

Warning Concerning Copyright Restrictions

The Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If electronic transmission of reserve material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

University of Nevada, Reno

**Queering Migration Studies:
Sexuality and Immigration Status among Mexican Youth in the United States**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ANTHROPOLOGY

by

REBECCA WHISTLER

Deborah Boehm, Ph.D., Thesis Advisor

May, 2013

**UNIVERSITY
OF NEVADA
RENO**

THE HONORS PROGRAM

We recommend that the thesis
prepared under our supervision by

REBECCA WHISTLER

entitled

**Queering Migration Studies:
Sexuality and Immigration Status among Mexican Youth in the United States**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS, ANTHROPOLOGY



Deborah Boehm, Ph.D., Thesis Advisor

Tamara Valentine, Ph.D., Director, Honors Program

May 2013



Abstract

In recent migration studies, scholars have started to consider the role that sexuality plays in shaping identity among transnational subjects. Previous migration research primarily focused on gender using a heteronormative frame, omitting large populations of people who identified as non-heterosexual or participated in non-heterosexual practices. By developing a queer theoretical perspective in migration studies that includes a range of experiences, academics can provide a more holistic view of migration patterns and experiences. Following recent work by queer theorists, this project studies how sexuality shapes diverse migration flows. The discussion can be further complicated, though, by including immigration status as an interconnected factor that shapes Mexican migration. Including diverse subjectivities in a queer theoretical perspective shows that ideas of self are malleable and can change within a variety of contextual transitions in one's life. In addition, immigrant youth movements, such as the DREAMers and UndocuQueer, work to bring these issues to light, since many of the undocumented youth leading these movements are also part of the LGBTQ community. Through the lens of emergent theoretical frameworks, and by researching current immigration and gay rights movements, I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork with Mexican youth of varying sexual identities and immigration statuses in the state of Nevada to consider the ways that sexuality and immigration status affect personal experiences and shape identity among Mexican immigrant youth in the United States.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Boehm, for the countless hours she spent guiding me with research, encouragement, and through provoking conversation. I admire the passion that she has for her own research and the way she conveys this passion to her students. I would also like to thank the Honors Program for the opportunity to write an undergraduate research-based thesis and for providing me with the funding to do so. I feel like this opportunity has better prepared me for graduate school in the future.

I need to express my deepest gratitude to Nik, Luis, Juan, and Maria for taking time out of their lives to meet with me, for being so open about their lives, and for being supportive and encouraging of my research. The interactions with them taught me invaluable lessons, and I admire each of them for their strength, knowledge, courage, and determination. To each of them: thank you, this wouldn't have been possible without you. In this same regard, I would like to thank everyone who works at the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada for welcoming me into their community and encouraging me to participate in their events. I am inspired by their passion for change.

Finally, I need to thank my family and friends for their constant support and encouragement over the past year. This has not been an easy project to complete, and they were all there when I needed them, offering up amazing advice and love. To each and every person who has contributed to this effort: thank you.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>ii</i>
Introduction.....	1
Identity Formation Among Mexican Migrants.....	1
Queering Youth Migration Studies.....	3
Ethnographic Methodology.....	6
Mapping the Thesis.....	9
Chapter 1: Literature Review.....	11
Problems of Linguistic Determinism.....	11
A History of Exclusion and the Production of “Illegality”	13
The Queering of Migration Studies.....	17
At the Intersection of “Illegality” and Sexuality.....	21
Chapter 2: On the Effects of Migration.....	24
Nik’s Crossing.....	25
Luis’s Crossing.....	27
Maria’s Crossing.....	31
Juan’s Crossing.....	33
Constructing National Identity.....	37
Hope for Immigrant Youth.....	38
Chapter 3: On Experiences of Education and Work.....	40
A Continuum of Difference.....	41
On Knowing That You Are Different.....	44

Compounded Experiences of Difference.....	47
Marginalization in Educational Settings.....	50
Difference as Challenge and as Strength.....	51
Chapter 4: On Expressions of Intimacy and Sexuality.....	53
“That’s Where the Crazy People Are”	53
Soy Gay/I’m Gay.....	56
Immigration Affects Diverse Sexualities.....	59
Transnationality and Sexuality.....	63
Immigration Status and Sexuality.....	64
Conclusion.....	66
Immigrant Youth Taking Action.....	67
Movements for Immigrant and Queer Rights.....	69
Finding Ways to Speak Out.....	72
References.....	74
Appendix I: Verbal Consent Script.....	80
Appendix II: Interview Guide.....	81

Introduction

“It’s like it’s on two different scales. Socially and culturally, I identify as American, but legally, I totally identify as Mexican, and part of that is that I have to live differently than most people.” – Maria, age 28

Identity Formation Among Mexican Migrants

At the age of eighteen, I was working in the kitchen of a popular restaurant in downtown Reno. I was the expeditor, who was in charge of making sure that orders came out correctly and in a timely manner. I was also the only non-immigrant working in the kitchen. After growing up in a predominantly white, middle class community, working in the kitchen was my first exposure to a large immigrant population and the complex social settings that immigrants navigate. The immigrants I worked with in the kitchen were underpaid and overworked and were often treated as second-class citizens by the front-of-house staff. However, because I was in the kitchen with them, I became a sort of honorary member of their community, and they would often share their food with me and teach me Spanish slang, and I in turn would give them rides home after work.

Everyone in the kitchen was from Mexico, Guatemala, or El Salvador, and a majority of them were undocumented. Some of them were recent arrivals, and others, like my favorite cook Raul, had been in the United States since their teens. They taught me all about the warmth and importance of community that exists for immigrants, but they also taught me about the constant difficulties that immigrants in the United States face. They would tell me how they missed their families and their homes, but how working in that hot kitchen for twelve or fourteen hours a day

was better than what they could do in their country of origin. They would also constantly poke fun at each other for being a *joto* (a derogatory term for being homosexual) and often found ways to assert their masculinity among one another, either by displaying their new tattoos or talking about the various women in their lives.

While working in the kitchen was my first exposure to immigrant identity formation, anthropologists and other social scientists have long studied the factors that play into the formation of identity among transnational populations. With the growing movement of people internationally due to globalization, the study of transnational people is becoming more critical to understanding the role that the state plays in shaping individual identity. Of particular importance to migration scholars is the study of Mexican migration, since it makes up the largest population of documented and undocumented people moving to the United States, the largest population of immigrants becoming naturalized U.S. citizens, and one of the largest migration patterns in the world (United States Department of Homeland Security 2012; Peutz and De Genova 2010). However, migration is often viewed by the public through a one-dimensional perspective that assumes sweeping generalizations and makes migrants appear as flat, non-dynamic figures. By breaking down these stereotypes, academics can help bring about social change in migrants' lives.

Queering Youth Migration Studies

Building on the work of migration scholars, I argue throughout this thesis that it is important to critically examine specific populations within larger migrations in order to “go against the abstraction of flows and mass group movement and emphasize the ways in which people as agentic subjects negotiate... identities” (Manalansan 2006: 229). By examining a specific population, I can show the nuances of individual experience based on age, class, gender, status, and sexuality. One generation of Mexican immigrants of particular interest to me is that of youth and young adults who were brought to the United States when they were children. By looking at different facets of these immigrants’ identities, including immigration status and sexuality, I expose the role that global capitalism and state power play in the opportunities or limitations that are placed on immigrant youth, which in turn, shape their identity.

There are many factors that influence an individual or family’s decision to migrate, including age, class, gender, and sexuality. While all of these are important factors, not all have been given appropriate attention in migration studies (Cantú 2009; Manalansan 2006). Scholars working in migration studies have long considered gender as an influential factor in migration; however, only recently have scholars started to consider the role that sexuality plays in immigration (Cantú 2009; Manalansan 2006). Much migration research has focused on gender using a heteronormative framework, meaning that migrants were assumed to be heterosexual and believed to follow the societal norms associated with

heterosexuality (Cantú 2009). In making this assumption, large populations of people who identified as non-heterosexual or participated in non-heterosexual practices were left out of global migration studies (Manalansan 2006: 224).

Immigration status is a primary factor that intersects with sexuality to shape identity among transnational youth. By including these two factors in identity formation, it becomes clear that ideas of self are malleable and are shaped by a variety of contextual aspects during an individual's life. This is especially true in the lives of immigrants, who live in physical and symbolic borderlands and have to negotiate the opportunities and limitations associated with these spaces (Anzaldúa 1987; Cantú 2009). The millions of immigrant youth in the United States live in borderland spaces as described by Gloria Anzaldúa:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. (Anzaldúa 1987: 25)

The in-between, unstable, and vague essence of the border is part of every queer and undocumented youth's identity. They exist in a state of liminality where they may not identify as "American", but they may not identify as Mexican either. Because of this liminal state, they must find other ways to survive and prosper, knowing that the system is not there to support them. The identities assigned to them by others are heavy and omnipresent in their lives, and are highly influential factors in the decisions they make as they grow and mature into adulthood.

The relevance of this study is evident within many spheres outside of academia. With U.S. immigration reform on the horizon and gay rights headlining newspapers daily, it is clear that this topic is current, important, and requires a critical eye. Many groups are also seeing the interconnectedness of being undocumented and being queer. Immigrant youth movements, such as the DREAMers and UndocuQueer, are working to bring these issues to light, as well as more mainstream forums, such as discussions held by host Neal Conan on National Public Radio's *Talk of the Nation* (Conan 2012, 2013). In this thesis, I consider the ways that sexuality and immigration status influence identity formation for transnational youth by employing a lens of emergent theoretical frameworks, researching current immigration and gay rights movements, and conducting ethnographic fieldwork through interviews and participant observation with Mexican youth.

The relationship between sexuality and immigration status has been largely understudied, so I contribute to this emergent body of research by focusing on the experiences of young adults who identify as immigrants and/or as queer. By doing so, I am able to see how both immigration status and sexuality enhance or limit the amount of agency Mexican immigrants have in the United States. For example, if a person identifies as straight and is an authorized migrant in the United States, s/he is entitled to more rights than a person who identifies as queer and does not have documents. In fact, a person who is non-heterosexual and undocumented is, in essence, a double minority, and discrimination against that person is intensified.

One of the goals of the thesis is to bring light to these issues, and to provide marginalized minorities a voice within academia.

Ethnographic Methodology

In order to consider how sexuality and immigration status intersect in the lives of transnational youth, I conducted ethnographic research, the foundation of anthropological inquiry. Ethnography is inductive research that focuses on the everyday experiences of individuals in order to study larger theoretical questions. Such methods can direct researchers to questions or situations that they had not originally anticipated, which can expand their overall analysis. The goal of ethnography is to gain a holistic point of view on a topic.

Ethnographic research can take on many different forms. In my project, I focused on interviews and participant observation with an immigrant advocacy organization, the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN). I conducted interviews with four Mexican immigrants between the ages of 20 to 28. Two of them, whom I call Luis and Maria, identify as straight and are undocumented immigrants. The other two, whom I call Nik and Juan, identify as gay and are naturalized U.S. citizens. I met Nik through time spent volunteering at PLAN, I met Maria last year when she spoke with group of DREAMers at the university, Luis and I have known each other since high school, and I met Juan through my thesis mentor, Dr. Boehm. Each of them willingly agreed to do an interview after I

explained the scope of my project. They all saw it as a unique opportunity to share their experiences.

I did one interview with each person, for a total of four interviews. Each interview lasted between one to two hours and was conducted in English, with occasional code switching into Spanish. I had each of my participants give verbal consent as opposed to written consent, and I did this for two reasons. First, two of them are undocumented, so signing their names to a form could potentially threaten their safety. In addition, two of them do not currently live in Reno, so sending written consent forms could potentially undermine confidentiality.¹

I allowed each of the interviewees to decide how and where we would talk. Juan and Maria both chose different spots on campus. Maria wanted a more private area, so she and I met in one of the study rooms in the Knowledge Center. Juan was less worried about confidentiality, so he and I met at the Starbucks in the student union. Nik lives in Las Vegas, so I talked to him over the phone, and Luis lives in Mexico City, so he and I connected on Skype. I was alone in my apartment for Nik's and Luis's interviews, which ensured confidentiality on my end. I was able to audio-record the interviews with Juan, Maria, and Luis. Because I spoke on the phone with Nik, I could not audio-record his interview, and instead took field notes for reference. The interviews were open-ended, and I had an outline of questions to ask each person.² The questions focused on the immigration experience, work and

¹ See Appendix I for an example of the verbal consent script used in each interview

² See Appendix II for the interview guide

school, and sexuality and intimacy. However, the structure of the interviews was not rigid, so each interview was conversational and unique.

Engaging in participant observation at PLAN helped me learn more about the grassroots work that is conducted to combat inequalities surrounding immigration and sexuality in U.S. law. I used participant observation as a foundation for approaching my research topic. I spent time from October 2012 to March 2013 volunteering with PLAN and their sister organization Uniting Communities Nevada. I attended two meetings for Uniting Communities: one in Reno in October and one in Las Vegas in December. Both meetings were daylong events that focused on working as an ally with LGBTQ people of color. I also attended two of their press conferences in January and February that discussed policy reform for keeping mixed status families together, and I spent a day in March lobbying with them for marriage equality at the Nevada legislature in Carson City. During this time I talked informally with members of the community, as well as heard the larger mission of the group, which is to provide equal access and rights to people in the United States regardless of immigration status or sexual preference.

While volunteering with PLAN, it became clear to me how ethnographic research is uniquely positioned to inform public policy; it provides examples of real life experiences, which give context to anthropological theories. Findings from ethnographic research can help empower marginalized groups in society, especially if these groups do not have many ways to advocate for themselves. For example, people who are undocumented may face serious consequences when they advocate

for themselves, such as detention or deportation, and people who are queer may be alienated from their communities for speaking out. By using ethnographic research to advocate for these groups, their identity is kept anonymous and their stories can reach many people across a wide spectrum of disciplines.

Mapping the Thesis

Throughout the thesis, I look at different themes to explore the intersection of sexuality and immigration status in identity formation among Mexican migrants. In Chapter 1, I incorporate a literature review surrounding theories of “illegality” and queer migration to build a theoretical framework. Next, I discuss the experiences of the Mexican youth I interviewed through the theoretical lens laid out in the literature review. I present this ethnographic information in three chapters that consider intersecting lines of inquiry: the migration experience (Chapter 2), education and work (Chapter 3), and intimacy and sexuality (Chapter 4). These chapters are especially important because they provide first-hand accounts of what it means to be a Mexican immigrant in the United States.

In the conclusion, I discuss social change and activism, including descriptions of my time spent volunteering with PLAN, as well as information gathered from immigrant youth through virtual discussions of immigration and sexuality. These are current and pressing issues of equality in the United States, so examining how people on the ground are working for change can provide a multi-layered analysis.

My project, therefore, studies Mexican immigrant youth identity at the intersection of illegality and sexuality, as well as provides avenues for social change in the future.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

When discussing migration scholarship about immigration status and sexuality, two scholars in particular have been highly influential: Nicolas De Genova and Lionel Cantú Jr. De Genova's work on migrant "illegality" (2002) and Cantú's application of queer theory in migration (2009) are both groundbreaking areas of research that have expanded the field of migration studies. The following literature review builds upon De Genova's concepts of "illegality" and Cantú's theories of sexuality, while using the scholarship of their contemporaries to support their arguments. After a thorough discussion of these two concepts, I tie them together using Gloria Anzaldúa's definition of the borderlands as metaphorical spaces:

The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands, and the spiritual borderlands... are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where the lower, middle and upper classes touch (Anzaldúa, 1987: preface).

"Illegality" and sexuality are two factors that create intersections in the lives of Mexican immigrants. How these concepts have become problematic and how they interact with one another will be explored throughout this literature review. These emerging areas of migration inquiry are interconnected, and my ethnographic research expands upon this connection to show how sexuality and "illegality" shape selfhood among transnational Mexican youth who live in a liminal space.

Problems of Linguistic Determinism

The problem of linguistic determinism when referring to migrants needs to be addressed before moving on with the discussion of the literature. Through

linguistic determinism, language can shape experiences, perceptions, and ideas of self and others. Migration scholars have problematized meanings associated with particular words, such as “migrant” and “immigrant,” which can often be too narrow in definition. They do this in order to challenge “the conceptualization of migration as a predictable or uniform process” (Boehm 2012: 19). Because of this, “migrant” and “immigrant” are used interchangeably throughout this paper to refer to a transnational person who has moved from one country to another. Terms such as “alien” and “illegal” will be avoided when describing transnational people, except when used in quotations, because they imply that there is something inherently illegal about a person. As we will see throughout this paper, these are terms that have been increasingly naturalized over time, but are in actuality constructions created over time. As De Genova argues, “the legal production of migrant ‘illegality’” (De Genova 2002: 419) has been enacted in particular historical moments.

Another problem of linguistic determinism occurs when describing the sexuality of migrants. Binary terminology, such as “gay” and “straight” is often too narrow in its description of sexual performance and desire. This terminology also does not necessarily apply in diverse cultural contexts (Luibhéid & Cantu, 2005). In response to narrow categories, scholars presented the term “queer” to encompass all sexualities and to show that sexuality is fluid. However, my participants referred to themselves as either “gay” or “straight” in our conversations, so this is the terminology I use when referring to their sexuality throughout the thesis. When discussing the larger field of sexuality in migration, though, the word “queer” is used

to follow the example set by current scholarship. By developing a queer theoretical perspective that includes a range of experiences in migration studies, I provide a holistic and multidimensional point of view of Mexican migrants in the United States and individual migration patterns.

A History of Exclusion and the Production of "Illegality"

From its inception, the United States has employed various tactics for dictating who can and cannot cross its borders, which have culminated in immigration policy that focuses on militarization and the policing of borders (Peutz and De Genova 2010; Dowling and Inda 2013). The "illegality" that this policing creates for unauthorized migrants has led to an in-depth discussion among migration scholars about the freedom of movement for citizens and non-citizens within sovereign nation-states (De Genova 2002; Gonzales and Chavez 2012).

In his influential article "Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in Everyday Life," Nicholas de Genova lays out the framework for theorizing the formation of "illegality" based on exclusionary policies in U.S. immigration law (2002). He argues that:

It is insufficient to examine the "illegality" of undocumented migration only in terms of its consequences and... it is necessary also to produce historically informed accounts of the sociopolitical processes of "illegalization" themselves, which can be characterized as the legal production of migrant "illegality" (De Genova 2002: 419).

In this way, De Genova states that "illegal" migration is a result of a series of historical events related to the development of state sovereignty and power. Even

though there is nothing inherent or natural about the “illegality”, such categorization “has emerged as a generalized fact in virtually all of the wealthiest nation states... during the post-World War II era” (De Genova 2002: 419). These same sentiments are expressed by Gloria Anzaldúa when she states that:

Gringos... consider the [Latino] inhabitants of the borderlands... transgressors, aliens, whether they possess documents or not, whether they're Chicanos, Indians, or blacks. Do not enter; trespassers will be raped, maimed, strangled, gassed, shot. The only legitimate inhabitants are those in power, the whites and those who align themselves with whites (Anzaldúa 1987: 7).

If the only legitimate, “legal” inhabitants are those in power, than everyone else can be categorized as “illegal.” De Genova and his co-editor Nathalie Peutz expand upon this framework in *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement* by arguing that there is a difference between the freedom of movement as an human condition that is necessary for survival and the idea of the freedom of movement as a “human right” defined by the state (Peutz and De Genova 2010: 8). De Genova notes that:

one can scarcely encounter a reference to the freedom of movement that is not immediately encumbered with the pertinent qualifications, limitations, and restrictions. Notably, the ineffable fault line in modern times for the positing of such a freedom has been the primacy, prerogative, and presumptive sovereignty of territorially defined (“national”) states (De Genova 2010: 34).

De Genova states that the creation of the state as a sovereign power with defined borders has transformed an important aspect of human survival, namely the ability to move, into a privilege that some people have and others do not according to “citizenship” (De Genova 2010: 45). However, these “qualifications, limitations, and

restrictions” (De Genova 2010: 34) do not stop people from crossing borders; instead, they encourage and facilitate illicit forms of migration, and they intensify the power of the border as a real and imagined space. The state’s response to unauthorized migration has been increased militarization of the U.S-Mexico border (and beyond) by the U.S. government, which intensifies the danger and risk involved in crossing from Mexico to the United States (Boehm 2012; Gomez-Peña 1996; Anzaldúa 1987).

With De Genova’s work acting as a catalyst, scholars from various disciplines have examined the history of U.S. immigration law to contextualize how and why the freedom of movement has been restricted for transnational people. These scholars piece together the ways that global power relations have historically directed and shaped migration patterns (Dowling and Inda 2013; Zilberg 2011). They also demonstrate how these larger global processes have shaped the everyday experiences and lives of migrants (Menjívar 2006). By using historical events to analyze the formation of “illegality” in regards to movement, they examine the increasingly naturalized use of the word “illegal” in reference to unauthorized migration. Among the many historical events that have impacted this discourse are the Bracero Program in the mid 1900s, amnesty for undocumented agricultural workers in the 1980s under the Reagan administration, the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in the 1990s, and increased border security and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security after September 11, 2001 (Boehm 2012; Chacón 2013; De Genova 2010; Gómez-Peña 1996;

Cornelius 2006; Hirschman 2006; Peutz and De Genova 2010). These events and their consequences can be contextualized within the “contentious relationship between sovereignty, space, and the freedom of movement” (Peutz and De Genova 2010: 2) that exists within U.S. immigration policy and have led to the creation of intensified “illegality” in the lives of transnational migrants.

Migration scholars focusing on “illegality” have shown how the border extends beyond the “physical” line that runs between the United States and Mexico. Through the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the United States also established its ability to police its interior in order to dissipate the “threat” of terrorism (Dowling and Inda 2013). As Jonathan Xavier Inda and Julia A. Dowling note in the introduction of *Governing Immigration Through Crime*:

Given that undocumented migrants have largely been constructed as criminal ‘illegal’ immigrants who harm the well-being of American citizens and threaten the security of the nation, the measures employed to govern them have been extremely exclusionary and punitive (Inda and Dowling 2013: 7).

The policing of the interior has caused the border to expand in the psyche of migrants, and this affects their identity formation and sense of self. The psychological border is particularly present in the minds of undocumented migrants, since there is the constant fear of being discovered, detained and/or deported by the DHS or ICE. Undocumented migrants are also limited in their access to resources in the United States, living in an “in between” space on the margins of society.

This “in between” space is described by Giorgio Agamben’s concept of “bare life,” which deals with state sovereignty and power over the individual (Agamben 1995). An individual exists in “bare life” when every aspect of social humanity has been stripped away, and s/he exists in a distinct mode of survival (Agamben 1995: 2). De Genova and other scholars have applied this concept to undocumented migrants. “Bare life” applies to undocumented immigrants since they have to behave in ways that are closely linked to personal survival in a hostile environment. They do not have the protections of formal citizenship granted by the state, and therefore live in a place of exclusion and liminality. However, because there are millions of immigrants who live in this realm of “bare life,” networks are formed to assist in survival, which creates community in the face of marginalization.

The Queering of Migration Studies

Prior to the 1990s, most migration scholarship did not consider sexuality and utilized a heteronormative perspective, which assumes that all migrants follow traditional, heterosexual gender roles. In this way, large groups of people who express their sexuality in non-normative ways were mostly left out of the migration discourse. Recent scholarship has challenged this perspective, though, and is now looking at sexuality as an important and influential aspect of migration (Cantú 2009; Luibhéid 2005; Manalansan 2003). This change in discourse began with the research conducted by Lionel Cantú Jr. in the 1990s among queer Mexican males living in the United States. Among the most significant work in this area is Cantú’s

book *The Sexuality of Migration* that was published posthumously in 2009 by Cantú's colleagues (Cantú 2009). The fieldwork and analysis discussed in this book acts as one of the catalysts for the shift in academic inquiry, and it has been highly influential in the inclusion of queer theory in migration studies. By looking at the multiple sexualities of migrants—including those who identify as complying with or going against heterosexual gender norms—scholars have begun to answer Cantú's question about how sexuality "shapes and organizes *all* migration, not just queer migration" (Cantú 2009: xiv).

One of the important points that Cantú focuses on in *The Sexuality of Migration* is the "queer political economy of migration" (Cantú 2009: 21), and he describes sexuality within this framework "as a dimension of power, [that] shapes and organizes processes of migration and modes of incorporation" (Cantú 2009: 23). For example, migrants who identify as heterosexual typically have a fairly easy time joining migrant communities in their new country. Prior to their own personal migration, these people are usually part of a migrant network. Brothers, brothers-in-law, or cousins often help males migrate for economic reasons, and then wives and children migrate later on if the men decide to stay in the United States. (Boehm 2012: 96). This pattern is different for queer migrants, though, since they do not have wives and children they need to support. Instead, many queer transnationals migrate for reasons related to sexuality, such as sexual oppression or violence (Cantú 2009; Luibhéid and Cantú 2005). Upon arriving in the United States, these

migrants do not feel like they fit into either gay communities or immigrant communities. This often leads to increased marginalization for them.

Another important issue that Cantú addresses in this work is linguistic determinism associated with sexual terminology. He problematizes notions of “gay” and “straight”, saying that these are cultural constructs and that they are too narrow in definition to describe the diverse experiences of transnational beings (Cantú 2009: 22). To be gay in the United States does not mean the same thing as it does in Mexico. In Mexico, a person has more fluidity in sexuality based on class status and the role one takes in an intimate partnership (either the *activo* (active) or the *pasivo* (passive) role), so to label a migrant as “gay” can limit mobility and multiple facets of identity (Cantú 2009). Cantú establishes the use of the term “queer” in his study to include all people who engage in non-heterosexual practices (Cantú 2009: 21). This points to an important theme that Cantú makes use of throughout the book, and which has become fundamental to queer migration studies: sexuality is not a black-and-white concept. Instead, sexuality may better be conceptualized along a continuum, where people’s everyday experiences challenge dichotomous sexual categorizations.

Since Cantú’s untimely death in 2002, other migration scholars, such as Tom Boellstorff (2007), Eithne Luibhéid (2002), and Martin Manalansan (2003) have expanded the study of queer experience in migration, and have examined how sexuality is a dimension of every migration experience, not just queer migration. They describe how sexuality can be an influential factor in the decision to migrate

(Boellstorff 2007), how it can impact experience during the migratory process (Luibhéid 2008), and how it can create community and agency for migrants in their new home (Manalansan 2003). Scholars of queer migration point out that queer immigrants are not a homogenous group, but that differences in class, legal status, self-identification, age, and motivations for moving to the United States separate them from one another (Cantú 2009; Solomon 2005).

In *Global Divas* (2003), Martin Manalansan shows how situational factors influence identity formation. He focuses on the lives of gay Filipino immigrants in New York, whom he describes as living in a series of borderlands established by the “institutions, identities, practices and persons” that these men experience in the United States (Manalansan 2003: 18). Manalansan demonstrates the blurred lines of sexuality for these men by describing them as somewhere in between “*bakla*”, which he describes as a male body with a female heart, and “gay” (Manalansan 2003: 25). The range of experience that exists between *bakla* and gay shows how sexuality is a cultural construct. The murkiness of this range represents the struggles that immigrants experience when being categorized by culturally particular definitions of sexuality.

Through other works leading migration scholars, Manalansan and Luibhéid, emphasize the importance of including queer theory in migration studies. They state that by looking at cultural concepts of sexuality we can examine our own understandings of gender and sexuality in the United States (Luibhéid 2002; Luibhéid and Cantú 2005; Manalansan 2006). These scholars also point to the

history of queer studies in the social sciences, stating that the feminist movement and the AIDS epidemic underscored the need to look at non-heterosexual gender performance (Manalansan 2006: 228). These events are important for the emergence of queer studies in the United States because they represent the first time that people publicly spoke out against heteronormative gender roles. Conversely, they also show the pressures of conforming to society, since these groups were marginalized and ostracized for breaking the established boundaries.

While there have been significant breakthroughs in the study of queer migration, the field is still a relatively new and growing body of inquiry. The scholarship discussed above shows how sexuality is complicated and multi-faceted, which points to the need for further research. Sexual identities among transnational people are indeed complex and shaped by a range of factors, including the person's country of origin and new country of residence. To date, queer migration research has been innovative and theoretically significant, but scholarship must still be expanded. By conducting my research among Mexican youth and looking at how sexuality and immigration status expands and/or limits agency to individuals growing up in a transnational world, I am contributing to this growing field of study.

At the Intersection of "Illegality" and Sexuality

In order to tie together the frameworks around sexuality and illegality discussed above, I turn to Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of the borderlands as metaphorical spaces that extend far beyond the physical border between the United States and

Mexico (Anzaldúa 1987). Anzaldúa, who identifies as a queer immigrant, describes the experience of immigrants as a mixture of cultures, ideologies, identities, histories, and languages, and this mixture is what creates the metaphorical borderlands. In this regard, transnational youth exist in a state of liminality; throughout their lives they can never identify as entirely “Mexican” or entirely “American” (Gonzales and Chavez 2012: 256). Instead, they are a bit of both, but cannot claim one culture or the other completely. They speak multiple languages and have multiple expressions of self, and they use this multiplicity to navigate the liminal state in which they exist.

Transnational Mexican youth live along a continuum of marginalization and incorporation within the borderlands. As described by Anzaldúa these borderlands are important because, “*es el lugar en medio de todos los lugares*, [it is the place in between all the places], the space in-between, the liminal stage or transitional periods in identity formation” (Anzaldúa 2000: 5). In this regard, Anzaldúa shows how modes of incorporation are processes that inherently affect identity. Some people can more easily incorporate into communities and escape the liminal space of the borderlands, while others have a more difficult time. For example, a straight documented immigrant is less marginalized and is less likely to live on the periphery of society than a queer undocumented immigrant; therefore the straight, documented immigrant may have an easier time leaving the marginalized space of the borderlands than the queer, undocumented immigrant does. However, both of these groups still exist in states of liminality, because liminality includes a range of

experience. The borderlands of immigrant identity are also imagined and expressed through thoughts, behaviors, and actions in a marginalized place.

Gloria Anzaldúa was revolutionary during her lifetime and made many scholarly contributions to how we conceptualize immigration and sexuality in identity formation. Her personal experience as a queer *mestiza* (person of mixed ancestry) sheds light on the importance of looking at individual experience when examining how structural factors play into the creation of identity. We can see this through poems in *Borderlands/La New Frontera* such as the following, which gives insight into what it means to live in the borderlands between Mexico and the United States:

To live in the Borderlands means to
 put *chile* in the borscht,
 eat whole wheat tortillas,
 speak tex-mex with a Brooklyn accent;
 be stopped by *la migra* [immigration police] at the border checkpoints (1987: 195)

In the following ethnographic chapters, I build on this concept of the borderlands to show how immigration and sexuality are intersecting factors in identity formation among transnational Mexican youth in the United States today.

Chapter 2: On the Effects of Migration

Among the most formative experience for any immigrant's identity is the physical act of migration. For all migrants, this is an important and fundamental event, but for youth it is especially important because they have little to no say in the decision to migrate, and this decision inherently affects the rest of their lives. The effects of migration on youth identity formation is a theme throughout the thesis, but in this chapter I pay particularly close attention to the migration experiences of the four individuals I interviewed. I do this in order to draw connections between the act of migrating as children and their identity formation as young adults. In this way, I show how states of "liminal legality" (Menjivar 2006) have been created for them based on their migration experiences.

In the next three chapters, I describe the lives of Nik, Luis, Maria, and Juan, who were all brought to the United States from Mexico when they were children. I show how varying immigration statuses and sexualities affect them in the different realms of their lives, and how these factors are important in their identity formation. Common threads run through these stories based on the power of the state, but significantly, each of their experiences are also unique. Ethnography provides a more dynamic portrayal of immigrant experience, and reinforces the idea that immigration is made up of networks of individuals, while also pointing to important patterns in migration flows.

Sexuality follows heteronormative gender roles in regards to the reasons that children and youth migrate. It is very common for a male head of household to

migrate first, and then to send for his wife and children, thus following established, heterosexual gender roles (Boehm 2012: 32-33). This is not to say that sexual identity for transnational youth is not important and relevant, though. Since they migrate as children, their lives and expressions of sexuality are developed within a transnational space. Transnational sexuality will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. For now, I focus on the migration experiences of Nik, Luis, Maria, and Juan, and how these experiences have affected their identity.

Nik's Crossing

The “illegality” of movement and its influence on identity is visible through the stories told by each of my informants. Some transnational youth have no memory of their migration and have to rely on stories told by their parents, while others have clear memories of the experience. Nik’s story begins when he was just a few days old. Nik was born in Tijuana where his mother lived. At the time of his birth, Nik’s father was living in San Diego as a legal resident who was granted amnesty. His mother knew that in order to give her newborn child the opportunity she imagined for him, she too would have to migrate. However, Nik’s mother was denied a visa to legally enter the United States, and therefore chose the only alternative for reuniting her family in the United States: unauthorized migration. Nik recounted the story as he knows it in our discussion together, saying how his mother walked through the desert with an infant in her arms, darting across the freeway at a moment when the traffic was light, crossing the border, and finally

meeting Nik's father in San Diego. Through his father's residency, Nik gained legal residency, and in 2008 he became a naturalized U.S. citizen. When I expressed dismay at the image of a young woman walking through the desert and running across a freeway with a newborn baby in her arms, Nik blankly said that their situation wasn't any worse than any other story, but that it was, in fact, fairly typical of the "usual crossing."

Because he migrated in the earliest stage of life and was fortunate enough to quickly receive residency and then citizenship, the impact of Nik's unauthorized migration has not weighed as heavily on him as it has for some people. In the gamble that is immigration law, Nik struck the jackpot. However, this is not to say that the political economic conditions associated with growing up as a Mexican immigrant have not affected him. On the contrary, lack of resources in school for a non-native English speaker, stereotypes, and racism have been a continually present factor in his day-to-day life. This influence will be discussed in later chapters on the formation of identity in the realms of education, work, and intimacy.

Even though Nik is a naturalized citizen, the effects of immigration status and documentation are still present in his life in multiple ways. His four younger siblings were all born in the United States and are therefore U.S. citizens. His father and his mother are both legal permanent residents. Nik's boyfriend, José, is an undocumented immigrant. So while Nik can live his life as any other U.S. citizen, his parents and boyfriend still live within the restrictions put on them by immigration status, which makes them deportable beings in liminal spaces (De Genova 2002).

Nik told me in our discussion of immigration status that people often assume that he is undocumented because he is Latino. He grew up in a Las Vegas neighborhood with a high Latino population, and he finds it racist and hurtful when people make this assumption. However, by taking a broader view, one can see that this assumption is shaped by popular rhetoric in the United States. Since the mid-1990s a great amount of attention has been placed on identifying and deporting undocumented people, which has become common rhetoric in the media and in mainstream culture (Cisneros 2013: 253; Chavez 2008). Nik finds this assumption especially frustrating because he is a citizen and has access to every right guaranteed to any other citizen. The marginalization that comes along with being an undocumented immigrant have not been a factor in many aspects of Nik's life: he has a driver's license, he works legally, and he can apply for college scholarships and loans. He says that the stereotyping he hears about Mexicans frustrates him more than it does his boyfriend José, who is undocumented, because when it is said about Nik, it is definitively untrue.

Luis's Crossing

Luis's father made an unauthorized border crossing in 1999 to look for work. He ended up in Reno and liked it so much that he decided to bring his wife and two young children to join him. At the time, Luis was eight years old, and his sister, Julia, was five. His mother had obtained travel visas for herself and her two children, and they flew from Mexico City to Los Angeles. As a protection strategy, in case they

were questioned by immigration authorities, Luis's mother told her children that they were going to Disneyland. Once they arrived in Los Angeles, Luis's mother told them the truth; they were not going to Disneyland, but instead, they were going to live with their father in Reno. Since he was so young, Luis did not understand the ramifications of this. In our interview, he told me the following reaction to it.

RW: How did you feel when she told you that you weren't going to Disneyland, that you were actually going to stay here?

L: She offered it to us kind of like a choice, like, hey listen, we're in L.A., so we can go to Disneyland or we can go up to Reno to see your dad. And it's not really a choice you give a kid. It's like, how shitty would you feel if you chose Disneyland over your dad? It was kind of underhanded on my mother's side, but it got us here.

Even though Luis recounted this experience to me in a lighthearted manner, it is clear how the limitations of U.S. immigration policy create ways in which people are forced to navigate the system.

Through the discussion of both Nik and Luis's migration stories, we can see examples of how marginalized people find innovative ways to work around a system of exclusion. In Nik and Luis's cases their mothers were determined to reunite their families and provide for their children based on the belief in better opportunity. When migration through official channels was not an option for their families, their mothers found an alternative way. Their stories also show why there is the need for immigration reform in the United States. On paper, current immigration policies "encourage immigration through family relations" (Boehm 2012: 59) in order to reunite families, but in reality, current policies create barriers for reunification and often tear families apart, which is evident by the millions of people living in mixed

status families in the United States (Boehm 2012: 60). Both Nik and Luis's mothers left Mexico in an attempt to reunite their families, but didn't have opportunities to do so through formal channels. Their stories also point to another reason why current immigration policies need to be reformed: people are going to migrate whether or not the government gives them permission to do so.

Growing up as an undocumented immigrant has had various effects on Luis's sense of self. When he was thirteen, his parents divorced and his father moved back to Mexico, leaving his mother to raise Luis and his sister on her own in the United States. His mother has worked as an independently employed housekeeper during the thirteen years she has been in the United States. She is a moral and upstanding person, and has never allowed Luis or Julia to use a fake social security number to work. When I asked Luis how his mother managed to work for so many years without one, he said that because she is self-employed, she doesn't have to have one. Here again is a way in which undocumented people must learn to navigate the system and follow moral codes in order to provide for themselves and their families.

Since Luis and Julia are not allowed to work in the United States, they have tried to help their mother out in whatever ways they can, including going on the reduced lunch program at school and working hard to get good grades. When Luis graduated from high school, he began taking classes at the university. However, because he is undocumented, he is not eligible for financial aid, and after a year of his mother paying for all of his tuition on her own, he decided to drop out of school and move back to Mexico to live with his father. He told me in our conversation that

I was really kind of disenchanted with the American government because I saw what was happening around me, with people at school and stuff. People that were involved very heavily with I guess what you would consider criminal activity – a lot of drug use going on and stuff. And I was thinking my mother, the worst she's ever done is gotten a parking ticket. I mean, that's like her rap sheet. And my sister and I, we were really good students. We had awesome grades in school, never got in trouble or anything like that. So I was thinking when I was at the university, that we were model citizens without being citizens.

I was curious about how Luis got back into Mexico since his tourist visa had expired years before. In a surprising point of view on the border he said:

I just walked across the border the other way. Because the border... when people walk into Mexico from San Diego to Tijuana there's one guy there that checks your bag for drugs. Sometimes. You press a button, just like at the airport... if it's green, you're good to go. So there was no paperwork, there was no mention, no nothing saying I left the U.S. at this date, which did help me later in acquiring my visa [to return to the U.S. for visitation purposes] because it meant that they had no record of me leaving. So they were like, 'alright when did you leave?' And I'm like, 'oh, six months, four months after I came in.'

When I asked Luis how he knew to walk across the border the other way, he told me that crooked lawyers in Mexico had advised his father to do it when he decided to go back after his divorce. Luis's father had then passed that information on to Luis. He told Luis that he would want to come back into the United States at some point, so he had to be strategic about how he left. Here again, we can see the inconsistencies that exist in immigration policy and how people learn to use them as a survival tactic.

Luis has been living in Mexico City with his father for the past two years, and even though he is back in his country of origin, Luis remains a transnational person. His mother and sister continue to live in the United States as undocumented

migrants, but Luis does not feel like either country is his home. He wavers between the two, finding his sense of self in both and in neither at the same time.

Maria's Crossing

The story of Maria's crossing is interesting, because it involves not one, but two border crossings. The first time she crossed, Maria was an infant who was carried through the border in someone's arms. After a short amount of time in the United States, her family decided to return to Mexico to see if they could make life work for them there. Back in Mexico, Maria's father soon gained legal access to work in the United States. He went to Nevada to work on a ranch and sent remittances to support his family in Mexico. Maria's mother was uncomfortable with the distance between them, though, and experienced acts of gendered violence directed towards her as a woman living alone. Because of this, she eventually made the decision to cross the border a second time. She had applied for a visa the first time they migrated and was denied but had decided to go anyways. She attempted to cross legally the second time as well, but was again denied a visa. This is when she decided that she and Maria would cross by hiring a *coyote*, or a person who facilitates in unauthorized migration.

Using a *coyote/a* to cross the border can be very dangerous and expensive. Maria was around five or six years old when she crossed the border the second time, and while she understood that what they were doing was "something big," as a little girl, she didn't understand the full effect of it. When I asked her what she

remembered about the experience, she said, “I do remember running and stopping at different houses in the *coyote* network. It’s a whole network of people, and we would stop at different houses, and they’d tell us to pretend like we were living in our own home, and hang out in the yard, and pretend like we were just going about our normal day.”

This idea of “pretending like we were just going about our normal day” can still be applied to Maria’s life in many ways. Maria is now in her late twenties and has been living in the United States as an undocumented immigrant for the majority of her life. She grew up in a rural Nevada where her family worked as ranch hands, and she moved to Reno to attend the university. In Reno, Maria feels like she has to hide her status from many people because she doesn’t know how they will react to it. She has friends with whom she has never revealed her status, and she has lived with an elderly man as his caretaker for the past three years who has no idea that she is undocumented.

Maria’s job as a live-in caretaker is particularly intriguing because it is a survival mechanism that Maria has found to fulfill many of the needs that she has. As an undocumented person, Maria has no credit built up and therefore cannot sign a lease on an apartment. She also does not want to work with a fake Social Security number, so finding a way to make a living has been a constant challenge for her. By working as a live-in caretaker, Maria has found a way to make money and arrange a secure living situation without breaking the law. Once again, this is an example of the barriers put on undocumented people by the presence of the “law” and the

avenues they find to work their way around their liminal sense of “bare life” in order to survive.

The ambiguities of immigration law are present in the story of Maria’s family, much like they are in Nik and Luis’s families. Maria’s sister was born in the United States, and is therefore a U.S. citizen. Maria’s father is a legal permanent resident, and her mother remarried a U.S. citizen after divorcing Maria’s father, thus gaining U.S. citizenship. Maria is the only person in her nuclear family that lives in the shadows of society because of her status. This mixed status family goes against the idea of “reuniting families” through immigration policy in all regards. Maria runs the risk of deportability every day, which would separate her from her family, her friends, and the entire life that she has built for herself in the United States.

Juan’s Crossing

Juan’s father left his family in Mexico in the late 1980s. His family knew that he had gone to the United States, but they had no idea where he went. After not hearing from him for over two years, Juan’s mother and older sister left Mexico in secret to search for him. Juan’s mother had been living on her husband’s family’s *rancho*, and no one would give her any information about her husband’s whereabouts, so she decided to go look for him. She took her daughter with her, thinking that a girl would be safer with her mother, but left her two sons behind. Juan’s mother was gone for two years, during this time, Juan and his younger brother, Diego, were left in the care of their grandmother on the *rancho*. Juan’s

mother searched for her husband in the United States during these two years before she gave up on the hope of ever finding him. At that point, she wrote a letter to her in-laws back in Mexico, telling them that she had met another man and decided to move on with her life. When her in-laws received this letter, they confessed to her that they knew where her husband had been all along. They thought they could maintain an element of control over Juan's mother by not telling her where her husband had been, but once they realized they had lost control, they decided to help her out and told her where he was. In hopes of saving her family, Juan's mother reunited with his father in the United States, and they decided to bring their sons to live with them in Reno.

Up until this point, Juan had lived on the *rancho* with his grandparents and other relatives, and he had never seen anything outside of this community. In our conversation, he described how incredible it was at six years old to ride a bus for the first time, which made the crossing with his grandmother and brother seem like an amazing adventure. He also knew that what they were doing was a secret, since his grandmother constantly reminded them not to mention the word *coyote* to anyone. While the crossing was incredible in Juan's six-year-old mind, it was also very serious. He described spending the night in a shack along the *coyote* network, where he was so excited watching the cars pass by that he couldn't sleep. In the morning when the *coyote* came to pick them up, Juan was exhausted from the lack of sleep the night before. He developed a fever, which lasted throughout the rest of the journey. He remembers being sick and running through the desert with helicopters

flying overhead, and he said that even though he and his family knew that the desert was full of poisonous creatures, such as rattlesnakes and scorpions, they weren't afraid of them because the helicopters were so much more terrifying.

Juan doesn't know how long it took him and his family to cross the border. During our conversation, he remarked on the fact that he has so many questions to ask his grandmother, since all he knows is based off of a six-year-old's experience. He said that he never remembers to ask her when he sees her, though, so the story lives on according to his memory. On the final day of Juan's crossing, they had to wade through a marsh somewhere outside of San Antonio, Texas. Diego, Juan's brother, was so small that Juan's grandmother had to carry him, but Juan was big enough to walk on his own. Walking through waste-deep cold water made Juan sicker than he had been before, and when they finally made it to the other side, Juan was seriously ill. His grandmother considered taking him to the hospital, but because would have run the risk of exposing themselves to authorities, she nursed Juan back to health in a hotel room. During this time, Juan went in and out of consciousness, until his fever finally broke.

Once Juan was strong enough to leave the hotel, his family made the last leg of the journey to Dallas with the *coyote*. In front of the courthouse in downtown Dallas, Juan was reunited with his parents, whom he hadn't seen in years. They paid the remaining fees to the *coyote* on the courthouse lawn, a most ironic place to do so, and Juan, Julio, and his grandmother drove to Reno with Juan's parents where they would begin their new life.

For a while, Juan's family lived in an overcrowded, rundown apartment in what he described as "a bad part of town". The apartment was also part of the immigrant network, where many new arrivals would stay for a while until they were able to find jobs and other places to live. Juan and his family lived in this apartment for a few years, during which time Juan would often have to sleep on the floor in the living room because there were not enough beds to accommodate everyone. Juan's family continued to support other recent undocumented arrivals in this way for many years after moving out of the apartment. When Juan was ten or eleven years old, he was molested by an "uncle" in this network who was sharing a room with him, which was a significant turning point in Juan's sense of identity as an immigrant and as a gay man.

Even though Juan made an unauthorized border crossing, he was soon able to gain legal residency. His parents were granted amnesty as agricultural workers under the Reagan administration, so Juan and his siblings were able to gain residency through them. However, legal residency should not be confused with citizenship, which can be illustrated by the fact that Juan could not gain U.S. citizenship until after his military service. His father was recently deported even though he was a legal permanent resident. He had been arrested multiple times, and the last arrest resulted in him being deported to Mexico as a criminal offender. The example of Juan's father shows how even though a person may have the protection of being labeled a legal permanent resident, s/he still lives system of "illegality" where rights are tentative for anyone who is not a citizen.

Constructing National Identity

Through the telling of individual migration stories, it is clear that situations vary dramatically in regards to border crossings and legal status. This range of possibility reveals the arbitrariness of U.S. immigration policy, while also displaying the very real presence that immigration policies have on the everyday lives of migrants. Individual agency is extremely limited through the exclusionary practices that laws around increased border security have created. This is clear through Maria's and Luis's stories; their status as undocumented immigrants has affected their mobility throughout their entire lives, which in turn, has shaped their sense of self. Maria, Luis, Nik, and Juan all exist in Anzaldúa's "borderlands" (Anzaldúa 1987). They are *mestizo/as*, or "mixed" (Anzaldúa 1987: 42) and identify and are identified as both "Mexican" and "American" while at the same time not fitting into either category completely.

One question I asked all of my participants was how they view themselves: as American, Mexican American, or Mexican. Maria, Nik, and Juan all said "American". Nik feels proud to be a U.S. citizen, Juan has served his country in the military, and Maria sees herself as part of the nation since she has lived in it for almost her entire life. Luis, on the other hand, feels like he is 100% Mexican. Interestingly, though, after each participant answered this question, they qualified it. Nik works for Latino and gay rights, and therefore identifies very strongly with the Latino population. Maria sees herself as American in every sense of the word, except in regards to the law, in which case she is Mexican. When Juan entered the military, he knew that he

was fighting for a country that was not really his because he was not yet a citizen, so in this way he was not really American. Now, though, Juan sees the confluence of his cultures as “yin and yang,” where his Mexican identity and his U.S. identity complement each other. Luis sees himself as Mexican, even though he was raised in the United States, speaks fluent English without an accent, and associates mostly with ex-patriots in Mexico. These qualifications reveal the ambiguities of the categories we use to describe people, and argue against the naturalizing of terms that refer to citizenship.

Hope for Immigrant Youth

The presence of the state and its ability to define immigration status is clearly visible in my conversations with Nik, Luis, Maria, and Juan, but one new program, in particular, stands out as extremely important to Mexican youth. Three of the four research participants mentioned Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in our conversations. Luis’s sister, Julia, was one of the first people in the state of Nevada to receive DACA. Nik’s boyfriend, José, has applied for and received DACA. Maria has applied for DACA, and is currently going through the approval process (I ran into her a few weeks after our interview, and she was very excited to tell me that she had just had her fingerprints taken for it).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals is an executive order that was signed by President Obama on June 15, 2012. It grants temporary relief to undocumented Mexican immigrants who were brought to the United States under the age of 16 and

who were under the age of 31 when it was passed. For undocumented youth, DACA can ease some of the burden they face. For example, it allows them to gain legal employment and get a driver's license. However, DACA also has many gaps, since it is not a path to legal residency and can be revoked at any time. There are also contradictions with it in since it takes a person from having no documentation to being hyper-documented (Boehm 2013). Furthermore, if an undocumented immigrant is not approved for DACA, s/he could be vulnerable to deportation. In this way, DACA is only a temporary, partial fix to a larger problem and is not a solution for the millions of undocumented migrants living in the United States.

DACA appears to be having a positive impact on the lives of the Mexican youth I interviewed, and for now it continues to benefit them. However, more immigration reform is necessary, which is evident through the migration stories narrated here. The people discussed in this chapter represent multiple aspects of U.S. identity, from the idea that the United States is a nation made up of immigrants to the concept of the American Dream, and the notion that through hard work and determination you can become whoever you want to be. Undocumented immigrant youth deserve the same opportunities for success as any other person growing up in the United States. Immigration status should not weigh so heavily on those who have no control over it.

Chapter 3: On Experiences of Education and Work

For all of the immigrant youth I interviewed, education and work situations present a multitude of obstacles. Education and work experiences place immigrants in borderlands where they have to learn to interact with different aspects of mainstream U.S. society as well as their own immigrant communities. Often times, they are marginalized in educational institutions and work settings because of race, language, and income. In this chapter, I examine the experiences that Luis, Nik, Maria, and Juan have had throughout their schooling and work histories. Through telling their stories, I show how sexuality and immigration status have influenced their everyday lives, and how these factors continue to be influential in their identity formation and opportunities for work and education today.

Starting with Luis, I show how educational institutions create situations where immigrant youth are marked as different and marginalized in school settings. Then I move on to the school and work experiences of Nik and Maria to show how their experiences as marginalized immigrants were more severe than Luis's were. After that I discuss Juan's experiences. Because he is gay and was an unauthorized immigrant, he has experienced compounded states of difference. In this way, I show how the idea of being "different" is treated in school and work settings, and how this difference exists along a continuum in regards to its ability to affect individual lives.

A Continuum of Difference

Luis and I went to high school together. He is two years younger than I am, but we were both interested in performance, so we sang together in the choir and danced side by side in musicals for two years. During the majority of this time together, I had no idea that Luis was an undocumented immigrant. He speaks English without an accent, and unlike many of the other Mexican teenagers in our predominantly white, middle class high school, Luis never saw himself as different than the rest of us. Because Luis had assimilated into the school so well, I never would have assumed that he was undocumented, until our choir was planning a trip to Disneyland to sing in a festival. The choir director wanted to fly as opposed to taking a bus, since flying would be much more time-efficient. After class, when we were leaving, I heard Luis go up to the director and tell her that he could not go on the trip with us if we were going to fly because he is an immigrant without a valid visa. This was the first time that I had ever heard anyone speak of immobility due to immigration status, and it struck me as entirely bizarre because in my mind, Luis was just like the rest of us.

In recounting his schooling experience to me, Luis confirmed my belief in stating that he, too, felt just like the rest of us. Through my conversation with Luis, it was revealed to me that his parents were both well-educated people, and that education was one of their main motivators for migrating to the United States. Prior to migrating from Mexico, Luis and his sister Julia had been enrolled in a Montessori school, and upon arrival in the United States, Luis's parents quickly enrolled them in

the Montessori school in Reno. Luis described the school as having “less of a Latino influence” since it was private, and no one at the school spoke Spanish. When I asked him what it was like to be in a school where nobody spoke the same language, he said:

There was nobody there to speak Spanish with me, which means that I essentially learned... perfect English in six months. You see what I mean? There was kind of a syncretism of situations... it was a very, very painful six months because obviously no one speaks your language, but this is the English that I have now, so that was definitely, definitely a good move on my parents' side.

Similar situations exist in Maria, Nik, and Juan's first experiences in the U.S. school system. None of my participants spoke English upon being enrolled in school in the United States, but all of them picked it up within a few months. They all described learning English as painful, confusing, and difficult, but each person was able to speak it after a certain period of exposure. However, not speaking English was one of the first experiences that let them know that they were different, and this knowledge of difference persisted through the rest of their primary and secondary educations.

Luis attended the Montessori school through middle school. He and Julia were two of the only Latino students in the school, but since they were good students they received scholarships to help pay for their tuition. His mother taught Spanish at the school a few days a week, and because of his family's involvement and the open and accepting environment of Montessori, Luis never felt like he was any different. The Montessori school in Reno only goes through eighth grade,

though, so when Luis graduated from eighth grade, he had to move on to the public high school. According to him:

When I got into high school, which was my first public school, I started seeing how it could be different. I started meeting a lot more... racism and certain things were expected of me for being an immigrant. Most people didn't believe that I was an immigrant because... I spoke English without an accent, because I wasn't a gangbanger, because I didn't do this or that. So there were times when people didn't believe me that I was Mexican or people would say racist things around me without realizing that I was Mexican.

High school was a time of transition for Luis. Besides it being the first time he attended a public school, it was the first time he encountered racist remarks about Mexicans.

As mentioned before, Luis attended three semesters of college before dropping out and returning to Mexico. Upon his return, he briefly worked as an English teacher in Mexico City before quitting to act in commercials. When I asked him if he will go back to college, he explained that it would be difficult for him to do so. He speaks Spanish fluently, but cannot read or write it as well, and so he feels like it would be very difficult for him to get a degree from a Spanish speaking university. He also does not see himself returning to the United States permanently, so finding somewhere to complete a degree in English will be tricky for him. His current plan is to be a flight attendant. Luis has a great sense of independence and adventure, and he has applied to work for Fly Emirates in the United Arab Emirates. He hopes that all of the paperwork will pass soon and he will be able to move to Dubai to start a new part of his life.

On Knowing That You Are Different

Luis's story is unique when it comes to transnational youth because he never lived under the assumption that he was different than anybody else. His parents are partially responsible for instilling this sense of belonging in him. They knew that they had to be cautious in certain regards due to their undocumented status, but they also never allowed it to limit their children's sense of personal capability. The Montessori school was a safe environment in which to grow, so by the time that Luis entered high school, he had established a strong sense of self. He was also fairly well integrated into the American community. As he told me, all of his friends were American, and he never spoke Spanish outside of his home. This integration has been important in the formation of Luis's identity, and it differs from many other youth migration stories. Nik and Maria, for example, both knew that their situations were different from the very beginning, which was influenced by their experiences in school. These experiences have affected how they think about themselves, and they have affected the experiences that they have had outside of school as well.

When Nik started kindergarten at the age of five, he did not speak any English. He was enrolled in a public school with a high Latino population, but the school lacked the necessary resources for the non-native English speakers. For the first few months of school, Nick did not understand why his parents were making him go there. He felt confused and lonely, but after a while he started to understand more of what was going on. He said that he learned a lot of English by watching TV, and as he learned more, his parents began to rely heavily on him to help them

navigate living in the United States. He described himself as a “seven-year-old translator,” helping his parents to pay bills since people would try to take advantage of them for not speaking English. He says that many times throughout his life, people have thought that his parents were stupid because they do not speak English. This frustrates him, but he is also frustrated with their lack of effort to learn English. Even now, his parents have been living in the United States for close to twenty years and only speak a little English.

The lack of resources in school for second language English learners and his parents’ inability to help him made Nik’s education a struggle. He said that his parents did not understand the U.S. school system, and no one was there to explain it to them, so Nik had to be very self-reliant in his education. Whereas “most kids who are born in the U.S. have someone to push them for school” Nik had nobody. His parents could not help him with his homework, and once his four younger siblings were born, any support that they may have given him was gone. Throughout elementary and middle school, Nik says that he fell into the stereotypes associated with being Mexican. He used it as an excuse to accept things for what they were and did not make much of an effort to break away from them. This changed, though, when he was accepted into a performing arts high school.

According to Nik, the high school was 80% white and full of motivating teachers who discouraged him from accepting who he was based on where he was from. The 2008 presidential elections took place during Nik’s sophomore year at the performing arts school. He took a huge interest in politics at this time and started

volunteering with the Democratic Party. It was the first time that he felt respected for being Latino and for being gay. He felt empowered through this process, and came to the conclusion that “others don’t outcast us, we outcast ourselves.” Nik graduated from high school in 2011. He has been highly involved in political action throughout this time and currently works for PLAN in Las Vegas. He hopes to attend college someday, although this is difficult because he has no support from his parents. He says that in the meantime, he will continue to fight for immigration reform and LGBTQ rights. Nik is lucky and wise beyond his years his many ways. Through the encouragement of a few key teachers and the acceptance of a political party, Nik has been able to turn his difference into an important strength. Whereas being gay and being an immigrant could have made Nik feel very small and incapable as it had while he was growing up, it is now a source of empowerment for him.

Maria’s schooling experiences were similar to and different from Nik’s in certain ways. First, since Maria grew up in a rural area, she did not have the influence of a highly Latino urban community around her. Instead she grew up surrounded by her aunts and uncles who worked on ranches, as well as ranch owners and other workers. Because the ranches were far from town, Maria, her sister, and her cousins had to take a special bus to school. This immediately flagged them as different from the rest of the students, which according to Maria, forced them to stick together. Like Luis and Nik, Maria did not speak any English when she started school. She was the only Spanish speaker in her first grade class, which let

her know that she was different. She describes herself as an outcast in school growing up. She played sports and did art and was always strong at academics, but she never felt like she fit in. Luckily, Maria had a few teachers who saw the potential in her. They encouraged her to take the SAT and apply for college, and when Maria graduated from high school, she moved to Reno to attend the university.

Maria is innovative and resourceful. She figured out that she could live in the dormitories at UNR without providing a social security number and found multiple ways to pay for her tuition. She started taking education classes thinking that she would like to be a teacher, but realized after a few semesters that she would not be able to get a teaching license, and therefore a teaching degree would be futile. Instead, she pursued a liberal arts degree, but even then felt like her future after college was grim. As she says, “the fact that I’m an undocumented citizen has been very central in the things I have had to do, and haven’t been able to do. For example, going to college and knowing that any job offer I get I would have to turn down is always in my mind.” This had led Maria to her current situation, living with and caring for the elderly man. She does not want to use a fake social security number to work since using a fake social security number is a felony, so instead she has put aside her college degree and is focusing on ways to survive.

Compounded Experiences of Difference

When Juan’s family moved to Reno, he experienced the same situation as Nik, and Maria: he didn’t speak any English and was enrolled in a school that lacked the

necessary resources for non-English speakers. Juan also started school a year later than most children in the United States, which marked him as different among his peers. Juan could feel this difference right away, with his first grade teacher being discriminatory towards him for being Mexican. He told me that story time was his favorite part of class because even though he didn't know what his teacher was saying, he could make up his own story by looking at the pictures in the book. One day, he sat right in front of the teacher for story time. He remembers her lowering the book to give him a dirty look. Then she had the class stand up and move to another part of the room to read the book so that Juan could not sit up front. He said for him, this teacher made school a scary place to go, and he didn't understand why she was so mean. In retaliation, he stopped doing his schoolwork, which resulted in him being held back. This means that Juan was essentially two years older than his peers throughout all of his schooling. It also established a disdain for middle-aged white women in his mind, thinking that they were all racist towards Mexicans.

Juan's family moved a lot when he was a child, so he attended multiple schools while growing up. Between the unstable school situation and experiences at home, including being molested, Juan became disruptive and careless with his schooling. He said that he did a lot of drugs in high school, and he was also trying to come to terms with his sexuality. He wasn't "out" to anybody yet, and friends would often ask why he didn't have a girlfriend. Juan started to date girls to stop the questioning, but never felt comfortable with it. He had one sexual experience with a

boy during high school, which he described as awkward and uncomfortable. The boy that he slept with is now married to a woman.

During Juan's senior year of high school, one of his uncles was working at a local hotel. Juan said that this uncle sensed that he was gay, and he approached Juan, telling him that that he could get a hotel room for the night of Juan's prom and that they could party in it together. This was a turning point for Juan. As he described to me:

It's terrible what you find out about people sometimes. He's telling me how he wants to do this, but he's also telling me not to tell anybody. And in my mind I'm thinking, you're married... and at this point, I'd already run into several men like him, so I knew what he was after... but he was the one who made me think about me and my sexuality and what I wanted. Because after high school, what's usually next for us Latinos? The next thing is a job, and then marriage, and then babies. And that's what this guy did.

Juan realized that he couldn't take these steps. He also knew that he had to get away from the influences of his high school friends, so when a military recruiter visited his school, he saw it as an opportunity to leave. He joined the military, thinking that it was be a way for him to get away, see the world, and discover who he is.

Juan recalls the beginning of his military training, where he was told about Don't Ask Don't Tell *after* he was sworn in. Ironically, though, the military is where Juan learned that it was okay to be gay. He was paired with another gay man as his roommate, who was from Southern California and who had many gay experiences. Juan says that it was this roommate who taught him about the multiple definitions of what it is to be a gay man. During this time, Juan was not the only immigrant in his unit, but he was the only one who had not been naturalized as a U.S. citizen.

When he joined the military, his commanding officer failed to tell him that he could apply for citizenship. In fact, he often overheard this officer say racist things about, “all the fucking Mexicans” in his unit, even though the officer’s wife was herself an immigrant (but not Mexican). When a higher ranking officer found out that no one had informed Juan of his eligibility for citizenship, he became very angry and ensured that Juan would be sworn in as a U.S. citizen when they returned from their deployment. This made Juan realize that the only reason he hadn’t been informed about his eligibility was because his officer was racist.

Juan was in the military for three years, the last of which was spent in Iraq. While he was in Iraq, one of his sergeants was killed and Juan was asked to step into the position. This gave him a sense of authority for the first time ever, and secured his sense of self worth. Upon returning to the United States, Juan became a U.S. citizen, and he used the strength of this experience to also come out to his mother about his sexuality. For the past four years, Juan has attended the University of Nevada where he studies art. He says he mostly paints nude males because you should “paint what you’re interested in.”

Marginalization in Educational Settings

It is clear that being an immigrant marginalized the individuals discussed here throughout their education. Even though Nik and Juan both went through the majority of their education as legal permanent residents and then as naturalized citizens, they still experienced marginalization for being Mexican. For Luis and

Maria, being undocumented intensified this marginalization, because they had to live in the shadows of the system. The stories told by these people can be applied more broadly to immigrant youth in the United States, since the lack of adequate resources for second language English learners, racism, and situational aspects, such as school busing and segregated neighborhoods, inhibit their ability to learn and grow in a community. This marginalization creates “bare life” for immigrant children and youth. They have to navigate a system that tells them they do not belong, and they have to figure out how to survive. The four people I interviewed are remarkable when it comes to their education, though, because not only did they learn to survive in a harsh environment; they learned to thrive. None of them have accepted the marginal positions that they have been placed in, and each of them works daily to improve their quality of life, even though the system tells them that they are not a legitimate part of it.

Difference as Challenge and as Strength

Through the discussion of my research participants’ experience with school and work, I have shown how sexuality and immigration play a role in creating situations of acceptance and discrimination, and I have connected these experiences to their lives today. All struggled with their identity throughout their schooling to greater or lesser degrees since they did not fit into the “norm.” However, in their young adult lives, they have used these differences as a source of empowerment,

which strengthens their sense of identity. These differences led them to where they are today and will guide their identity formation in the future.

These differences will also continue to influence the education and work opportunities that are available to each individual. For example, without more support from his family, it may be unlikely that Nik will be able to attend college, and unless she obtains work authorization through DACA, Maria may not be able to get a position that builds on her education and qualifications. Luis may never finish college, since he doesn't feel like he could do so in a Spanish speaking university, and Juan may experience more racism or homophobia as he looks for a job.

Conversely, difference can also be used as a strength, which is obvious in the ways that my research participants are already doing so. Nik has used his status as an immigrant and a gay man to secure work that is empowering and important to him. Maria uses the skills she has acquired through a lifetime of navigating the system to find a job that fulfills her needs for work and housing while also abiding by the law. Luis has used his transnationality to become an international citizen, and he uses his bilingualism and multiculturalism as a selling point when applying for jobs. Juan gained citizenship through military service and expresses his sexuality that he closeted for so many years through art that is seen by his peers, family, and mentors. Through these examples and more, it is clear how sexuality and immigrant status can present challenges and opportunities to transnational youth.

Chapter 4: On Expressions of Intimacy and Sexuality

In this chapter, I turn to experiences of intimacy and expressions of sexuality. Intimacy is used to express an idea of closeness: To whom do you feel close? Who do you consider to be the most important people in your life? How have partnerings and relationships formed out of expressions of sexuality? How have non-sexual relationships been significant? These questions are examined to reveal how sexuality has played central role in identity formation and relationships for Juan, Nik, Maria, and Luis.

I have saved this chapter for last because sexuality is a process that starts in childhood, blossoms in adolescence, and can be most freely expressed as a young adult. For each of my participants their sexuality is a tool for navigating the world around them, and it creates situations of both inclusion and exclusion in their lives. In this chapter, I discuss the role that sexuality has had in identity formation and the intimate situations that migrants experience.

“That’s Where the Crazy People Are”

Of all of the people I talked to, Juan was the most open about his sexuality. Juan sees sexuality in every facet of his life, and he can trace a clear line connecting experiences with sexuality in his life to where he is now. When he was telling me about migrating with his grandmother and brother, he paused to tell me about his first experience with homophobia. He said:

This is the first memory I have of gay people or what I thought gay people were. My brother saw a hotel, and it said ‘hotel,’ he could read

it, h-o-t-e-l. You don't pronounce the 'h' in Spanish, right? But the way we were reading it was *jotel*, like *joto*, right? So my brother asked me, 'what is that place?' and I said, 'oh you don't want to go there. That's where the crazy people are.' And I told him that that's where bad people are. That's a place you don't want to go. But I think my perception of gay people then was that they were molesters, pedophiles, that sort of person.

Juan recounted this story to me when he was describing waiting outside of the courthouse in Dallas. Unfortunately for Juan, this idea of gay man as molester and pedophile was reinforced multiple times in his life. It was a rhetoric that he heard from adults as a small child in Mexico, and it was an experience that was reinforced when he was molested when he was eleven years old and again when his uncle approached him at the end of high school.

After Juan told me about the *jotel*, I asked him how old he was when he knew that he was gay. He told me that he always knew that he liked boys better than girls. He thought they were cuter and cleaner, but he didn't equate what he was experiencing emotionally with being gay. He also told me that when he was molested as a young boy, he had conflicting feelings about it. He knew that what was happening to him was wrong, but he was also entering puberty and part of him enjoyed the experience and was curious about sex. During this time, Juan also started hearing about AIDS, and it made him think that he was dirty for participating in sexual acts with a man. However, because of the traditional family structure in Mexican culture and strict notions of gender associated with *machista*, Juan felt like he couldn't share any of these thoughts or emotions with members of his community.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Juan had difficulty coming to terms with his sexuality in middle and high school. He described living in a very *machista* world, where his father, brother, uncles, and cousins criticized him for small things like helping with the dishes because that was “women’s work.” He was also constantly questioned for his apparent lack of interest in women. As described before, Juan dated girls on and off in high school to cover up the fact that he was gay until he befriended a lesbian named Robin. Robin was one of the first people with whom Juan felt he could discuss his sexuality. One night Juan’s brother, Diego, overheard Juan and Robin on the balcony talking about sex. Diego came out on the balcony and told Juan that he was disgusting, and then Diego threatened to tell their parents. In response, Juan said, “Please, go ahead and tell them. I want you to because I don’t know how to, so if you’d do it for me that would be great.” This, of course, kept Diego from telling anyone that Juan was gay, and Juan didn’t come out to his family about his sexuality until after he left the military.

In the military Juan learned about queer culture from his roommate, who told him the difference between drag queens and transgender people and what a “hook-up park” is. Juan says that this roommate was the most amazing person he ever met because he knew everything about being gay. Slowly, through conversations with his roommate, Juan learned to be comfortable with his sexuality. Upon returning to the United States from his deployment in Iraq, Juan decided to come out to his mother. One Sunday when they were in church together, he leaned over to her and told her that he had something important to tell her. She told him

that the best place to reveal a secret is in church, so Juan told her, “soy gay” (I’m gay). Juan’s mother was, according to him, surprisingly accepting of this, but she also told him, “as long as you don’t dress like a girl it is okay.”

Because Juan is a Mexican immigrant, his sexuality affects him in ways that it would not affect an American citizen. While Juan is confident and assured in himself, he still deals with a lot of homophobia in the Mexican community that is associated with *machista*. Also, since Juan’s father was deported, Juan has assumed the role as the head of household in his family. He supports his mother and younger half brother. He described often having to stand up to his mother’s new husband, who will tell his son that he can’t be a “*joto* playing with dolls.” Likewise, Juan’s brother Diego puts on an air of hyper masculinity with a stereotypical Mexican male air. He often call Juan a faggot, but Juan says Diego doesn’t use it in a mean way, but that he uses it as more of a joke. However, at the same time Juan worries about Diego saying this in front of Juan’s gay friends or other members of the gay community who will take more offense to it.

Soy Gay/I’m Gay

Like Juan, Nik grew up in a community where specific ideas of masculinity were constantly reinforced through actions and words. In our conversation together, Nik described his father as being a harsh and verbally abusive man, who often made derogatory jokes about being gay and would forcefully tell Nik that he “can’t be acting like a girl” or “acting like a faggot.” There were also numerous points

in Nik's childhood when his community reinforced this idea. For example, Nik described an instance when he was riding in the car with his uncle and father as an adolescent. His uncle's son had recently come out of the closet, and the men were discussing how sick and terrible they thought it was. Nik's father said how he would "make his son a man" if this ever happened, which Nik took as a sign. He figured that his father already knew that he was gay, so the remark was a way of his father telling him that he did not approve. In this way, Nik's father and surrounding community taught him that being gay was a bad thing.

As discussed in the last chapter, Nik felt like he had to hide many aspects of his identity until he began attending the performing arts high school and started volunteering for the Democratic Party. Here Nik learned that he was not sick for the emotions and desires that he experienced. On the contrary, he came to view his sexuality as central to his identity, and he began to embrace this realization. When Nik began volunteering with the Democratic Party during the 2008 election, he started to distance himself from his family and become closer to his friends. In our discussion, he said "my family is the Democratic Party because they celebrate me for being gay, Latino, and young. There is respect there." Nik has used this sense of respect to try to be a role model for his four younger siblings, but he finds it hard to do because his father is such an overbearing person, and his mother passively accepts his father's ways. These factors have forced Nik to grow up very quickly, think for himself, and not follow the example set forth by his parents.

Even though he has confidence in who he is, being an immigrant continues to affect Nik's relationships and sexual desires. When I asked him about relationships and dating, he told me that everyone he has ever dated except for one person has been Latino. He says that the cultural differences make it hard for him to date people outside of the Latino community. He described the one non-Latino he dated as "just not getting it" when it came to many aspects of Mexican culture, and he felt like this person often paraded him around as his "Little Mexican" to show people how open-minded and progressive he was. This experience was enough to persuade Nik that he should only date Latinos, and he and Jose have been dating for a few years now. Nik says that he loves José very much, and he would consider marrying him one day, yet this is not an option for them, and Jose continues to live as an undocumented immigrant in Las Vegas.

As an immigrant and a gay man, Nik clearly sees the need to fight for his rights. He talked about how Mexican culture creates a difficult space for immigrant youth who identify as gay because they hear a mostly pro-gay dialogue in the U.S. media while being denigrated within their own communities for being gay. According to Nik, religious factors play a large role in the denigration of homosexuality in immigrant communities, since these communities are predominately Catholic. However, he does recognize that the role of religion for immigrants is starting to change. He also points out how the image in popular U.S. culture of a gay son coming out to his mother is always a "white interaction" and

that when speaking about gay rights, people do not consider the multiple situations and relationships that exist within families.

Immigration Affects Diverse Sexualities

While it is easy to see how sexuality has been an influential factor in the identity formation of Juan and Nik, the role that sexuality has played for Luis and Maria may not be as evident. Unlike Juan and Nik, Luis and Maria fit into more normative gender roles and identify as heterosexual. However, their immigration status has affected their ability to form and maintain relationships throughout their schooling and as young adults. While sexuality may not direct immigration for straight immigrant youth, immigration certainly affects sexuality. For Luis and Maria, creating and maintaining partnerships has been inhibited by immigration status.

Luis had his first girlfriend in high school. She was a U.S. citizen, and she and Luis dated on and off for about two and a half years. I asked him in our conversation if being an immigrant ever affected their relationship. In response, he said, "I don't think her parents really liked me, but I also think that was because I was her first actual boyfriend. I still hold that it was in large part because I wasn't white, but I don't think it was particularly because of my immigration status, more because of my ethnicity." Luis went on to describe how his girlfriend's parents were fairly conservative and traditional, which for him translated into being anti-Mexican. Luis

openly shared the fact that he was undocumented with his girlfriend, but in our predominately white, middle class high school, no one really knew what that meant.

Luis has not had any serious relationships since his high school girlfriend. I asked him if he was seeing anyone in Mexico, and he said that dating in Mexico is really hard for him. He doesn't see himself staying in Mexico for much longer, so he feels like it would be unfair to someone else and to himself to try to get involved in a relationship. He also says that Mexican culture makes it hard to casually date people. As a twenty-one-year old man, people are constantly asking him when he is going to get a real job and settle down with a nice woman. Luis doesn't see this as an option for himself. He wants to travel the world, part of which seems like a quest to find himself and figure out where he belongs. He still holds very close ties to the United States, and he visits his mom and sister once or twice a year on a tourist visa. He feels like U.S. cultural practices of dating and building relationships fits into his own personal philosophy better than those that exist in Mexico.

Luis also uses his transnationality to stay close to his family and friends in the United States by maintaining close ties to U.S. culture and the people he cares about in Reno. He still considers his closest friends to be the ones that he made in high school, and even though he has made some friends in Mexico, he doesn't consider any of them to be his best friends. He lives with his father who is a flight attendant in Mexico City. Because his father travels so often for work, Luis is very much on his own. He stays in touch with his extended family in Mexico, but for the most part he is a completely independent person. This gives Luis the freedom to

leave if he so chooses, because he doesn't have many emotional connections. It also keeps him connected to the United States even though he is highly critical of it, since the people that he considers to be the most important and valuable in his life all live in Reno.

Like Luis, Maria has not had to deal with marginalization based on her sexuality. However, her immigration status has been a significant barrier in her ability to form meaningful relationships. Since Maria moved around a lot as a child and was marked as different for this, she had a hard time forming relationships during her schooling. She says she knew a lot of people, but never got close to anybody, and she describes herself as a loner who kept to herself. At the beginning of college, Maria started dating a U.S. citizen and quickly became engaged to him. The rhetoric of marrying for citizenship had been present in Maria's life for a long time. Her mother is remarried to a U.S. citizen, and many other immigrant women in her life have done the same thing. Maria thought this was what she should also do, since it would make her life so much easier, but as time went on their engagement was extended, and Maria eventually broke it off. She says that she would rather be undocumented than married to someone she doesn't love.

Maria says that the older she gets, the harder it is to date people. She says that a lot of men have been suspicious of her reasons for dating them once she tells them that she is undocumented. A few boyfriends have even broken up with her because they think that she wants to marry them for citizenship. Maria tries to be upfront with people about her status, but she also feels like she has to be wary of

who she shares it with for this reason. This is ironic, because Maria came to the conclusion long ago that she will never marry anyone for citizenship. In fact, she adamantly says that she never wants to get married.

Even when Maria's past boyfriends have been understanding about her status, she says that their families can be a different story. She thinks sharing her immigration status is a good way to quickly find out what people's politics are like since she has had people judge her before getting to know her based only on that aspect of her. Because of this, Maria says she wants to date someone who is more liberal and open to people's differences; she needs someone who is supportive of the multiple aspects of her. At one point in the conversation, she mentioned to me that she has been seeing the same guy for a few years, but she doesn't consider him to be her boyfriend. Instead, she described him as a "really good friend." When I asked her more about this, she said that she could never see herself getting serious with him, which is why she doesn't consider him as a boyfriend.

Because Maria hasn't been able to find a partner who can provide her with the support she needs, she relies on other people in her life for it. She doesn't feel close to her parents; she is estranged from her father and her mother has grown more distant since she got remarried. Instead, Maria relies on her sister and friends. Since her sister is a U.S. citizen who knows Maria intimately, she helps Maria with the difficult situations that are created in Maria's life by her status. Maria says that she also has a close group of friends in Reno who know that she is undocumented

and help her in whatever way possible. These are the people with whom Maria is able to form meaningful, intimate relationships.

Transnationality and Sexuality

Through the discussion of sexuality, it is clear that there are connected factors that influence an immigrant's ability or inability to form intimate relationships. For all four of the people I interviewed, being an immigrant has greatly affected identity formation and expressions of sexuality. There are cultural shifts taking place in the United States: the gay rights movement is rapidly gaining support in the United States and people increasingly believe that queer people should have the same freedom to marry as straight people. However, even though this discourse is gaining popularity, U.S. law still creates multiple obstacles for migrants. For example, even though gay marriage has been legalized in some U.S. states, it is not legal for an immigrant to marry a U.S. citizen and apply for U.S. citizenship in any of these states.

In addition, family and community members express cultural notions of sexuality. All of my participants discussed expected Mexican gender roles, saying that they have pressure put on them by their family to get married and start a family. Juan and Nik have also experienced a lot of homophobia in their communities. Discourse around masculinity and expectations for exerting masculinity are present in their daily lives, so breaking away from heteronormative discourse and coming out as homosexual has been a difficult and brave move for

them. Part of the ability to come out may be attributed to the influence of the larger gay rights movement in the United States.

Immigration Status and Sexuality

By comparing the experiences of Juan and Nik to those of Luis and Maria, the ways that immigration status and sexuality affect the ability to form intimate relationships becomes clear. Each of the people I interviewed expressed a struggle in forming relationships because of being undocumented or gay and the way that these factors label them as “other” in their own communities and in U.S. society.

I find it interesting that Juan and Nik discussed early sexual experiences with me, but Luis and Maria did not. Juan and Nik both recognized milestones in their development when they realized they were gay and lived in a world that was not accepting of this. Conversely, Luis and Maria realized at different points in their lives that being undocumented impacted them in ways that it did not impact their U.S. citizen peers. Since their heterosexuality was unmarked, it was not as central to their sense of self as immigration status was. Instead, immigration status affected their sexuality and their ability to form relationships. Also, Luis and Maria have predominately dated white, U.S. citizens even though both of them expressed difficulty with it, while Juan and Nik have mostly dated Latinos. In his work, Cantú discusses how the gay community tends to eroticize Latinos, creating the fantasy of the “Latino Lover” (Cantú 2009). This eroticization was mentioned in Nik’s story about being a white man’s “Little Mexican,” and it could be a factor influencing why

Nik and Juan tend to date within the Latino community while Luis and Maria date outside of it. Unlike Juan and Nik, Luis and Maria are friends with mostly non-Latinos and date outside of the Latino community.

By telling the stories of Nik, Luis, Juan, and Maria, I complicate and problematize simplistic notions in popular discourse, such as immigrants marrying for citizenship, what it means to be gay in the United States, and how immigrant youth interact with their multiple communities. Problematizing these simplistic notions is important for breaking down stereotypes associated with immigration and homosexuality in the United States. It shows how complicated the lives of immigrant youth are regardless of whether they are documented or undocumented, straight or queer. It also shows how sexuality and immigration status are important in building identity since each of these people have been highly influenced by their immigration status and sexuality.

Conclusion

“The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts . . . collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war” (Anzaldúa, 1987: 80).

The United States defines itself as the “land of the free” where all members are equal, yet clearly there are people in the country who do not have access to the same rights and liberties as others. Being an immigrant and being queer are two limiting factors for millions of people living in the United States, which proves that democracy for some is not democracy for all. By telling the stories of Juan, Nik, Luis, and Maria, I hope to shed light on the need for immigration reform and queer rights in the United States.

Instead of focusing on unequal rights and liberties in the conclusion of this thesis, however, I would like to discuss some of the social action that is taking place around immigration and queer rights. The United States is at an important moment, when people are actively speaking out in support of immigration reform and gay rights. The Internet plays a primary role in this, since it can connect one person to millions. In this regard, change does not have to come from established organizations. Instead, change can start with just one person. The Internet also allows people to share their immigration and sexuality stories through different websites without meeting others face to face. This can be an important step for people who are afraid to come out of the closet about being undocumented or being queer because it allows them to remain somewhat anonymous.

In the following section, I examine two movements that are led by individuals in the United States. Both of these people have used the Internet as a medium for expressing themselves and for reaching out to others in their communities. After that I briefly discuss the time I spent volunteering at the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN). In conclusion, I connect these movements to the theoretical questions laid out in the literature review.

Immigrant Youth Taking Action

There are many ways in which immigrant youth take action within their communities. Many of these individual movements are connected to larger organizations that urge immigrant youth to let their voice be heard. “Ask Angy” is one such forum where an undocumented woman has found her own way to speak out for undocumented immigrants. “Ask Angy” is a series of YouTube videos made by Angy, a Columbian-born undocumented immigrant who works for the New York State Youth Leadership Counsel (NYSYLC). Angy makes videos discussing a range of issues experienced by undocumented youth growing up in the United States, such as “Dating While Undocumented,” “Undocumented Hopes for the Next 4Yrs,” “How Deferred Action May Change my Life,” and “Undocumented and Unafraid in New York” (Ask Angy 2013). In the videos, Angy shares her own experiences, and then she encourages viewers to email their comments, thoughts, and questions to her. NYSYLC posts responses to viewers’ questions on their website in the hope that other undocumented immigrant youth can also use the advice. In this way, “Ask

Angy” is an informal way to connect to a broader movement for immigration reform. It is important and relevant because it creates a virtual community, where other undocumented youth in the United States can ask questions and receive advice.

Like Angy, Julio Salgado is an undocumented immigrant living in the United States. Salgado was brought to Southern California as a young boy, where he has spent most of his life surrounded by other immigrants. Today, Salgado creates art around social issues, such as sexuality and deportation. His Tumblr page (Salgado 2012) contains hundreds of images that speak to many issues, but one of the most powerful and interesting groups of images is called “I am UndocuQueer!” Salgado works with the Undocumented Queer Youth Collective and the Queer Undocumented Immigrant Project to circulate these images through public forums. Anyone who is UndocuQueer can send a photo of themselves to Salgado with a quote saying why it is important to come out as both undocumented and queer. Salgado then turns these photos and quotes into his powerful images. The project “aims to give us undocumented queers more of a presence in the discussion of migrant rights” (Salgado 2012).

These are just two examples of undocumented youth taking action in ways that are broadly accessible by using social media, such as YouTube and Tumblr. Many individual projects connect with larger organizations, such as the community organizations that I discuss next.

Movements for Immigrant and Queer Rights

There are many community organizations around the country that work for immigrant and/or queer right, but in this section I would like to focus on the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN), since this is where I conducted participant observation. PLAN taught me the importance of grassroots organizations in forming community and creating change in local settings. PLAN has offices in Reno and Las Vegas, and the two often collaborate with one another to organize events, provide resources, and create power in numbers. I spent a day at the PLAN office in Las Vegas, but I have followed them closely on Facebook, and from what I can see, they are as much of a community as the Reno office is. I have spent time volunteering in the Reno office for various events. As mentioned in the introduction, I attended two workshops for their sister organization, Uniting Communities Nevada, participated in two press conferences for immigration reform on the platform of keeping families together, and spent a day lobbying at the Nevada State Legislature.

For the meeting in Las Vegas, PLAN paid for a group of organizers and volunteers to fly from Reno to Las Vegas. We flew down on a Saturday night and had the evening to get to know each other before the meeting the next day. Even though this time together was informal, it was some of the most powerful and memorable time I spent with PLAN. The group included a second-generation Mexican-American lesbian, a transgender second-generation Mexican-American man, a Mexican immigrant who is the mother of a transgender son, and an older transgender U.S.

citizen who had undergone hormone therapy and surgery to become female before transitioning back to being male.

Talking with this group over food and drinks solidified in my mind that sexuality cannot but be categorized in neat ways. For example, both of the transgender males are attracted to women. Since the younger transgender male was born biologically female, he considered himself a lesbian until he decided to undergo a gender change and now he sees himself as a straight man. The older transgender male would have been labeled as a straight man for most of his life, although he sees himself as a transgender lesbian. The conversation with this group also allowed me to see the multiple, overlapping struggles that exist for people who do not fit into narrow gender categories. For example, the older transgender male lost his job and his family by coming out as transgender. He decided to stop the hormone therapy and converted back to being a male to try to regain the trust of his daughter who cut him off almost ten years ago. He wants to have a relationship with his grandsons, but she will not let him see them because she feels betrayed by his change. He also pointed out certain aspects of himself that remain female. For example, he had a breast augmentation and had his adam's apple shaved down while changing genders, so even though he dresses by a male and goes by a male name, he still retains many female qualities.

Spending time with this group also allowed me to see that the struggles associated with immigration do not exist only for first-generation immigrants. Both of the second-generation immigrants in our group expressed difficulty with identity.

They kept making “brown jokes” and talked about how people think they are “illegal” even though they were born in the United States. They both learned English as a second language, and they speak with slight accents. The immigrant mother in our group also said how she dyes her hair a lighter color to try to make herself look less Mexican. Through these examples, it is clear that all people who do not fit into white, heterosexual norms of the United States feel discriminated against and have to find ways to negotiate their marginalized situations.

Both of the PLAN offices provide important resources for immigrants and LGBTQ people. The offices act as safe spaces, where people can get advice and support on a range of issues, from DACA paperwork to hormone therapy, in order to feel like they are not alone in these scary and complicated processes. PLAN also organizes many events in the state that help queer immigrants feel empowered and like they are part of a community, such as a transgender New Year’s Eve party, film screenings for queer youth and DREAMers, meetings with senators and lawyers, and workshops for becoming LGBTQ allies. PLAN is also part of the Nevada Immigrant Coalition, a larger organization that works to unite all of the people working for immigration reform in the state of Nevada. In this way, people from other organizations can connect with PLAN or vice versa to expand the community.

Grassroots organizations all over the country work in ways similar to PLAN to try to bring about social change. For example, the Pride Foundation in the Pacific Northwest works for LGBTQ rights and helped to pass the marriage equality bill in Washington, and the Center for American Progress works for LGBTQ and immigrant

equality. These groups lobby at state legislatures and in Congress, with the idea that there is power in numbers. The more people speak out to their representatives about wanting social change and equal rights, the closer we will get to creating change in our country.

Finding Ways To Speak Out

I believe that anthropology is closely linked to social activism, so when I began this thesis last fall, I knew that I wanted it to have a theme around social change. Anthropologists and other academics are uniquely positioned to bring about social change because they have access to research, contacts, and forums through which information can be disbursed. They can also gather information from large groups of people to analyze and draw conclusions. In this same vein, ethnography is important because it tells the stories of individuals, which can often be more powerful than faceless numbers.

The work of Nicolas De Genova, Lionel Cantú Jr., and Gloria Anzaldúa show how academics can raise awareness about issues related to social inequality. De Genova has been highly influential by outlining reasons why “illegality” has become normalized in immigration. By pointing to historical events and the issues of power associated with state sovereignty, De Genova gives context to the “legal production of migrant ‘illegality’” in immigration law (De Genova 2002: 419). In this same vein, Cantú shows how variation exists for Mexican migrants in regards to sexuality and modes of incorporation in destination communities. This gives depth to migration

studies and shows how migration exists along a continuum of experience and argues against looking at Mexican migrants as a homogenous group.

Gloria Anzaldúa's work may be the most powerful of all the work discussed in this thesis. As a queer *mestiza* growing up in the U.S. Southwest, Anzaldúa experienced firsthand the discrimination and marginalization that queer immigrants face in the borderlands. As Anzaldúa outlines, immigrants living in the borderlands move between two communities. The two sides do not always understand one another, which creates confusion and anger. Anzaldúa expresses this misunderstanding by code switching between English and Spanish in her poetry and essays without providing translation. She shows the volatile nature of misunderstanding, which is what many immigrant movements are currently working to heal.

This thesis has been my way of using scholarship to speak out for social change and equal rights. It has made me feel more connected to my community, and it will allow me to continue with activist work in the future. By sharing the stories of immigrant youth, volunteering with a community organization, and tying these experiences to larger migration theories, I have made connections between real life situations and academia. Linking theory and practice is a powerful way to create change within my community, and I believe that this is just the beginning of a lifetime of working for social change.

References

Agamben, Giorgio

1995 *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. D. Heller-Roazen, trans.
Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Anzaldúa, Gloria

1987 *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute
Books.

2000 *Interviews/Entrevistas*. New York: Routledge.

Ask Angy

2013 Ask Angy. Retrieved April 23, 2013 from
<http://www.youtube.com/user/AskAngy>

Boehm, Deborah A.

2012 *Intimate Migrations: Gender, Family, and Illegality Among Transnational
Mexicans*. New York: New York University Press.

2013 *Undocumented to DACAdmented: A Path to Uncertainty*. Paper presented at
the 2013 Meeting of the Anthropology of Children and Youth Interest Group
and Society for Psychological Anthropology, San Diego, April 4-7.

Boellstorff, Tom

2007 *Queer Studies in the House of Anthropology*. *Annual Review of
Anthropology* 36: 17-35.

Cantú Jr., Lionel

2009 *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men*.
New York: New York University Press.

Chavez, Leo R.

2008 *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*.
Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Conan, Neal

2012 *Talk of the Nation* (audio broadcast). Washington, DC: National Public
Radio. April 30, 2012.

2013 *Talk of the Nation* (audio broadcast). Washington, DC: National Public
Radio. February 5, 2013.

Chacón, Jennifer M.

2013 *The Security Myth: Punishing Immigrants in the Name of National
Security*. *In Governing Immigration Through Crime: A Reader*. Julie A.
Dowling and Jonathan Xavier Inda, eds. Pp. 77-93. Stanford: Stanford
University Press.

Cisneros, Josue David

2013 *(Re)Bordering the Civic Imaginary: Rhetoric, Hybridity, and Citizenship in
La Gran Marcha*. *In Governing Immigration Through Crime: A Reader*. Julie A.
Dowling and Jonathan Xavier Inda, eds. Pp. 253-268. Stanford: Stanford
University Press.

Cornelius, Wayne A.

2006 Impacts of Border Enforcement on Unauthorized Mexican Migration in the United States. *Border Battles: The U.S. Immigration Debates*, Web Forum of the Social Science Research Council. <http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Cornelius/>

De Genova, Nicolas

2002 Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31: 419-447.

2010 The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement. *In The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement*. Nicolas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz, eds. Pp. 33-65. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

De Genova, Nicolas and Nathalie Peutz, eds.

2010 *The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the Freedom of Movement*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dowling, Julie A. and Jonathan Xavier Inda, eds.

2013 *Governing Immigration Through Crime: A Reader*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gómez-Peña, Guillermo

1996 *The New World Border: Prophecies, Poems and Loqueras for the End of the Century*. San Francisco: City Lights Books.

Gonzales, Roberto G. and Leo R. Chavez

- 2012 Awakening to a Nightmare: Abjectivity and Illegality in the Lives of the Undocumented 1.5 Generation Latino Immigrants in the United States. *Current Anthropology* 53 (3): 255-281.

Hirschman, Charles

- 2006 The Impact of Immigration on American Society: Looking Backward to the Future. *Border Battles: The U.S. Immigration Debates*, Web Forum of the Social Science Research Council. <http://borderbattles.ssrc.org/Hirschman>

Inda, Jonathan Xavier and Julie A. Dowling

- 2013 Introduction: Governing Migrant Illegality. *In Governing Immigration through Crime: A Reader*. Julie A. Dowling and Jonathan Xavier Inda, eds. Pp. 1-36. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Luibhéid, Eithne

- 2002 *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- 2005 Introduction: Queering Migration and Citizenship. *In Queering Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*. Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú Jr., eds. Pp. ix-xlvi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- 2008 Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2-3: 169-190.

Luibhéid, Eithne and Lionel Cantú Jr., eds.

2005 *Queer Migration: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*.

Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Manalansan IV, Martin F.

2003 *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*. Durham, NC: Duke

University Press.

2006 *Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies*.

International Migration Review 40 (1): 224-249.

Menjivar, Cecilia

2006 *Liminal legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrant's Lives in the*

United States. *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (4): 999-1037.

Peutz, Nathalie and Nicolas De Genova

2010 Introduction. *In The Deportation Regime: Sovereignty, Space, and the*

Freedom of Movement. Nicolas De Genova and Nathalie Peutz, eds. Pp. 1-29.

Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Salgado, Julio

2012 Julio Salgado. Retrieved April 17, 2013 from

<http://juliosalgado83.tumblr.com/post/15803758188/i-am-undocuqueer-is-an-art-project-in>

Solomon, Alisa

2005 Trans/Migrant: Christina Madrazo's All-American Story. *In Queering Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*. Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú Jr., eds. Pp. 3-29. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

United States Department of Homeland Security.

2012 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2011. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.

Zilberg, Elana

2011 Space of Detention: The Making of a Transnational Gang Crisis Between Los Angeles and San Salvador. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Appendix I

Verbal Consent Script

I am an undergraduate student writing my senior Honors thesis in anthropology at the University of Nevada, Reno. For my thesis, I am conducting research about sexual identity and immigration status among immigrant youth from Mexico and other parts of Latin America living in the United States. I am interested in how sexual identity and immigration status, either document or undocumented, influences the immigration experience and shapes the identity of individuals living here. My research involves talking with people who fit these demographics. If you consent, I would like to include your experiences in my findings.

This research is very important and relatively new in the field of migration studies. Past research tended to look at migration through a heterosexual male-female binary perspective that left out people who did not fit into these typified categories. Since the 1990s, researchers have begun to look at the migration of members of the LGBTQ community, and by including these groups in their research, they have developed a more complete and complex view of human migration. By looking at the sexuality and immigration status of youth living in our area, I can help to expand the field of study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and should require no more than two hours of your time; however, a follow up interview can be arranged if you are interested. You may also choose to leave the study at any time. To protect the anonymity of my research participants, I will use pseudonyms in presentations and publications, and I will change any identifying details. I may use audio recordings and photography in the research, but I will always ask your permission before doing so. Remember that your participation in the research is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw any data, including notes, photographs, and audio recordings, at any time. If you have an interest in the work I produce, I am happy to share this with you. Similarly if any questions or concerns come up, please feel free to contact me. You may call or email me any time at (775) 560-6642 or becca.whistler@gmail.com. You may also contact the committee at my university that reviews research with people if you have any questions for them: Chair of the Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, c/o UNR Research Integrity Office, 205 Ross Hall / 331, University of Nevada, Reno, Reno, Nevada, 89551, (775) 327-2368

Appendix II

Interview Guide

- Questions about migration experience/border crossing
 - How old were you when you migrated?
 - Who did you migrate with?
 - What were the motivators for migration?
 - Do you have memories of the border crossing? If so, what was it like?
 - Where did you migrate from?
 - Do you remember the planning that went into the border crossing?
- Questions about family/home life
 - Who do you live with here in the US?
 - Who do you consider to be your family?
 - Who are the most important people in your life?
 - Who are your best friends?
 - What family is still in Mexico? How long has it been since you've seen them?
 - What family is here in the US? What is your relationship like with them?
 - Do you feel any social pressures from your family? What kind of responsibilities do you feel towards them?
- Questions about growing up/relationships/personal interests
 - Can you tell me a bit about past relationships/partnerings?
 - Has being an immigrant ever affected relationships or friendships?
 - What was your experience like in high school?
 - What have you done since high school? How do you think being an immigrant has impacted these experiences?
 - Are you in a relationship now? If yes, can you tell me about it?
 - What do you like to do for fun? What kind of interests do you have?
 - If you could be/do anything and live anywhere you wanted to, what would you do?