research. First, I term *intentional transnationals* as those who engage with intentionality in multiple contexts which cross national boundaries. Primarily, *intentional transnationals* travel physically between countries to engage with networks of actors in the sending country while also adjusting to lives in the host country (Basch, et al., 1994; Portes, et al., 2002). These individuals may even decide to return permanently to a sending country or follow patterns of circular migration, oscillating back-and-forth between countries (Aranda, 2006). *Intentional transnationals* have an intentional understanding of their visits to the sending country; that is to say that they are not merely visiting as tourists but maintaining, strengthening, and re/establishing complicated networks for economic, community, religious, and/or political *sobrevivencia*. Second-generation children are depicted as being less engaged in transnational practices, though research shows that many second- and even third-generation children do engage in *intentional transnational* practices (Martínez & Urrieta, 2009; Sánchez, 2007; R. C. Smith, 2006; Urrieta & Martínez, 2011), just as my research has shown.

Transnationalism is not limited to those who physically return to a sending country. The concept of *emotional transnationals* expands the sense of who can be considered transnational because one need not physically return to the sending country but engage it on an emotional level. Wolf argues that since 1965, due to expanding abilities to communicate, send goods and people in transnational spaces due to

technological changes as well as the changing role of nation-states, there is an increased tendency for the children of immigrants to engage in transnational practices. In fact, she highlights that despite the possibility of growing up entirely in one geographic location, some second generation children are highly affected by the ideological sense of what “home” is as it is depicted by kinship and social networks. *Emotional transnationals* “inhabit multiple cultural and ideological zones,” including a sense for “home” which exists in a different continent to which they have never physically arrived (p. 285). In her study of Filipino families, the children she researches often develop an internal sense of what that home is and refer to it “with reverence,” demonstrating a respect for a context that only exists ideologically for the children who have never been to the Philippines (p. 284). She explains that this sense of *emotional transnationalism* is often complex for these children of immigrants to navigate, attempting to live up to standards they recognize in their parents without the same cultural context in which to apply those standards. Wolf also shows how Portes’ (1995) depiction of segmented assimilation lacks some explanatory power for these second generation children. Despite achieving what is often referred to as “acculturation, assimilation, and upward economic mobility” (the criteria for having successfully assimilated in his model), these second generation children were, in fact, still participating heavily in the transnational sphere. As security issues continue to permeate the transnational knowing of the participants in my study, I imagine they will likely be forced to participate more as emotional transnationals.

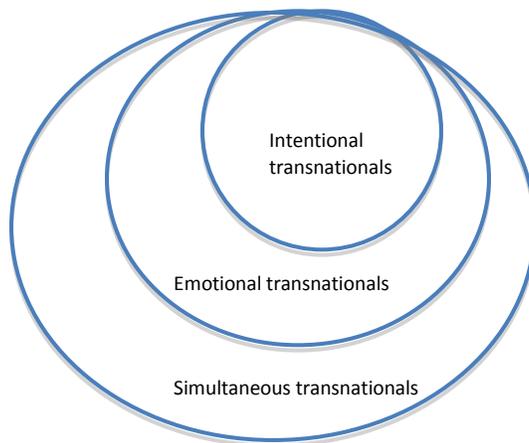
The final sphere of transnational actors, the most expansive of all three, is what I call *simultaneous transnationals*, borrowing from Levitt and Glick Schiller’s thoughtful theoretical work explaining social science’s need to expand the frames of analysis for

interpreting society in an era when the role of the nation-state is changing—while transnational actors' roles are becoming more complicated and intertwined (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Levitt and Glick Schiller explain that simultaneity refers to the more contemporary practice of “living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in a destination country and transnationally” (p. 1003) though not necessarily by traveling physically across borders. This means that *simultaneous transnationals* need never leave one country to be *simultaneous transnationals*. In fact, they propose that actors can invoke transnationalism after years of consciously not belonging to transnational communities. They may, for example, choose a marriage partner from the sending country after many years of only marginal engagement in the sending-country's cultural spheres. Or they may tap into other social networks which they had not engaged in earlier parts of their lives, such as distant family members in other parts of the sending country or in the host country to participate in rites of passage for themselves or these family members. They may have uneven life cycle engagement with these networks. Conversely, according to these authors they can make identity claims of belonging while never having visited the sending country context. I believe that there are a host of youth who have not returned to their family's sending country but who participate in this simultaneous transnationalism. One example includes a one young man I met in San Juan Diego had only begun returning to Mexico in late adolescence. He had begun dating a woman from a rancho or small farm near San Juan Diego and made frequent return trips, even though he had been born in the U.S.

I theorize there are three over-lapping categories of who can be described as transnational. There is an inner circle of what I refer to as *intentional transnationals* at

the core. Around these actors are what Wolf (2002) and Aranda (2006) refer to as *emotional transnationals*. An even larger share of actors are those I refer to as *simultaneous transnationals*, drawing from the theoretical work of Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004).

Figure 2. Framework of Who Transnationals Are



I connect these three spheres to show how transnationals can be navigating multiple senses of home, belonging, and being; I argue that taken together, the term transnational is an apt descriptor for first and second-generation immigrants in the U.S., based on the broader scope of transnational practices I explained in both *emotional* and *simultaneous transnationals*. Being transnational is complicated while at the same time involving maintaining a set of multiple lenses for understanding one's life and one's multiple communities because of those transnational experiences. These experiences, as evidenced above, can range from direct contact in sending countries in intentional

relationships to imagined communities (B. Anderson, 1991) of belonging to the latent potential for engaging a community of practice.

Khagram and Levitt (2008), in their co-edited book, *The Transnational Studies Reader*, attempt to define and guide the field of transnational studies. In their introduction, they recognize that transnational studies has helped reframe processes that are not proscribed within national boundaries, but that social practices cross national boundaries. Transnational studies theorizes and elaborates on everything from transnational terror networks to global economics to working masses who leave their homelands to women's organizations networked over borders. Based on what they see as shifting social conditions, Khagram and Levitt argue for the "transnationalization of the social sciences" (2008, p. 13). They claim that a transnational perspective "allows for a creative interaction between different philosophies of knowledge—from positivism to postmodernism and from interpretivism to constructivism" (2008, p. 13). In some ways, it is difficult to know exactly what transnationalism is, based on the wide net they cast, incorporating all research paradigms and calling for a complete shift in social science research. It seems they are still trying to keep the umbrella wide for those who can stake a claim in transnational studies, and that the field is still struggling to determine which tools are useful for analysis in transnationalism. I tried my best to follow some of their recommendations as signposts to guide my research, realizing the field is far from perfect.

Khagram and Levitt (2008) explain that a central focus of transnational studies is "to understand the intersection and collision of the many layers of relations, perspectives, and cosmologies" (p. 12). My work did just that—examining the ways of knowing of

Mexican origin families on both sides of the U.S. border and particularly how they are at play in the U.S. and in schools. I have also taken up Khagram and Levitt's (2008) call to use transnationalism as both methodology and theoretical orientation. By completing multi-sited ethnography, being among families during their return visits to San Gabriel and San Juan Diego, I was able to get a more complete understanding of these families' transnational participation and ways of knowing. I also used parts of transnational theory to frame my thinking as I designed my research and interpreted the data, examining the ways borders were transgressed and far more porous because of the social practices which crossed the borders—physically and metaphorically—than previous social science research has demonstrated. My research also extends beyond the calls made by Khagram and Levitt. My work adds to the corpus of transnationalism by being among the first to examine the ways of knowing of transnational families across borders.

Transnationalism and its tools were not enough to situate my research. I recognized a tension between researchers of transnationalism; some theorists wanted to offer a celebratory portrayal of the actors in transnationalism, particularly those of meager material means, as newly agentic because of their transnationalism, much like Appadurai suggests because of the new “fantasizing” people can do in considering their families' future life trajectories and how they might cross borders (2008). It is as if transnationals' life choices are somehow *completely* unfettered, “deterritorialized” and “unbound,” as could be understood from the foundational work *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Basch, et al., 1994), the very title offering a sense that something new is happening to masses of people. In fairness, the authors never make the case in such broad strokes,

though they are critiqued as if they had done so. For instance, Smith and Guarnizo “take issue” with the concept of transnationals as having “unboundedness,” arguing against the notion that social actors had a “total disconnection from local constraints and social moorings” (1998, p. 12). They also critique Bhabha’s concept of Third Space (2004), reducing it to suggest that his idea was equivalent to “free-floating people represented by the now popular adage ‘neither here nor there’” (1998, p. 11). My read of Bhabha, coupled with my own transnational experiences and years of work with transnationals helped me understand that this critique was facile. The Third Spaces, as my research bore out, did exist, but not permanently and not toward some victory for all subaltern people.

I was careful not to exalt any act of alterity as resistance and thus social transformation. Smith and Guarnizo caution against a merely exultant subaltern analysis, later echoed by Ong (1999), in stating:

We must avoid, at all costs, confusing intentionality with consequences, as when actors are designated ‘resistant’ or ‘oppositional’ because their practices produce some social change, even when it was not one they intended, fought for, or socially organized. (1998, p. 29)

Smith and Guarnizo caution against the celebratory aspects of transnational theory, but they do not appear to offer tools which would allow for a more nuanced analysis of the agency of transnationals. Transnational theorists appear to be on opposing sides about the agency of transnationals, and I needed a new tool which was not available in transnational theory.

I broke away from the dichotomy of agency/non-agency in the arguments about transnationalism. To help me do this, I worked to access the tools which were available to the people I researched—tools not often easily available to western researchers—which led me toward *conocimiento*. Instead of theorizing only about agency and resistant acts, I reframed the research question altogether. To do that, I had to shapeshift as researcher by making sense of the ways of knowing of the people with whom I worked, not merely chronicling their acts and reported behaviors and attitudes. While I did not “go native,” I did my best to understand the world through the lenses of my research participants. It would be difficult to make a good-faith effort to research ways of knowing any other way. In some ways the question of “how much agency” is not important; of course the people with whom I researched demonstrated agency—within the structures of power and authority that shaped their agency and their transgressions against those structures, particularly through bridge-building and creation of Third Spaces.

I believe it was only through my departure toward *conocimiento* that I was able to research and offer something new for the field of transnational studies. Researchers in the field of transnational studies could learn from following a similar path. There is a need for more research that is oriented in the position of the researched. By understanding the ways people know the world, we can understand why transnationals act the way they do. We can then better bridge our understandings of how other forces at play, such as multinational institutions, governments, and corporations connect with and influence/are influenced by transnational people. This further research can offer

suggestions for working toward bridging differences among disparate groups, including those who are transnational.

Conocimiento's Addition to Transnationalism and Resistance

Conocimiento bears similarity to James C. Scott's (1990) elaboration of the "hidden transcripts" of "subordinate groups," where subordinate groups elaborate a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant (p. xii)—the "powerless" in hegemony, as described in his carefully researched study of resistance among cultures from all over the world spanning many periods in history. Yet *conocimiento* is not simply an agitation or reaction against powerful forces coming down against the powerless, nor is it a "breaking of silence" against hegemony, as Scott suggests. *Conocimiento* is also socially transformative and socially creative. Unlike the "dominant" of Scott's hegemony, who create hidden transcripts to make reality "fixed," the families in my research were able to navigate the lack of fixed conditions of reality as they lived those conditions. They were able to create responses and counter-responses to conditions, entering "a zone of possibility" (G. E. Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 544), such as when Lupita Medrano entertained a host of family possibilities when her husband was detained by ICE at the Mexico-U.S. border.

For those who have written directly in transnationalism, there have been meaningful attempts to understand what makes a transnational different. Researchers have tended to focus on practices, however, instead of the internalized ways of knowing from which people operate. Appadurai is one of the first to theorize about how the transnational acts differently, "More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of 'possible' lives than they ever did before. . . through the prisms of . . . the mass

media in all their forms. That is, fantasy is now a social practice..." (2008, p. 54). He shows that what leads into transnational participation is the practice of fantasy and imagination. In a way he is just beginning to theorize about knowing while hypothesizing about transnationals' imaginations. Levitt (2009) gets closer to the sense of knowings yet still focuses on what she calls "cultural repertoires," which lead to agentic choices and practices:

The ability to manage several cultural repertoires at once and to access social networks in several contexts can strongly influence mobility trajectories.

[Transnational] children apply these values and social contacts at school, at work or at the church or mosque. Just as membership in tightly-knit ethnic communities in a host country embeds children in powerful, often protective social networks that create opportunities as well as obligations, so even indirect, almost-by-osmosis in the homeland community is also a potential source of power, information and support. (p. 1226)

Levitt's work echoes my own results in some ways, showing that transnational behavior is rooted in cultural values and among social networks, even for second generation transnationals. She shows the importance of networks both in the host country and the "homeland." My work, however, has shown how transnationals *know*, and how that knowing then articulates into practice later—that these knowings are foundational to the being of transnationals. More importantly, I have highlighted how these knowings are part of a *conocimiento* which may not be easily recognized by one who does not live as a transnational herself. Instead of understanding that there might be cultural repertoires or bifocality where a transnational person can see from two perspectives—home country

and host country—(Rouse, 2004), my work shows that there is a sophisticated and generally overlooked form of knowing at play.

I return now to more fully interrogate *conocimiento* as it manifested itself among the families in my study. Anzaldúa defines *conocimiento* as:

My term for an overarching theory of consciousness, of how the mind works. It's an epistemology that tries to encompass all the dimensions of life, both inner—mental, emotional, instinctive, imaginal, spiritual, bodily realms—and outer—social, political, lived experiences... you could say that *conocimiento* is basically an awareness, the awareness of *facultad* that sees through all human acts whether of the individual mind and spirit or of the collective, social body. The work of *conocimiento*—consciousness work—connects the inner life of the mind and spirit to the outer worlds of action (Hernández-Ávila & Anzaldúa, 2000, p. 177)

Anzaldúa shows that knowing is not the merely observable but the subjective and how it is all at play in the actions of people's lives. She highlights the "awareness" of the *facultad*, suggesting that the knower understands her awareness overtly, consciously. She also points to how there is work involved where a person is engaged in consciousness. I found, however, that the participants in my study did not have a conscious awareness of their *facultad*, or what Anzaldúa calls the "capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities" (p. 60), yet they succeeded in a depth of perception that allowed them to have dramatic impacts on people around them toward achieving social transformation which worked against Whiteman hegemony. For instance, Diego Medrano had an analysis regarding the expectations Latino families had for their own children but also knew that structurally, schools expected little of Latinos in terms of

academic performance. He did not set out to transform himself and examine his bridge-building capacities; he just did these things. Similarly, Lorena Paredes played a key role in helping Northern Virginia High School create a Third Space of celebration of Latino cultures through its first ever Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in front of over 1000 students, created and led by Latino students. Neither youth came from highly formally politicized households nor had experienced highly political training elsewhere. I argue they learned *conocimiento* in their homes and in their home communities on either side of the border, an organic *conocimiento* without the explicit labeling of their consciousness or *facultad*.

The participants in my study did not operate as the *Nepantleras* following the path of *conocimiento* toward “spiritual activism” as described by Anzaldúa (2002) and those loyal to her work (Koshy, 2006). I highlight this for researchers who value Anzaldúa’s work and use it, as I do, as a theoretical lens. Families did not do “spiritual activism” by building “holistic alliances” which allowed “conflict to dissolve through reflective dialogue,” (Anzaldúa, 2002; p. 572). Anzaldúa suggests that as *Nepantleras* people step “into consciousness” (2002, p. 573). My data did not suggest that my participants had done long, introspective analytical work where they had deeply examined their lives as Anzaldúa did and argued for; there was not one pivotal moment or series of moments where the participants in my study could point out how they had come to realize who they were as *Nepantleras*. I use Ernestina Paredes’s comment, “*todo va evolucionando*,” or, “everything goes on evolving,” much like the knowing of the participants in my study. The transnational families in my study were agile and transgressed expectations, having internalized their senses of the expectations in many ways and building bridges despite

the expectations. I could begin to speculate as to why, but this, I believe, is a question for future research. What are the reasons that transnationals did not appear to do the heavy lifting of interior work that they could name and still be socially transformative in powerful ways? A larger question might be, what are the many paths to agency and knowing in *conocimiento*?

The *conocimiento* the transnational families in my study had was situated in chained knowing—to their communities and to the border, *sobrevivencia* knowing, and *Nepantlera* knowing. All three of these mutually constituted the others, and these forms of knowing were not linear, one knowing no better nor worse than any of the others.

I saw the deep networks the families had at play across borders, and in local situations. These networks were not a means to an end, an idea which is prevalent in the works of educational researchers who advocate for funds of knowledge (N. González, et al., 2005; Moll, et al., 1992), where they suggest that social networks can be drawn upon to support K-12 learning, and for the sense of social capital that families have to navigate the U.S. and U.S. schools (Yosso, 2005, 2006). The chaining among family members was an ends in itself, to be among family and community for the sake of being connected together. This chaining had a foundational value of respect at its core, where family members demonstrated a host of forms of respect across genders and generations. Family and community relationships, like the knowing of the families in my study, were linked to the Mexican-U.S. border, as well. The border figured into their life chances, into the ways they knew they were related to their communities on opposite sides of the border.

The border figured into the families' *sobrevivencia* knowing, or their knowing of how to navigate the world to both survive and thrive. The U.S.-based families

demonstrated an underdog mentality. It helped them succeed through a determined grittiness, but that grittiness did not always help them prevail in their circumstances. For instance, several of the students in this study succeeded in honors courses despite the expectations of their teachers and administrators (D. A. Foley, 1997; Menchaca, 1997; Valencia, 1997). However, despite the Delgado parents' persistence in deciphering the U.S. education system the best they could, from attending a host of school events, to meeting face-to-face with their eldest son's guidance counselor, he was unable to meet their dream of having Nicolás enter a four-year university.

These four families' knowing was also informed by matters of life and death, situations in everyday life that were unavoidable and colored their knowing and actions. The Medrano family experienced two life and death crises during my research, one where Lupita's mother died and where Lupita decided not to return for her mother's burial, largely because Lupita was undocumented and was forced to make a choice because of her legal status. The other was when her husband, Santiago, was apprehended on the U.S. side of the border, throwing into question their entire lifestyle and family togetherness north of the border. Would Lupita take her entire family back to Mexico, with a middle-school aged son who hardly spoke Spanish, and a high school aged son who was headed toward college in the U.S. system but entirely unfamiliar with schooling in Mexico? Showing the connectedness of family, Santiago's brother risked his own family livelihood by passing him over the border from Mexico. All the families dealt with issues regarding their economic livelihoods and safety when considering returning to visit their families in Mexico, with an increasingly violent atmosphere in Mexico as a result of the Mexican government's crackdown on drug cartels.

The U.S.-based families in my study demonstrated Nepantlera knowing; it manifested itself in the families' liminal experiences and positioning, their creation of Third Spaces, and their bridge-building capacities and efforts. Family members toggled back-and-forth and among knowings oriented in their experiences in the U.S. and Mexico as they approached life situations. For instance, though Daniel Paredes, Gloria's father, wanted her to stay close to home for graduate school and to continue to reside under their roof, he lost a day's wages to drive and accompany her to a graduate program interview to show his support of her choices. He was of a liminal mind where he was with his daughter in that strange space of wanting to support her through and despite the interstices of his and her thoughts about Gloria's future.

There were physical and virtual ways the families in my study created Third Spaces (Bhabha, 2004) where new possibilities of framing understandings and discourses occurred at the intersection of subaltern positioning and action. The González family created a Third Space by developing their business and literally transporting it where they needed to in order to do business in their *loncheras*, or food trucks, hosting a wide range of customers from different backgrounds. They were responsive to the local political climate, leaving Prince William County where they lived to do business outside it after its nefarious anti-immigrant laws were passed where law enforcement officials were deputized to enforce immigration law, which consequently drove out flocks of Latinos and had a detrimental effect on all sorts of businesses, Latino and non-Latino alike. Many of the youth engaged in the Third Space of Facebook, where family members on both sides of the border shared experiences, feelings, and even political engagement through their postings.

Children and adults in the U.S.-based families skillfully built bridges across racial groups, arcing over the negative expectations of students' performance in schools. Diego Medrano participated successfully in pre-AP classes, despite the ways his classmates sometimes commented on his being the only Mexican in classes; instead of apologizing for his status, or explaining it, or making claims as a representative for his group, he said he responded by simply saying, "yeah I am." He knew what he was doing, he said; he wanted to break down stereotypes surrounding Latinos and worked toward the bridging of friendships across racial lines. Similarly, all the children in this study had friends of various racial groups and were able to dance between their own cultural backgrounds and those of their friends, such as in the case where Jessica was able to make multiple considerations regarding her Pakistani friend's disdain for using the headscarf as a marker of her Muslim identity. Jessica was able to judge it through the lens of her own faith but at the same time realized she might have been wrong in making a judgment and withheld comment, recognizing the importance of bridging their friendship across cultures, placing the friendship before her weighing in with an opinion that may have been in error.

Transnational families' ways of knowing were largely hidden in U.S. schools. Students explained they were unable to talk about their experiences in return visits, let alone ask permission off from school for them. They were shut down when they tried to describe their return summer visits; in the imaginations of their teachers when discussing what they had done during their summers, "I went to Mexico" didn't merit further questioning. Despite this hidden knowing of transnational students in U.S. schools, the students in the U.S. based families acted as *Nepantleras* within their schools. Even

though it wasn't popular to do so, several of them helped newly arriving immigrants adjust to school by helping them understand the locations of important places in schools, their schedules, and how to work with their guidance counselors. They also navigated friendships in their ethnic groups while taking white-dominant honors classes, instead of embracing a myth that said they were beating expectations about Latino students because they were somehow "better" than other Latinos, they inhabited the liminal sense of just staying in those spaces despite not having much company from co-ethnic peers.

Parents laughed about the thought of telling school officials about their return trips, so aware they were of the rift between their families and the school culture. Similar to Olivos's findings about how schools neglect families through the school's reproduction of their hegemonic positioning (2006), the schools' responses to the families in my study and other Latino families fell along what I call the "continuum of the comfortable," or a scale where the schools responded only insofar as they were comfortable in accommodating the needs of these families.

Following, I offer three recommendations for those who work in the field of education.

**Recommendation #1: Recognize the Conocimiento and Potential for Conocimiento
in Transnational Students and Their Families**

The weekend that the Hunger Games film (Ross, 2012), based on the widely popular young adult novel bearing the same name (Collins, 2008), was released, something unexpected happened. A trend emerged among the social media Twitter's feeds; a large number of people were disappointed to learn that some of the protagonists were portrayed as African Americans, standing in contrast to the sympathetic ways they

had imagined the protagonists (clearly not as African American) (Stewart, 2012). One representative Twitter feed read lamented why the main character “had to be black,” saying that it “kinda ruined the movie” (Stewart, 2012). Clearly there was a lack of recognition in the humanity of the protagonists. While at first blush the reader of this report may want to judge this as reprehensible, I argue this report is worth closer examination beyond dismissing the ugly and obvious racism of the comments. When we do not see the fullness of the person before us in a situation, we are not as moved to sympathize and act (in this case, viewers became less sympathetic). This underscores the point I am about to make.

Educators must find a way to recognize the transnational families as being transnational, and recognize the potential for their *conocimiento*—and not in haphazard fashion. In fact, we may want to borrow from transnational families’ *conocimiento*, which offers tools which could be useful for one who attempts to understand this knowing, such as how to build bridges between people with disparate understandings. Though *conocimiento* may sound foreign or like something one cannot relate to, this is not a reason to dismiss it, lest the observer end up like the users of Twitter who did not like the protagonists in the *Hunger Games* film because they could not see themselves in the actors.

Currently, schools recognize “Limited English Proficient” (or LEP) students, usually by offering families a home language survey. That same survey could be used to ask if families have transnational participation—with questions about whether families make return visits to visit families in other countries, whether they engage family members living in other countries, and whether they identify with those other countries,

echoing the three realms of identifying who is transnational—intentional, emotional, and simultaneous transnationals—which I described above. I am arguing that any “immigrant” to the U.S. is actually also a transnational, and I am calling for a shift in the ways we frame immigrant students to highlight the complexity of who they and their families are, as well as their ways of knowing. Much like identifying data that are coded about each individual student electronically today, this information could be made available to educators. Sharing this knowledge with educators would help them understand that transnational students may not only be first- and second-generation (or later) immigrants, but that their lives may be far more complex than the idea that families come to the U.S. on a one-way journey to the U.S., never to look back, an idea that seems pervasive in U.S. education. This change in labeling could be quite powerful, as it would force those who work with transnationals to reckon with the transnational parts of these students’ and families’ identities; the label would also force a shift in expectations to understanding the additional components of these families’ lives, components that more monocultural people do not have. This label would help shift the discourse away from the increasingly derogatory usage of the word “immigrant,” particularly in the climate of anti-immigrant legislation currently being proposed throughout much of the U.S. Its regular usage would, in turn, normalize transnational participation, and transnational students would have a much easier time in school expressing who they are and their ways of knowing. In turn, this could also help alleviate the gap between parents’ adaptation and their children’s adaptation to the U.S. in the cases of newly arriving families, as each family’s members transnational participation would be valued by school members and the family members themselves.

On a federal and state policy level, it's time for a shift in language from the federal government terminology of LEP (U.S. Department of Education, 2012) to including the potential transnationalism of students. I am not saying that all transnational students necessarily would qualify as "LEP"; however, many transnationals do have the need for English language instruction. While the field of English instruction to speakers of other languages has shifted toward the use of "ESOL students" or "ELs,"—English for Speakers of Other Languages students and English learners, respectively—this focuses solely on linguistic ability. These labels still portray the students as "deficient" by showing what students are missing—English. My research has demonstrated the multitude of ways these transnational families have knowings which manifest skills and experiences that are unique and worthy of being understood and built upon. An appropriate shift would be "Transnational English Learners," or TELs, for, as I indicated previously, even the potential to engage transnationally would allow for students to be called "transnational." It would help the issue about teaching English to heritage English speakers from other countries whose academic language does not position them toward academic success. I will heretofore refer to these students as TELs.

For the purposes of curriculum development, the experience of transnationalism needs to be added, especially in an era that is increasingly globalized (M. M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007). While many propose the need for the curriculum to speak toward globalization (such as the International Baccalaureate curriculum), few have argued for the recognition of transnationalism as part of that globalization. The study of transnationalism reframes simpler discourses of one-way immigration and shows the more complex ways transnationals navigate multiple nations and cultures. These are

skills that will help all students better navigate an increasingly globalized world. If the U.S. continues to move toward the implementation of curriculum standards, then transnationalism should be embedded into the standards. Transnationalism can easily be embedded into language arts, social studies, math, and science curricular areas, and ideally it would be studied in a cross-disciplinary fashion. Following I offer a few curricular objective examples for each of these areas:

Table 2. Curricular Applications of Transnationalism

Curricular area	Objectives	Possible texts
Language arts	<p>--Compare the ways transnational people live in the world with people who have lived in one country for generations</p> <p>--Gather approaches to living in the world transnationally and then apply to the student's own life experiences</p>	<p>Nonfiction texts, such as news reports, autobiographical and biographical essays</p> <p>Novels, including: <i>Caramelo</i> (2003) by Sandra Cisneros; <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> (2007) by Junot Diaz; <i>Habibi</i> (1999) by Naomi Shihab Nye; <i>Friends from the Other Side/Amigos del Otro Lado</i> (1997) by Gloria Anzaldúa; <i>Recuerdo mis raíces y vivo mis tradiciones: Remembering my Roots and Living my Traditions</i> (2003) by TransNational Latinas</p>
Social studies	<p>--Compare the engagement of transnational people today with previous waves of migratory movements</p> <p>--Determine what causes the movements of people transnationally and the impacts, both local and global</p> <p>--Understand how and why people identify with more than one nation while critically evaluating one's own national affiliations</p>	Local, national, and international newspapers
Math	<p>--In units on addition, subtraction, multiplication and division; fractions and probability, compare numbers of the movements of remittances and people across countries</p>	Demographic data from the U.S. Census and the United Nations
Science	<p>--Understand the impacts of the transnational movements of people across borders on the environment and on global health</p>	World Health Organization data; United Nations data; newspapers and magazines

Specifically, in the area of TEL (Transnational English Learners) instruction, as WIDA (the World-Class and Instructional Design and Assessment) continues to have growing influence throughout the U.S. for the setting of academic standards as well as TELs' assessment (WIDA, 2012), the group should incorporate transnationalism into the suggested content of their standards as well. When immigration is offered as a possible area of study for content, such as its sample content area for the core instructional area of social studies (WIDA, 2007), it can be reframed as transnationalism. While the inclusion of immigration units of study has been encouraged for TELs (Freeman, et al., 2002), TEL educators need to be careful to also include the host of experiences related to transnationalism, moving beyond the idea that immigration is a fixed, one-way journey. This expansion will allow the learner to recognize herself more broadly in the curriculum, making the learning even more culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) and encouraging additional transnational participation on behalf of those with the ability to do so. For monocultural counterparts, they can gain from learning about the ways TELs use their abilities to negotiate multiple cultural and linguistic contexts and see that the world is more complicated than a monocultural read of it might have them think.

At the classroom level, teachers need to be careful not to fetishize their transnational students as potential purveyors of all-things-exotic, nor should they ignore the knowings of their transnational students. Instead, they can develop authentically caring (Valenzuela, 1999) relationships with students to learn about their backgrounds, whether through journals, private conversations, or classroom discussions. Teachers, with the power and authority they have, need to be careful not to position students in a way that makes them feel they are supposed to be the spokesperson for their group

(Burns, 2000; Cruz, 1995). As such, teachers need to be careful about the language they use when they ask transnational students questions about their transnational backgrounds. For instance, they can preface questions they may have about a cultural practice by saying something to the effect of, “No one can know all things about all the cultures in one country, but I wonder if you know much about today’s topic and would care to share what you know.” When the broad and everyday topic of markets came up in class, Diego Medrano felt confident about what he could share with his classmates in front of the group. Conversely, when Lorena Paredes was asked to speak on behalf of all Mexicans about the Day of the Dead—a practice that varies widely throughout Mexico, and certainly not observed by all Mexicans—she felt awkward and nervous. Eventually, once a positive relationship is established with the transnational student positioned as a “knower,” the teacher can pull back from qualifying questions and simply ask them, always making sure the relationship between the teacher and the student knower is healthy and intact.

Recommendation Two: Disrupt and Redirect the Continuum of the Comfortable

In Chapter 5, I described the schools’ reactions to Latino families as falling along a “continuum of the comfortable.” I argue that schools’ modest movement along this continuum, fitting what is comfortable for the school authorities, must be disrupted. Schools must holistically engage transnational families and families who do not fit the Whiteman norm of schooling (Lee, 2005) if they are to truly serve both their students and the greater community, especially as demographics shift toward increasing diversity in schools. Otherwise, we can continue to expect schools to reproduce similar social inequalities, especially racial inequalities, that have been reproduced by schools for

decades (Lewis, 2005). Those who work in education can gain from allowing for and creating opportunities for liminality, an often uncomfortable sense of being “betwixt and between,” (Turner, 1967) as if being on a threshold between what one used to know and the passage into a different understand. Educators can experience this liminality if they break out of the patterns of being comfortable by staying inside the situatedness of their own (commonly Whiteman) knowing in their responses to communities that are “other.” Liminality often occurs on the margins of life and life experiences, and these potential openings can occur on the margins of schooling—during hallway exchanges, before and after school, during professional development, in after-school dialog with students and families. Thus, despite the pressures teachers experience currently in a high-stakes testing era, there is still room for prioritizing this liminality.

Drawing from Koshy’s essay, “Nepantlera-activism in the transnational moment,” she argues that transnationals see “through the eyes of the ‘other’” (p.150). This ability is something the research participants in my study did, manifesting itself in their ability to shapeshift and fit various circumstances depending on the context, be it an honors classroom or assisting newly arriving immigrant students, understanding how their peers were seeing them and how they could be most effective in the context. Lorena Paredes, for instance, was able to engage discourses that allowed for effective communication with newly arriving transnational students to the U.S. in her school’s Programigo program as well as educating a large swath of the student body for the school’s first ever Hispanic Heritage Month festival. This is a skill that can be borrowed by learning from transnational families. I caution that the knower will not be able to know in the same

way as the Nepantleras in my study, but a partial view can be developed. I turn to several concrete recommendations to demonstrate how this seeing might occur.

Center X at the University of California, Los Angeles, in addition to credentialing teachers and administrators, offers a yearly conference for TEL educators with this very title, “With Different Eyes.” The Center attempts to help educators do just that—see with different eyes—working toward social justice with an emphasis on the historically underserved (UCLA Writing Project, 2012). A classroom teacher while I attended the conferences, I remember learning how to help students work with their language registers and claim and name these registers for themselves, how to facilitate students’ usage of their heritage language while learning English, and how to help students identify what they were doing well in their writing. The most recent conference focused on students’ hybrid identities, emphasizing the positive attributes of being knowers of Spanglish, for instance. These recommendations are uncomfortable, however, to schools that are resistant to allowing the use of heritage languages in classrooms. But this is the very point—schools need to shift to *understand* why they are resistant to such practices. This conference is one example of professional development that can make a transformative difference in disrupting the comfortable practices of schools.

Disrupting the continuum of the comfortable also means disrupting the negative discourses surrounding transnational students. This means teachers and administrators must *name* their low expectations and interrogate *why* they hold low expectations of TELs and immigrant families. It’s time to understand *who* the people are that educators hope to teach and how they can work with all the families in their schools (Delpit, 2006; Olivos, 2006). I offer a list of questions educators can ask themselves as a sort of gut-

check to consider if they should engage this liminal sense where they cross between what they think they know about transnational students towards a more complete and accurate understanding:

1. Do I blame students and their parents for students' low academic performance?
2. Do I try to avoid working with certain populations of students so I can work with "better" students?
3. Does hearing students speak another language make me feel uncomfortable?
4. Do cultural markers with which I am not familiar (such as students' forms of dress or style of communication) make me uncomfortable; do I think that they should learn to dress or talk "normally"?
5. Of the historically marginalized students I teach, are they performing academically below their white counterparts?

If an educator says yes to any of those questions, then she should investigate disrupting her own comfort toward the end of being better able to engage her students. Having the courage to attempt and do this self-reflection and shift toward expanding understandings requires stepping into the liminal sense of not-knowing. For the educator, this work carries a possibility for transformation. The educator can shift from deficit thinking about transnational students and their families (Valencia, 1997) toward one that begins to embrace their sophisticated ways of knowing.

A very uncomfortable possibility is that educators will come to learn that they do not *know* in the same ways many of their students *know*. This potentially highly discomfoting finding is one that schools and districts need to offer support in; that

support may likely come from the communities they have previously so unsuccessfully engaged. Positioned toward generative dialog, districts and schools can invite parents and family members to help educate staff members about who they are, their expectations and hopes for their children, and how they educate their children at home. Such understandings would help begin to bridge the divide between schools and transnational families, a point to which I will return shortly.

Schools, of course, do not operate in isolation. In the current climate of standardized testing accountability, U.S. schools are less able to act with autonomy than ever. Recognizing this, I like countless others, argue that accountability measures must also be readjusted or removed (Au, 2009; Booher-Jennings, 2005; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Valenzuela, 2005) so that schools and districts can do this hard work of being of real service to the communities where they are located. If we are to continue with an accountability movement, I argue that a component of such accountability would include the degree to which schools genuinely engage families as partners in their children's education. Transnational families are among those who have underserved, and it is time for them to be included as genuine partners in educating their children.

Engaging the discomforts of disrupting the continuum of the comfortable means engaging a liminal experience in which teachers begin to question and doubt. Educators must look at their students and realize that the ones they are failing are the faces of people they do not *know*. This means they have to admit to themselves that the narratives they have about transnational students are ineffective. It means they must either accept their poor performance as educators or take action. I propose action, and I offer it in the following recommendation.

Recommendation Three: Cross Borders

Before proceeding, I reiterate a point about crossing the Mexico-U.S. border I made in Chapter 4: it is not to be taken lightly or romanticized. People die trying to cross the Mexican-U.S. border before they even make it to the border; the perils are haunting and many (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999; Spener, 2009; Urrieta, 2003). That said, I believe that the courage of transnational families to cross borders is a model from which educators can learn. If our students' families have the courage to make such risks for their children's futures, can educators not take a much smaller-scale effort to cross much less threatening borders in the collective effort to educate children?

The borders I suggest that educators transgress help maintain the Whiteman hegemony of formal schooling. Uprooting that order would threaten the order of the society in which we live. Real penetration would mean understanding what lies on the other sides of borders. Are educators ready to understand the points of view, the ways of knowing, of the people they teach? If they understand the ways of knowing of their students, their own ways of knowing will become affected as well. That knowing will lend itself to the educators' sense of obligation to having some kind of responsibility for the conditions which have forced the movement of Mexicans over the border to the U.S.

In my own experience, I have learned from this kind of border crossing, and I aim to continue this as a lifelong process. As an undergraduate, I benefitted by learning from a grassroots social action organization in Guadalajara, Mexico as a study abroad student in the mid-90s. I witnessed how people from marginalized communities organized, educated, and agitated for change in a social action group called *Intercolonias*. The group's work resulted in change for their communities, from government recognition of

their communities' existence, to the government's provision of electricity, roads, and public transportation and an increased sense of agency in the community participants. By learning Spanish, I gained the ability to communicate with people on a much deeper level—an impossibility prior to my becoming bilingual. I also add that this learning Spanish was not easy for me; it took years of work and a great deal of frustration and struggle; I share that to demonstrate the discomfort I had to experience in order to cross borders.

This communication has opened a completely different sense of knowing for me, one which positioned me to be able to better communicate with the students I taught and their families (as well as the participants in this research). I believe I could have communicated with Spanish-speaking families without Spanish, but my efforts at learning the families' language was a gesture of good faith in building a bridge toward the families, one that said I wasn't insisting that they do all the work to communicate. I am suggesting a continual motion over borders, not a quick trip to a metaphoric beach resort, such as an isolated 30 minute exercise in a teacher professional development session.

Elenes (2001) invokes Anzaldúa's work to form her own idea of a border/transformativa pedagogy:

Gloria Anzaldúa's mestiza consciousness can help us all—Chicanas/os and non-Chicanas/os—learn to deal with differences in a productive way. Her conceptualization and my notions of border/transformativa pedagogy are not intended to reproduce forms of oppression, or to sanitize classroom practices. On

the contrary, this methodology offers ways in which we can all bring our different, contradictory, and oppositional points of view for discussion (p. 700). Elenes uses mestiza consciousness to find a way around dualistic thinking about moving toward “the same side of the river” (p. 693). Unlike Giroux’s emphasis on an “anti-racist border pedagogy” (Giroux, 1992), Elenes is clear that she is interested in working against a hegemony which marginalizes a host of intersections of oppressions without privileging one form of oppression to work against. She shows that engaging on the same side of the river does not mean acceptance of all ideas and beliefs but finding ways to engage discussion where everyone can dialog at once.

I argue that educators need to attempt to get on the same side of the river as their transnational students instead of reproducing an educational system which by its inegalitarian nature keeps transnational students on the other side. I do not, however, consider my call for border crossing a pedagogy, instead I ask educators to attempt to embrace an(other) way of knowing—but they have to do the border crossing to get there. Many educators claim to be lifelong learners. If teachers can be lifelong learners, why not lifelong border crossers? The crossing they will have to do is one that will require a lifetime of movements that are liminal and recursive. It is a lifetime process.

Much like De Lissovoy’s compound standpoint, which is “less the achieved *product* of experience than the constantly reframed *practice* of analysis in the context of material struggle,” (2008, p. 73) it would be a lifetime collection of gathering standpoints and a willingness to shift one’s knowing in accord with those knowings. One might think of Anzaldúa’s *remolinos* or whirlwinds—but a constant *remolino* (G. E. Anzaldúa, 1999) or whirlwind where knowings situated in the material realities and histories of the people

they cross borders toward are continually gathered into the vortex throughout life and spun together. The remolino will constantly be in flux, and senses of knowing will have to be re-understood regularly as contexts and material realities change. Concretely, I suggest that educators need to dislodge themselves from their sense of comfort to engage other points of view and ways of knowing, humbly positioning themselves in dialog with others. This means meeting with and learning from people who are differently affiliated. It also means asking for permission to enter people's homes to meet with them on their terms, in community spaces that are safe to these others, where the educator removes her safe positioning of full authority to one of shared authority and authorship. I offer examples of movements the educator can make toward the goal of border crossings.

One of the first practical recommendations for crossing borders is for school personnel to openly engage families by spending time with them, especially in families' homes. This was the first suggestion of the parents and children in my research when I asked them what schools could do better to engage their families. Ernestina Paredes explained it this way: "*Yo pienso que las familias mexicanas si quieren que vengan a visitar. Pues no tienen nada que esconder, y luego aparte, este, como le digo, ya, ya estamos aquí y entre más se vaya uno involucrando, ellos con uno y uno con ellos, pues qué mejor, verdad?*" or, "I think Mexican families do want them [teachers] to visit us. Well they don't have anything to hide, and moreover, as I tell you, well here we are, and the more that one gets involved, them with oneself and oneself with them, what else is better, right?"

Participants in my study said they liked how I arrived to their homes to talk with them, and they would like to meet with other educators in a similar fashion. Educators

have much to learn by engaging transnational families in ways that are respectful of and open toward them, on terms that are amenable to the families (Moll, et al., 1992). This is a dramatic shift from the “aesthetic caring” of teachers (Valenzuela, 1999) who have for decades been more likely to contact students’ families only when there is a problem or when the teacher wants to talk *at* families, an extension of Freire’s banking model of education (2008), where not only the student is filled with the teacher’s knowledge, but even the parents are positioned as empty and to be talked at instead of dialogued with. Educators can also teach courses about the families with whom they work, both for themselves and for the students, another suggestion of my research participants. These courses can be after-school professional development for teachers and ethnic studies courses for students—both transnational and non-transnational.

How is this family engagement the crossing of borders and getting on the same side of the river? Having taught pre- and in-service teachers and given them funds of knowledge (Moll, et al., 1992) oriented projects, I have asked these teachers to work with families in historically marginalized communities to understand the families’ aspirations for their children, some of their stories with schooling, and some of the families’ funds of knowledge. I have observed a reactionary Whiteman thinking at work which often *installs* a border; the pre- and in-service teachers almost always reject the notion of having to talk with a family in their homes. They repeatedly asked, “What if they don’t want me there? What if they don’t want to talk to me?” Instead of embracing a hopefulness about the potential of dialog, teachers’ comments have been oriented in fear, the unwillingness to disturb their comfort.

This concrete recommendation of family visits, then, draws upon my two previous recommendations—disrupting the comfortable and recognizing the *conocimiento* of transnational families. Almost without fail, the teachers who have conducted these family visits (always with training in framing families as having positive attributes to learn from, framing against the historic deficit thinking surrounding historically marginalized families) with a willingness to disrupt their comfort have written project results recognizing they have been “transformed” by what they have learned from families. Teachers I have taught have described being deeply surprised at what the families knew in terms of their own professions and the contexts of the schools where the children attended. They have been moved by families’ stories of why they have journeyed to the U.S. and the challenges of maintaining family and community ties transnationally. I caution that one visit is not enough. Like the spiraling movement of the *remolino*, the teachers will have to visit with families more than once and with future students’ families throughout the years of their career. Educators must understand that the families are not static; much like Ernestina Paredes recognized when she reflected on her own changes in the U.S., “*todo va evolucionando*” or, “everything keeps evolving.” Schools and districts should embrace the spirit of these visits and allow for paid work days for teachers to engage in these visits so that these visits would be systemic. If parent-teacher conferences are funded, so, then, can home visits.

Pre-service teacher education programs should help prepare teachers to cross borders. The class project I described above is one way to cross borders. Pre-service teachers should also learn the sociohistoric, material contexts of the students with whom they may work. They should learn from the communities where they will work, and

preferably as transnationals themselves. All courses in teacher preparation programs should engage these issues; they should not be limited to a catch-all, one-semester course in multicultural education.

Study abroad programs can be tailored to take pre-service teachers to historic sending communities of transnationals to the U.S. Research indicates that study abroad programs help students learn increased intercultural skills through these programs (P. H. Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Paige, Cohen, & Shively, 2004). If the study abroad programs are targeted toward historic sending regions of students to the U.S., pre-service teachers will also be better equipped to understand their transnational students, especially from those regions. Like the teacher participants in a six-week trip designed to study transnational student participation (Olmedo, 2004), pre-service teachers can learn the historic and sociopolitical contexts of their future students while also working toward creating lesson plans that speak to the transnational experiences of the students they hope to teach.

While I previously suggested several curricular objectives that could be built into curriculum, I also argue that the curriculum itself be overhauled by a continual process of border crossings, where those who have the power to create the curriculum find ways for it to speak to and engage the community's learners, including its transnational learners. Ideally the instructed curriculum would be an articulation of the community's desires, her-stories/histories, and positionings alongside the professional guidance of professional educators. The hidden curriculum (Apple, 2004) of schooling needs to be named and changed to explicitly be known to not just the authorities in schools and those with the

cultural capital to interpret it but to all who are stakeholders in schools, including, of course, the students and families.

Language policy for TELs also must change in a way that crosses borders. First, I reiterate the expert opinions of language researchers: additive bilingual language programs are the most effective at helping TELs acquire English (Collier & Thomas, 2004; Crawford, 2004; Cummins, 2005; Ovando, et al., 2006). English monolinguals in the U.S. can benefit greatly in participating in dual immersion programs; they, like the TELs, will have to cross borders to effectively learn from such programs—linguistic and cultural. The heritage language TELs would be crossing borders both linguistically and culturally with their counterparts in dual language programming.

With or without dual language programs, the language instruction of TELs needs to address the context of the TELs' lives, especially their transnational participation, something that has not been as deeply researched in the field of TEL instruction. While researchers are emphatic that effective language instruction must be content-driven (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2007), Echoing Knight (2011), I argue that the content must at times refer to the TELs' experiences as transnationals. Because drawing on "prior knowledge" is key to helping TELs learn English (Dutro & Moran, 2003), using TELs' transnationalism as a source of prior knowledge is an excellent approach. When transnational students are able to see their own experiences, their identities are recognized as valuable and worth their place in the curriculum (Sánchez & Kasun, In press). This is precisely what happened to Daniel Paredes when he took Mr. Schneider's class; by studying his family's home country history, he was able to see himself and his

family's place in the U.S. differently. This helped create the momentum toward his academic achievement in both high school and college.

I contrast the language experiences of Nicolás Delgado and Diego Medrano to highlight this point. Nicolás had his language skills denigrated in schools; even in his official Spanish language courses, the teacher did not recognize his native abilities. Guest speakers said that Spanish wasn't important for future work. Diego, on the other hand, had elementary teachers who applauded his language skills in ways that were simple, allowing him to be the expert when the occasional Spanish word was referenced in text. Diego felt very positive about his Spanish as a result; Nicolás had to struggle as an underdog and gritted his teeth about his experiences, especially with teachers who refused to recognize his knowledge of his heritage language. Prior knowledge should not be brutalizing toward students; it should be built upon and recognized so that the learner can seamlessly continue to learn in formal schooling.

Instructionally, there are many ways teachers can incorporate transnationalism into their teaching. Borrowing from literature often cited by National Writing Project teachers and leaders, I agree that students' experiences can be integral to the texts they create for writing and study at all ages (Calkins, 1994; Murray, 1998; Romano, 2003). Transnational experiences can be what Atwell refers to as some of transnational students' "writing territories" (2007) in student journals. For instance, the journal that Cristián González was assigned when he was in middle school as his homework while he visited San Gabriel was a deeply meaningful activity—the very kind of activity that could be recommended for transnational students if their teachers only knew that their students were doing these rich return visits.

Through personal writing, teachers can learn about students' transnationalism, and through comments and writing conferences with the student writers can engage them about how their lives has been transnational. Teachers can introduce the term to their students when they teach, allowing the more monocultural students to begin to understand their student counterparts from a lens of appreciation rather than derision for viewing them as "immigrants" and the baggage which comes with it. In online and print publications, teachers can have students share about their transnational experiences to a broader audience, allowing for a diffusion of ideas about their experiences. Teachers of TELs can look for transnational connections in their curricula, having students write about the personal connections from their own lives regarding social studies, science, and math, and they can pull those written experiences into discussion insofar as TELs are comfortable sharing with a larger group.

For educational researchers, I argue that they, too, need to do more border crossing. Educational researchers should try to understand the knowing of students from the sophisticated ways they do so, particularly students from historically marginalized populations. What are the ways of knowing of transnational, Mexican-origin students who live much closer to the physical Mexico-U.S. border? Those who live in Mexico and travel into the U.S. for schooling? What are the ways of knowing of transnational Mexicans who come from the elites who are fleeing the increasing violence in Mexico? How do those ways of knowing overlap or stand in contrast? This question of ways of knowing could be applied to any number of groups, and educators would stand to learn from crossing these borders to better inform how we work with people who have been

historically marginalized—if, in fact, educators’ goal is to educate all, and educate all well.

Final Thoughts

I admire and value the work of researchers who have been crossing borders; several researchers have identified a host of components that show how Mexican-origin students and families demonstrate agency and subaltern approaches to navigating the U.S. and schooling in the U.S. (Carrillo, 2009; Elenes, 2001; D. Foley, 1994; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999; Sánchez & Machado-Casas, 2009; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Urrieta, 2009; Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2009; Yosso, 2006). These contributions help correct a long history of racist notions about Mexican-origin youth and families in U.S. schools and suggest how educators might cross borders to work more effectively. Without their research, I would not have had the tools to perform the work I did. More importantly, their work crosses borders of hegemonic notions regarding Mexican-origin youth and families. I encourage these researchers to continue with their research agendas, and I ask that they take my work into consideration.

I hope I have argued convincingly for the need to disrupt practices that do not recognize the knowing of transnational, Mexican-origin families by crossing borders. I believe we will need these skills and senses of knowing for a growing mass of people in the U.S. to navigate the changes on the horizon in the U.S. Economic indicators show that inequality is growing in the U.S., and there does not appear to be a macroeconomic need for unskilled workers to be paid higher wages anytime soon. With the increase in outsourcing of jobs from the U.S. to other countries alongside global economic

conditions where social safety nets have largely been removed, I believe Aihwa Ong was correct in noticing the trends between “global citizens” and those who live in “bare life” (Ong, 2007). The United States, for example, all but sells citizenship to individuals who are able to invest half a million dollars in the U.S. (McGeehan & Semple, 2011), unlike the millions who toil and do the labor that helps keep the engine of the economy running. While Ong demonstrated very little hope for the agency of those who would be assigned to bare life conditions, I counter that in fact there is a *conocimiento* way of knowing she missed, for *Nepantleras* have an agency which she has no accounting for in her description of “bare life.”

The disruptions of comfort in approaches to schooling and border crossing I’m suggesting should lead to a greater form of democratic participation by all school community members, including parents, children, and staff. Because of the need to recognize the situated positioning of community members in their material historic contexts through this border crossing, there will be a fuller recognition of the constituents which should lead to a greater understanding of people’s needs. As long as the border crossing is situated in the acknowledgment of the need to join up collectively, school community members will be able to connect with each other toward greater common goals, the kinds which can inspire individuals and communities to greatness. This greatness is a radically different vision than that of holding teachers’ feet to the fire in the current regime of testing accountability and its attendant de-skilling of educators (Kincheloe, 2003). It is one that will be articulated by the community members who stand on the same side of the river.

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