Title
The Tijuana Dream: Fronteriza/os, Transborder Citizenship and Legal Consciousness at the U.S.-Mexico Border

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Publication Date
2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Tijuana Dream

Fronteriza/os, Transborder Citizenship and Legal Consciousness at the U.S.-Mexico Border

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Kendy Denisse Rivera

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Tijuana Dream

Fronteriza/os, Transborder Citizenship, and Legal Consciousness

at the U.S.-Mexico Border

by

Kendy Denisse Rivera

Doctor of Philosophy in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Robert C. Romero, Chair

Since the 1990s, the identifying label of "*transfronterizos*" has emerged in border scholarship to theorize the experiences of transborder, U.S.-Mexico border resident families and individuals. *Transfronterizos* have also been characterized as U.S. and Mexico cross-border residents with dual citizenship, who attend school, work, and forge families across nations. They have also been described as bilingual and bicultural people that possess tight affective ties on both sides of the border. While the existing border literature provides appropriately general and schematic understandings to theorize on the lives of cross-border families and individuals living on the Tijuana and San Diego border region, this dissertation centralizes the memories, voices, material

realities, and lived experiences of "transborder citizens" themselves. To do so, this dissertation draws from oral history approaches and ethnographic research methodologies to excavate transborder citizens and families' past experiences and present lived realities in the Tijuana and San Diego border region. Based on my findings, I refer to "transborder citizens" instead as, *fronteriza/os*. This dissertation does three things. First, it historicizes the rise of transborder family units and transborder citizenship practices on the Tijuana border from 1889 to 1965. In the same vein, I also explore and theoretically advance the post-1965-1989 rise of "transborder parentocracy," an intentional and aspirational upwardly-mobile practice to give birth north of the borderline so that middle and upper-class border children can benefit from a U.S. birthright citizenship status in the Tijuana and San Diego region. Secondly, I theorize on the present-day and lived transborder family and citizenship experiences of *fronteriza/os*. I found that transborder family units also include members of mixed-legal status living at the U.S.-Mexico border. Thus, I further advance that *fronteriza/os*' articulate and construct a form of "transborder legal consciousness," shaped by U.S. citizenship and Mexican dual nationality laws. On the one hand, *fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness is implicated by a U.S. citizenship status that is shaped in relationship to family members mixed-legal status at the border. On the other hand, *fronteriza/os'* transborder legal consciousness is complicated by a limited and differential access to Mexican dual nationality. Third, and lastly, I theoretically encapsulate *fronteriza/os'* transborder family and citizenship experiences, including the construction of a transborder legal consciousness, through the border localized and aspirational "Tijuana Dream" narrative. I argue that ultimately, the notion of the "Tijuana Dream" is fueled by narratives of exceptionalism and meritocracy, promoting the idea that the "American Dream" is readily available to U.S.

citizens and transborder families living at the Mexican border city of Tijuana. Through the exploration and theorization on the historical genealogies and quotidian social practices shaping transborder citizens' experiences in the Tijuana and San Diego border region, this dissertation fills a void at the intersection of Border Studies, Law and Society, and Chicana/o and Latina/o citizenship scholarship. This dissertation further expands the theories of transborder citizenship, legal consciousness and mixed-legal status families with the inclusion of "transborder mixed-status family" experiences, the practice of "transborder parentocracy," and the construction of a "transborder legal consciousness" into academic circles.

The dissertation of Kendy Denisse Rivera is approved.

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DEDICATION

This research project is a result of a shared and lived experience and part of a genealogy of social activism at the Tijuana and San Diego border region. It is partly an *ofrenda*, an offering to the communities that travel, live, long, laugh, love, labor, learn, and seek liberation the beyond border Walls that seek to separate the Tijuana and San Diego region, Baja California and California, and Mexico and the United States. It is mostly an homage to the souls that nurtured my cross-border musings from a very young age and encouraged me to engage in this research and writing journey, and who sadly, will not be able to read my renderings of their storytelling: Elvira Rodríguez González (1932-2012); Dr. Luis Calderón Rodríguez (1953-2014); Teresa Blanco Duarte (1929-2020); Víctor Antonio Ramírez (1968-2020); and, Carlos Rodríguez (1929-2020). *¡Gracias por existir! Q.D.E.P.*

A Kokó, por acompañarme a ir a la escuela, llevar a cabo encargos para la familia en "el otro lado," y jugar a ser adultos cuando sólo éramos niños cruzando una de las fronteras más transitadas. Marcando zanjas desde Tijuana, pasando por San Ysidro, San Diego ó Chula Vista, y hasta llegar a, Los Ángeles, y de vuelta. Desde el pre-kínder y hasta el doctorado. A pie, en car-pool, en transporte público, y ya hasta al último, en carro. A medianoche, ó, a plena luz del día. Kokó, creo que de algo valió la pena todo tú esfuerzo, ya que ésta trayectoria no hubiera sido posible sin tí. Gracias por acompañarme a cruzar caminos inciertos, y de antemano, por los caminos que vendrán.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am unspeakably grateful to *mi familia* who generously passed-down our family's cultural wealth through borderlands' *historias, mitos, cuentos, y leyendas.* To Kitty, *Borrego*, *Doña* Elvie, *Abuelita* Tere, *Abuelitos* Panchito and Julián, and to my *bisabuelas* Cruz and Juanita, and to the Riveras, the Cárdenases, the Rodriguezes, the Gonzalezes, the Blancos, and the Ramirezes, for teaching me how and what it means to be a U.S.-México transborder family throughout time and for future generations alike. Thank you Meritxell C., Nancy B., Marcela L., Mauricio C., Amanda G., Gabby O., Joaquim dS., Asael P., Laura S., Michael G., Arturo V., Xiomara C., David V., Jesús R., Alex M., Casey M., Suyapa R., Vilma B., Rosa C., Ivis V., Marlín A., and Astrid A., for keeping me grounded and providing spaces of radical *compañerismo* in tumultuous times.

My whole-hearted gratitude to the now UCLA Department of Chicana, Chicano and Central American Studies faculty, administrative, and student community for welcoming me into *la familia* and supporting this research project with compassion and kindness. To my Chair and friend, Dr. Robert Chao-Romero for his extraordinarily graceful mentorship, unconditional support, and compassionate leadership. To Dr. Leisy J. Ábrego, for her *amistad*, genius and generous guidance. My gratitude to Dr. Rubén Hernández-León and Dr. Laura Gómez for their patient and formidable support, wisdom, and poignant advising. To Dr. María Cristina Pons for sharing spaces of *convivencia*, and femtorship while learning how to navigate *el Norte* early in my doctoral studies. I am forever grateful to Dr. Chon Noriega, Dr. Kevin Terraciano and Dr. Raymond Rocco, for their patient and diligent mentorship while I was an aspiring doctoral applicant. To Dr. Abel Valenzuela, Dr. Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Dr. Judy Baca, Dr. Otto Santa Ana, Dr. Maylei Blackwell, Dr. Eric Avila, Dr. Teresa McCarty, Dr. Parissa

Majdi-Clark, and Dr. Maurice Magaña, for teaching me how to become a university Professor. To Dr. Randal Johnson, Kelly Rytel and Dr. Sabrina Smith, for becoming *minha familia bahiana* and rescuing my eyesight. To Dr. Mark Q. Sawyer, for it was a true honor and treasured experience to radically envision racial and social justice in Latin America while I was his student and advisee. MARK Q. SAWYER, *¡PRESENTE!*

This dissertation would not have been drafted and reviewed without the invaluable comments of Dr. Heidy Sarabia, Dr. Jennifer Boles, Dr. Albert Laguna, Dr. Esther Díaz-Marín, Dr. Erin Michaels, Omar Ramadan-Santiago, Dr. Pablo Garcia Gamez, Roberto Rincon, and Dr. Nadiah Fellah. I am grateful to the 2017-2018 Inter-University Program for Latino Research fellows team. To Dr. Rebecca Epstein and Dr. Maria de los Angeles "Nena" Torres for having faith in my project. I am also immensely grateful for being a part of the 2015-2016 UCLA Urban Humanities Initiative-Mexico City research collective, and to the faculty, Dr. Todd Pressner, Dr. Danna Cuff, Dr. Maite Zubiaurre, Dr. Jonathan Banfil, Dr. Jonathan Crisman. But mostly to the UHI alumni, Ryan Hernandez, Gus Wendel, Lucy Lin, William Davis, Kenton Card, Dr. Teresa Monroe, Dr. Peter Chesney, Andrew Ko, Grace Ko, Dr. Alejandro Ramírez, and Alejandra Guerrero.

Mi amor infinito a todes les estudiantes de posgrado en el departamento de estudios chicanxs y centroamericanos de la UCLA, a les que vienen y les que van. To Chantiri Ramírez, Nadia Zepeda, Dr. Rafael Solórzano, Fernando Villegas, Dr. Kaelyn Rodríguez, Isabel Durón, Lucy León, Iris Ramirez, Christian Durán, Dr. Brenda Nicolás, and Carissa García. *Muchisísimas gracias a* Dr. Silvia Rodriguez-Vega, Carlos Rogel, Omar Gonzalez, Dr. LeighAnna Hidalgo-Newton, and Angélica Becerra*, por vernos crecer, y tenernos la paciencia y confianza que solo se le tiene a muy pocos en ésta vida.* To Vanessa Rodríguez and Ana González for your fiercely impartial analysis of the research data. To my former students at the "*Transfrontera*: Introduction to U.S.-

Mexico Transborder Studies," undergratuate seminar for your brilliant critiques and moving forward this emerging field with your ideas. To the Transfronterizx Alliance and Student Organization at San Diego State University and UCLA. Especially to Isaac Felix Machado and Estefanía Castañeda-Pérez.

Unconditional gratitude to Tijuana's cultural promoters "living abroad," the AMBOS Collective, Dignicraft, Cog • Nate Collective, and Borderclick artivist groups. Especially to the LA-TJ artivists and critics, Tanya Aguiñiga, Karla Aguiñiga, Marissa Aguiñiga, Dr. Josh Kun, Misael Hernandez, Amy Sánchez, Natalie Santizo, and Alejandro Martinez. Gratitude and radical love to my soul mates, Maxwell E. Greenberg, Dr. Jack Cáraves, and Dr. Sa Whitley. To Emeéme, Mr. Pussy-Gato, Violet, and Cuquito for bringing joy, lightness, and fresh energy needed to complete the revisions.

This would not have been possible without the generous funding, support, and leadership, from the faculty and staff at the then UCLA César E. Chávez Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, the UCLA Graduate School, the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, the, the UCLA Center for Mexican Studies, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Los Angeles CityLab, the UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, the UCLA Labor Center, and the Colegio de la Frontera Norte's *Departamento de Estudios Culturales*. And, to the extraordinary community leaders brought together by the UCLA Labor Center, and who continue to support me by sharing a collective vision of liberation beyond the university and border walls. To Kent Wong, Rev. James Lawson, Rev. Francisco García, Dr. Gaspar Rivera-Salgado, Dr. Janna Shadduck-Hernández, and Dr. Laura Velasco Ortíz.

Above all, I want to thank the *fronteriza/os*, transborder families and individuals who shared their spaces, stories and strategies for healing fractured U.S.-México border communities. It's because of you that I write this dissertation.

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PRESENTATIONS

2019 "'*No Somos* Anchor Babies': *Procesos Raciales, Legales y Sociales entre Jóvenes Transfronteriza/os en la Region Tijuana-San Diego*." Seminario Teoría Sobre Migración, Diásporas, y Fronteras. Estudios Culturales. El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana, November 13

2019 "The Makings of a Transborder Movement: *Transfronterizx* Student Organizing" Association for Borderlands Studies Association, San Diego, April 27

2018 "'We are not anchor babies': *Transfronteriza/os* Sense of Belonging in the U.S." Latina/o Studies Association, Washington D.C., July 14

2017 "*Del Otro Lado*/From the Other Side: Tijuana-San Diego Transborder Flexible Citizenship." 6th Biennal, SIGLO XXI- Inter-University Program for Latino Research, San Antonio, Texas, May 19

2016 "*Del Otro Lado:* Identity, Cultural Citizenship and Mapping of U.S.-México Flexible Citizenship" National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies, Denver, Colorado, April 6

2014 "Border Babies and the Decolonial Imaginary at the U.S.-México Border." National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 10

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO *FRONTERIZA/OS'* "TIJUANA DREAM"

> "the American Dream" (noun phrase): a happy way of living that is thought of by many Americans as something that can be achieved by anyone in the U.S. especially by working hard and becoming successful (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2020).
>
> Tijuana is moving from just being a "spring board." [It is] now going from the American Dream to the "Tijuana Dream." It's making *that* [cultural?] transition. There's actually someone who made a documentary recently called "the Tijuana Dream[1]" pretty much inviting people to dare and root themselves in TJ. Give *this* TJ a chance. Basically, as it has all *those* [cultural?] things often and it is not just as a "spring board" (Antonio, 28).
>
> Make Tijuana Great Again (Risco 2018)

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the identifying label of "*transfronterizos"* gradually emerged in academic border literature to designate the experiences of "transborder citizens," that is, U.S.-Mexico border resident families and individuals "who personify the border zone's diversity and dynamism," as crystallized by leading border theorist, Norma Iglesias Prieto (2011.) *Transfronterizos* have further been defined as "people with dual citizenship, with experiences of having lived, studied, and worked on both sides of the border; who are bilingual and bicultural; and who have profoundly personal ties on both sides" (Iglesias Prieto 2004, 2011, 2014).

Furthermore, Norma Ojeda and Silvia Lopez (1994) have defined "transborder families" as Mexican residing units engaging in routine cross-border practices and journeys, and include members such as, U.S.-born children, commuter workers, or cross-border students attending schools in the U.S., and/or, building transnational family relationships and networks in the U.S. (18). The existing literature on

[1] Rito Zazueta, *Tijuana Dream,* Produced by Rick Zazueta and the New York Film Academy, Vimeo, 2016, Audiovisual film, 17:05, https://vimeo.com/165060260

transfronterizos has nourished border discussions by bringing forth greater schematic understanding of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands and provided novel theoretical underpinnings to analyze a highly complex social context (Bejarano 2010; Chavez Montaño 2006; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Marquez and Romo 2008; Ojeda 1994, 2009; Relaño Pastor 2007; Romo 2008; Tessman and Koyama 2017).

What is yet to be captured and documented as part of the academic border canon on *"transfronterizos"* are the memories, voices, material realities, and lived experiences of "transborder citizens" in their quotidian life. This dissertation explores how U.S. and Mexican legal systems of nation-state building and border and immigration policy have historically shaped the present-day lived transborder citizenship practices and legal consciousness of U.S.-born citizens of Mexican background living in Tijuana. This dissertation further investigates the relationship between transborder citizenship and legal consciousness and its implications in the Tijuana context. Thus, the two guiding research questions of this dissertation are:

1) How have U.S. and Mexican relational historical contexts, and border and immigration legislation, shaped the past and present transborder citizenship practices and legal consciousness of *fronteriza/os*, Tijuana-rooted, cross-border, U.S.-born, millennials of Mexican background?
2) What is the relationship between transborder citizenship and legal consciousness amongst *fronteriza/os* in the context of the Tijuana border?

This dissertation fills an important void in the intersection of Border Studies, Law and Society, and Chicana/o and Latina/o citizenship scholarship. It traces a historical genealogy of transborder citizenship and legal consciousness in Tijuana. I do so by employing an interdisciplinary research design utilizing oral history and ethnographic research (qualitative interviewing, participant observation, and

researcher journals and memos) methodologies to theorize on the transborder citizenship practices of eleven (11) U.S.-born, Tijuana residents of Mexican background.

I argue that transborder citizenship in Tijuana is clarified by theorizing the articulation of a "transborder legal consciousness, " characterized by a differential access to Mexican dual nationality and U.S. citizens' relational status as part of a "transborder mixed-status family." In order to form transborder mixed-status family units, cross-border Mexican residing parents (or, transborder family members) engage in a practice I theorize as "transborder parentocracy," that is, aspirational transborder parents' intentional pattern of giving birth north to secure a U.S. citizenship status for their cross-border children and seeking lifetime upward mobility at the Tijuana and San Diego border region. Overall, I found that comprehensively, the practice of transborder parentocracy, formation of transborder mixed-legal status families, and construction of a transborder legal consciousness sustains the "Tijuana Dream" narrative.

The historical genealogy of the "Tijuana Dream" narrative is traced by carefully listening to respondents' oral accounts describing the families' history of migration to Tijuana from 1889 through 1965. The oral histories allow me to argue that respondents understand the "Tijuana Dream" narrative as the ability to live the "American Dream" in Mexico, as laid-out by their forebearers who migrated to the Mexican northwest frontier in search of a "fresh start." In other words, seeking and securing better economic opportunities, a U.S. dollar income, a U.S. legal status (without having a desire to migrate north of the border), improved housing and healthcare infrastructure, family safety and security, learning spaces for children and youth, access to U.S. products and commodities, and happiness. Through the last quarter of the 19th C and the first half of the 20th. C., *fronteriza/o* respondents family

histories' are laced by privileged and uncritical celebrations to the "myth of meritocracy," a belief in American exceptionalism, aspirational upward mobility, and most importantly, establishing Tijuana as a place of destination, and debunk the idea of the border as a "spring-board" to the United States.

In a similar and more contemporary vein, the ethnographic research allowed me to theorize how *fronteriza/o* respondents continue to uphold the "Tijuana Dream" narrative in their daily practices across borders, and as evidenced in the articulation of a transborder legal consciousness. One way I point this out is my exploring how *fronteriza/o* respondents, despite a U.S. citizenship status and Mexican healthcare, continue to engage in the ongoing practice of "transborder parentocracy." Another form in which the "Tijuana Dream" narrative transpired through the ethnography and qualitative interviews is by the desire to seek a U.S. citizenship status for their transborder mixed-status family members living in Mexico. Mexican dual nationality further supports respondents' belief of the "Tijuana Dream" narrative by formalizing their participation and inclusion in Mexico as affluent dual nationals part of the "Mexican Diaspora."

I review primary datasets and interdisciplinary literature theorizing on U.S.-Mexico border communities and immigrant experiences, and particularly, cross-border commuters, or, transborder individuals and families history, politics and sociology, from an interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies, particularly Border Studies, Chicana/o Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Latin American Studies approaches. By advancing scholarship at the intersection of Border Studies, Law and Society, and Chicana and Latino citizenship theory, this project contributes to U.S. history, Latin American history, the U.S.-Mexico border, migration studies, Mexican American history, race and gender, oral history and ethnography literatures.

My findings and theories are informed by two original research data collections engaging in a profoundly rich account while documenting the lives of eleven (11) *fronteriza/os* across the Tijuana and San Diego border region and through January 2013 and May 2017. The chapter discussions and findings were written and revised between June 2017, and September 2020. The first data collection includes the audio-recorded and fully transcribed oral histories of *fronteriza/o* individuals and family histories across Southern California and Northern and West Mexico from post-Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo turn of the 19th C. to the inauguration of U.S. 45th President Donald Trump. I collected the oral histories between January 2013 and December 2015. I also engaged in reconnaissance ethnographic fieldwork in Tijuana and south San Diego County, specifically the cities of Chula Vista and San Ysidro, while collecting putting together the oral history collection.

I gathered the second qualitative research data collection from January 2016 to May 2017, employing an insider, multi-sited, transnational approach to ethnographic fieldwork across Tijuana and Los Angeles, including, twenty-two (22) qualitative interviews (utilizing the phenomenological approach), twenty-two sound recordings, twenty-two fully-transcribed audio files, photography, video, soundscape audio recordings, participant observation memorandums, and researcher journal entries. I traveled at least once a month from Los Angeles County to Tijuana either driving my personal motored vehicle or riding the Amtrak train from Downtown Union Station to San Diego's Santa Fe Depot, then followed by a trolley ride to the San Ysidro Port of Entry (SYPoE). Visits ranged from month-long, week(s)-long, long-weekend visits, and even day trips from Los Angeles County to meaningful sites impacting transborder citizenship experiences and legal consciousness of *fronteriza/os* across Tijuana and San Diego cross-border region.

PERSONAL JOURNEY INTO THIS PROJECT

As an inter-generational Mexican border resident, I learned from a very young age that U.S.' racial, class, and legal structures also matter a lot in Mexico, and further separating between "deserving" and "undeserving," "legal" and "illegal," "documented" and "undocumented," "haves" and "have-nots," undocumented residents and transnational commuters, reunited families and separated families. This project is in part *testimonio*, a testimony to my shared and lived experience as a *fronteriza,* in community with and continuing to nurture intergenerational close and extended family and friendship ties and networks of solidarity across Baja California and California.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

In Chapter 2 I review border theory exploring the histories, experiences, culture, and politics of the Tijuana and San Diego border metropolis in particular, the California and Baja California mega-region, or the U.S. and Mexican borderland families' and communities. I evaluate interdisciplinary border literature stemming from Chicana/o Studies, Central American Studies, and Latina/o Studies decolonial lenses. I particularly review the two main concepts for which I am also building upon with this work: transborder citizenship and legal consciousness.

My aim in Chapter 2 is to engage with, and build upon critical discussions and concerns on the ontology and epistemology of existing border literature as a cross-national and multilingual discussion requiring interdisciplinary considerations. I problematize the experiences, subjectivities, and tensions between people of Mexican descent living and navigating the Tijuana and San Diego border. In an effort to build upon and towards cross-border community and solidarity discourses, and following

border theorist, Pablo Vila's encouragement, I review border literature "to allow the community's differences surface, and to vent them publicly in the search for an alliance between different actors (Mexican nationals living in border towns, Mexican immigrants, and Chicanos)" (2003, 334). My goal in the literature review is to signal towards ongoing critical border scholarly discussion stemming from a radical interdisciplinary Chicana/o Studies', Central American Studies', Latina/o Studies', and Latin American Studies' cannons.

In Chapter 3, I thoroughly describe the rich interdisciplinary methodological approach employed while collecting and analyzing the research materials advancing my findings and theories and as documented in the 33 interviews collected amongst 11 *fronteriza/o* respondents. I followed Joseph Maxwell's interactive approach to qualitative research designing (2013), and discuss how a flexible research plan enriched this project by allowing the re-assessment of the guiding questions and facilitating the integration of interdisciplinary methods and analytic frameworks throughout the data collection, analysis, and discussion of the findings. This chapter builds upon and contributes to interdisciplinary methodological literatures in oral history, insider ethnography, Border Studies, Transnational Studies and Ethnic Studies. My methodology is unique as it is not only interdisciplinary, but employs both a historical approach and qualitative research methods to collect data longitudinally, in a multi-sited and transnational context.

Drawing from the oral accounts, Chapter 4 historicizes the relational cross-border Mexican and United States events, moments, crisis, and legislation shaping the *transborder citizenship* experiences of *fronteriza/os* from 1889 to 1965. I argue that Baja California and northern Mexican residing families established intergenerational networks across California and the U.S., while experiencing gradual upward mobility in

Mexico and partly due to their U.S. legal status. In the second section of Chapter 4, I look at the impact that the context of globalization has upon the lives of transborder family and citizens in Tijuana. I argue that the gradual, inter-generational, middle-class Mexican upward mobility practices are epitomized in border parents' pursuit of U.S. birthright citizenship for their 1980s decade born *fronteriza/o* offspring, and a practice that I theoretically advance as "transborder parentocracy." Drawing from Tessman and Koyama's (2017) "border parentocracy," I re-theorize a *transborder* parentocracy as practiced amongst Tijuana-residing, U.S.-documented, border family members and parents of middle and upper-class backgrounds seeking a U.S. citizenship status for a new generation of affluent and upwardly-mobile *fronteriza/os.* This practice ensured *fronteriza/os'* access to U.S. public and private services and resources, and later, Mexican dual nationality, while also introducing the experiences of transborder mixed-status families.

In Chapter 5, I examine how U.S. citizenship and Mexican dual nationality laws impacts the legal consciousness of *fronteriza/os* in the present-day. Through ethnographic fieldwork collected between 2013 and 2017, including twenty-two qualitative interviews, I describe how *fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness is presently shaped by a differential access to Mexican dual nationality and U.S. citizens' relational status as part of a "transborder mixed-status family."

I theorize that comprehensively, *fronteriza/o* transborder legal consciousness, characterized by differential Mexican dual nationality and their relational citizenship status as part of a transborder mixed-status family membership, continue to sustain and celebrate the "Tijuana Dream" narrative. U.S. citizenship and Mexican dual nationality legislation shapes *fronteriza/os'* transborder legal consciousness, while at the same time, celebrating a commodifiable, meritocratic allusion and sets of practices

promising an exceptionally privileged and unique way of living the “American Dream” on Mexican land, particularly in the border city of Tijuana and sustained by U.S. and Mexican binational social structures privileging upward social mobility and wealth accumulation at the border.

The final chapter serves as the coda, where I reflect on almost a decade investigating and theorizing the hyper-militarization and redevelopment of the U.S. and Mexican border and ports of entry and its implications upon transborder communities, families and individuals. I pin-point ongoing social and cultural concerns shaping lives and relationship at the border, such as the commodification and mediatization of the “Tijuana Dream” narrative in North American media outlets and through 2019.

In the coda, I also summarize my findings, arguments, and contributions, and warn against the ongoing normalization of dangerous political discourses embedded not just in U.S.’ mainstream narratives, but also evident in elite and affluent Mexican border culture upholding draconian border policy and immigration rhetoric and legislation discerning people between “good” and “bad,” “legal” and “illegal,” ”desirable” and “undesirable.” Doing so, welcomes an invitation to continue engaging in the rich, intellectual tradition and discursive research strengthening cross-border community and solidarity efforts accompanying border crossers on their journeys, across distance, decades, and divides; as traced by radical Ethnic Studies, Chicana/o Studies, Central American Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Latin American Studies scholarly cannons.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: *FRONTERIZA/OS'* TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP AND LEGAL CONSCIOUNESS.

Chapter Abstract: In this chapter I review relevant interdisciplinary social sciences and humanities border theory exploring the practices and experiences of transborder residents and communities sharing space in between Tijuana and San Diego border metropolis, the California and Baja California mega-region, and the U.S. and Mexican geopolitical divide. I particularly evaluate interdisciplinary border literature stemming and building upon intellectual decolonial Chicana and Chicano Studies, Central American Studies, Latina and Latino Studies, and Latin American methodological and ontological endeavors within the academe and rooted in the material realities, cultural and social networks built between Global North and Global South transborder and transnational communities. The evaluations and rich discussions look at how the available literature has theorized transborder citizenship and legal consciousness from interdisciplinary standpoints.

The literary evaluations and discussions in this chapter contribute to the areas and fields of Border Studies, Law and Society, Chicana/o and Latina/o citizenship theory, Latin American Studies, and Ethnic Studies. The theoretical discussions in this chapter build upon critical border theorizations and literature especially concerned with centering the narratives and lenses of *fronteriza/os*. Instead, this literature review problematizes the material realities and tensions between people of Mexican descent living and navigating the Tijuana and San Diego border as a way of life.

INTRODUCTION

> *[F]ronterizos*, imply the border itself when positioning themselves geographically. We also refer to [the border] as *el otro lado* to convey the idea of a whole, which has at least two sides (Malagamba-Anóstegui 2008, 234).

> [T]heories of Tijuana's role in a cross-border global megacity have had less currency in Tijuana itself, where scholars and critics are typically more focused on local asymmetry, not inter-California regional prosperity, and have tended to approach globalization not in terms of transnational flows and transnational geographies but in terms of how shifts in global economies have impacted highly localized struggles around culture and politics and local struggles around social equality and civic health (Kun and Montezemolo 2012, 103).

Tijuana transborder citizens and their families, are cross-border, or transborder commuters (Castañeda Pérez 2020; Iglesias Prieto 2004) navigating the U.S.-México geopolitical divide almost on a quotidian basis to labor, learn, leisure, shop, engage in commerce, visit family and friends, or receive healthcare (Bejarano 2010; Chavez Montaño 2006; Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018; Marquez and Romo 2008; Ojeda

1994, 2009; Relaño Pastor 2007; Romo 2008; Tessman and Koyama 2017). Leading border scholar, Norma Iglesias Prieto has further described transborder citizens as U.S. and Mexican dual nationals, bilingual and bicultural subjects with U.S. and Mexican living, schooling, working experiences and tight affective relationships to both sides of the border (Iglesias-Prieto 2004, 150-151).

Theorists have explored how the border between the U.S. and México functions as one of the most simultaneously dynamic and asymmetric places in the globe. Recent border literature highlights the border as a site of contradiction. Where, on one hand, it is dynamically open for free-trade of goods, products, and services. And, on the other hand, it is also understood as a fine-tuned and narrow funnel generating social stratification and asymmetry between the Global North and Global South (Andreas 2000; Sarabia 2014, 2016; Velasco and Contreras 2010, 2013).

Some U.S.-México border studies scholars argue that due to social stratification and economic asymmetry, binational integration between American and Mexican border communities, specifically Tijuana and San Diego, proves limited or nonexistent (Alegria 2008; 2012). However, the U.S.-Mexico border continues to be highly porous for the 194,005,543 people entering annually through southern U.S. border ports of entry (U.S. Department of Transportation 2018).

The literature reviewed understands borders as sites of contradiction, as in the case study of *fronteriza/os,* who, despite a U.S. passport, have past experiences and family histories, citizenship practices, and legal consciousness, which are marked in stark relationship to the legal status of their mixed-legal family members living and navigating the U.S.-Mexico border. This contradiction becomes heightened at the Mexican borderlands, where *fronteriza/os*, as ethnically and culturally local *tijuanenses* (someone from Tijuana) and multi-generational Mexican border residents, have

differential access to dual nationality and are culturally marked as “other” or “foreign-born” south of the border.

U.S.-Mexico transborder communities have historically had ambiguous roles in the national discourses and collective memories of both Mexican and American national narratives. In Mexico, transborder communities are accounted for mainly as U.S. constituents’ living in Mexico or as Mexican residents working and attending schools in the U.S. North of the border and while in the U.S., transborder citizens and families are a part of the Mexican border commuting communities straddling challenging lives at the border, while residing south of the border.

Border literature from the fields of Ethnic Studies, particularly, Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies’ border theory, does a better and more comprehensive work at narrating how U.S.-Mexico transborder communities’ experiences and histories are a part of the American fabric as much as they are a shared story that is complemented and interrelated to Latin American transnational communities. Nonetheless, due to far geographical distances, increasing border militarization and violence, limiting funding and technological resources, Chicana/o Studies’ and Latina/o Studies’ border theory on transborder citizens and family experiences continues to place a heavier load on U.S.-based realities.

THE TIJUANA BORDER AS A SITE OF OPPORTUNITY, OBSTACLE, AND UNCERTAINTY

The geopolitical border between Mexico and the United States serves to divide two adjacent and asymmetric nation-states that constantly interact, interpellate, and interrelate with each other on environmental, security, and developmental efforts. Identity markers, such as race, legal status, age, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality,

race, ethnicity, phenotype, religion, culture, etc., shape and hierarchize border crossing experiences and border life.

Ethnographers Laura Velasco and Oscar Contreras theorize that border crossers' experience the U.S.-Mexico border in three general categories: obstacle, opportunity, and uncertainty (2011, 179-187). Velasco and Contreras' border typology offers a useful continuum capturing border crossers' relationships to *la línea,* the U.S.-México borderline. In this study, I will refer to Velasco and Contreras' border typology: obstacle, uncertainty and opportunity, to organize the literature reviewing according to the various ways that *fronteriza/os'* are able to relate to the U.S.-Mexico border and cross-border communities along the Wall.

The first type presents the border as a source of social stratification and difference, through the lens of "obstacle." This is a given for the U.S.-Mexico geopolitical divide, as the border's main purpose and function is to divide and create a hierarchy between legal and classed haves and have-nots, and clearly demonstrating the social stratification of what lies north and south of the border. Because the border "filters a person's position and value," Velasco and Contreras (2011, 179) promote two ways in which the border shapes subjective stratification and difference, by "defining, categorizing, and imprinting identities and upending the position and class relations of individuals who cross" (Velasco and Contreras 2011, 179-180). Geopolitical and social-cultural borders impact social stratification, differentiation, and exclusion of people within the border region.

The second and most widely known subjective meaning of the U.S.-Mexico border is as an "opportunity" and a bridge towards the "American Dream." The border as opportunity conveys the narrative that crossing the border is not only good and/or productive in a person's life, but leads to seemingly guaranteed positive future

outcomes, better life opportunities and resources than in the past, or life before "crossing the border."

Velasco and Contreras propose a third type of meaning in relation to the border, referred to as uncertainty. Uncertainty manifests subjectively and as people experience strong negative emotional attachments and cultural associations to the borderlands, leading to trauma, discontinuity, crisis, or rupture. However impactful and intense are the affective relationships that a person has to the border crossing, the higher the level of subjective uncertainty. Border as uncertainty occurs when contradictory expectations towards mobility and stability co-exist, which characterize the border region and amplify the understanding of its uncertain nature. The border represents a revolving door that expands and encloses according to international and local contexts, in an everchanging and dizzying movement that few can pinpoint. Instability or uncertainty is certainly linked to border's fluidity (Velasco and Contreras 2011, 187).

THE GLOBAL CITY OF TIJUANA

In *Immigrant Families,* Menjívar, Ábrego, and Schmalzbauer (2015) explain that in a divided and neoliberal globalized economy,

> The same global economic forces motivating the migration of the poor and the working class have simultaneously increased migration flows of high-skilled and high-wage workers into global cities of the world (Sassen 2008). In this class bifurcated global economy, lower and working-class workers migrate for survival, to maintain their lifestyle, to obtain resources that their countries' governments do not provide, for mobility, and for family reunification whereas high-skilled workers migrate to enhance their careers and increase their wealth (Chao 2013; Gu 2012) (57)

Like Menjívar, Ábrego, and Shmalzbauer, this study brings together a meaningful body of literature critiquing the insidiousness of borders as mechanisms tying global

capitalism with unsustainable U.S. and Mexican nation state agendas that serve to uphold globalized corporate greed while crushing social welfare networks and institutions.

Tijuana is the land where global capital demands are met. Workers lives and the built environment are shaped, tweaked, ripped, torn, and fragmented, in order to fit the demands of global consumer capitalist demands via U.S. intervention and facilitated by Mexican neoliberalization. When theorizing on Tijuana, as a contemporary global city in a post-War on Drugs Tijuana, cultural border theorists Josh Kun and Fiamma Montezzemmolo find that,

> Tijuana is an ideal site to follow through on Saskia Sassen's important urgings that globalization does not minimize the role of nations and cities, but that globalization actually exists through nations and cities which function as "enablers" and "enactors" of the global…Tijuana is a global city, then, not only because it has been made to play a contemporary role in free trade's reorganization of North America and neoliberalism's reimagining of social life, sovereignty, and subjectivity, but because it inherits two imperial lineages, both of which set the stage for the domination and administration of the Mexican working classes that the current era of assembly and manufacturing still depends upon (2012, 7-8).

Tijuana is also a land that fragments and is molded to neoliberal and globalized visions of technology, medical, consumerist, merchandising, automotive, electrical, sex tourism, and military industries. Borders are not U.S.' specific, or even Global North specific. Border enforcement is not exclusive to developed countries' economies, but is tied to the ongoing neoliberalization of global capital via nation-state apparatuses.

TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP

The processes of globalization, as a growing interdependence amongst nation-states' economics, politics, and culture, inevitably shifts border dynamics, migration, and citizenship practices. Since the rise of globalization and neoliberal free-economies

after the latter end of the 1970s, nation-state borders have undergone a simultaneous process of debordering and rebordering. As theorized by Peter Andreas, the phenomenon of debordering entails loosening cross-border interactions, cooperation, and networks. While the process of rebordering describes the tightening of cross-border dynamics through border security and immigration policy (Andreas 2009).

This study understands 1994's North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and "Operation Gatekeeper's" physical construction of a border wall in San Diego and Tijuana, as the symbolic starting point for the debordering/rebordering between Mexico and the United States. I will refer to this border paradigm of debordering/rebordering also when describing the process of opening, loosening, closing and tightening of border policy and immigration legislation between the U.S. and Mexico, as experienced by *fronteriza/os.*

Citizenship, as the exclusive political and social membership to and granted by a nation-state (Kymlicka 1994), perpetually shifts due to migration practices and the reconstitution of national and transnational communities (Bakker and Smith 2009; Rocco 2014). Due to the processes of globalization, both economic calculation as well as an adaptation to political instability have become fundamental components for transnational elite and middle-class subjects' citizenship of choice (Ong 1999).

Anthropologist Aiwha Ong theorizes flexible citizenship as a transnational, elite practice of passport accumulation during times of political turmoil and economic instability. Transnational elites practice flexible citizenship as they seek to circumvent restrictive laws and/or take advantage of economic trade, and immigration policies (Ong 1999, 111). Such theorizing examines the implications of a globalized economy and citizenship practices along border spaces and epitomized in the further discussed practice of "transborder parentocracy," as one example.

Cultural anthropologist, Vanessa Fong also implements the concept of flexible citizenship to theorize the experiences of middle-class youth seeking to enhance and/or replace their developing world citizenship with a developed world citizenship through transnational higher education (Fong 2011, 33). Given that it is a transnational practice, flexible citizenship makes contextual sense when examining all components of transnational citizenship.

For Fong, and in agreement with democratic citizenship theory, flexible citizenship is composed of legal, social, and cultural citizenship. Legal citizenship is understood by a set of rights based on documentation status. Secondly, social citizenship speaks to a status granting access to class, education, health care, mobility, etc. And, thirdly, cultural citizenship, is characterized as community belonging recognized by the self and others and adequately participating in group discussions (Fong 2011, 13).

Studies on Mexican emigration and U.S.-Mexico border demographics show that the practice of U.S.-Mexico cross-border flexible citizenship, among northern Mexican border residents, may be gradually increasing (Zuñiga 1991; Fussel 2004; Palmer 2008; Chávez 2016; Vargas Valle and Coubès 2017). Recent studies also suggest that upper-middle class flexible citizens migrate to the U.S. during times of public insecurity and violence (Meza Gonzalez and Feil 2016; Romo and Mogollón 2016).

Norma Iglesias-Prieto (2011) theorizes on the notion of "transborderism" describing and characterizing the inherently diverse and transnational relationship between the border and cultural citizenship (Fong 2011; Rocco 2014). Iglesias-Prieto defines "transborderism," as the "level of interaction… frequency, intensity, directionality, and scale of crossing activities; the type of material and symbolic exchanges; and the social and cultural meanings attached to the interactions" (2011,

143). Iglesias Prieto's transborderisms (2011, 2014), transborder subjectivity (2014), and transborder citizenship (2011) provide rich theoretical grounding to understand how Tijuana and San Diego *fronteriza/os* in this case study, exemplify the highest degree of transborderism, through their legal, social, and cultural citizenship practices and experiences both in Mexico and the United States.

In my discussions and findings, I will be referring to Iglesias Prieto's four types of transborderism, which are impacted by the tightness or looseness of cross-border social and affective relationships. These types of transborderisms range from: 1) commercial; 2) periodic and personalized; 3) warm and emotional; and, 4) transborder citizenship. In my work, I deep-dive into the quotidian experiences of the fourth and "highest," "tightest," and most intense level of transborderism, as Iglesias Prieto theorizes, it being transborder citizenship.

Iglesias Prieto's research, which cedes the theorization of transborderism, consequently serves as a foundation for the conceptualization of "transborder citizens," subjects personifying the borderlands and "include people with dual citizenship; with experience and having lived, studied, and worked on both sides of the border; who are bilingual and bicultural; and who have profoundly personal ties on both sides" (2011, 144).

For Iglesias-Prieto, "transborder citizens" represent an opportune cross-border demographic that "possess the cultural ability and awareness that allows them to move independently on both sides" (2011, 144) of the U.S.-Mexico border. The potential opportunity at the border, as Iglesias Prieto underscores, "lies precisely in the involvement and potential of such transborderized citizens… who are often more critically aware of the everyday realities of border living" (2011, 145). I also find Iglesias-Prieto's theorizing of transborder subjectivity and citizenship reminiscent of

the work of Gloria Anzaldúa, Hommi Bhabha, and Edward Soja and their respective, conceptual and sociocultural "third space," where north and south borderlands integrate.

Transborder subjectivity challenges national binaries of belonging that bifurcates "us/them," "here/there," and, "this side/that side," by simultaneously and actively participating in both U.S. and Mexican social fabrics and its multiple communities (Iglesias Prieto 2014, 113). Iglesias-Prieto evokes Anzaldua's *conciencia de la mestiza,* the process of mestiza consciousness that recognizes that transborder citizens "have the most complex understanding of the border: they recognize it as a kind of fracture; a boundary where one feels the exercise of power, abuse, and suffering" (2011, 145). This integration then forms a transborder metropolis, or a transborder urban ecosystem (2014, 110-113) that transgresses and transcends nationally bound notions of the borderlands as a geopolitical divide.

By recognizing the cultural diversity at the borderlands, and flexibly integrating into many borderland communities, transborder subjects also recognize the different tensions between and amongst U.S. and Mexican borderland communities. And, while transborderism does not automatically presuppose binational citizenship as a necessary legal category to participate in transborder integration and represent such subjectivity, transborder citizenship practices are far more complex as they require the simultaneous participation of political, social, and cultural spaces beyond national borders, according to Iglesias-Prieto (2014, 114).

My work extends Iglesias Prieto's conceptualizations by further examining the notion of transborder citizenship and understanding the relationship and negotiations between legal, social and cultural citizenship of *fronteriza/os* in the U.S. and Mexican borderlands. My work magnifies the economic and political contexts that cede and

allow for the creation and performance of a transborder type of citizenship, in their complex and sophisticated forms of "transborderisms" as Iglesias-Prieto identifies in her work.

Sociologist Heidy Sarabia (2014, 2016, 2017) shows how socioeconomic status and legal categories intricately shape citizenship, nationality and belonging at the California-Baja California borderlands (2016, 343*). Cosmopolitans* at the border access U.S. services, markets, and goods through their frequent crossings as Mexican citizens with Border Crossing Card[2] privileges (Sarabia 2014, 348). As argued by Sarabia,

> Cosmopolitans live in Mexico but cross the international boundary on a regular basis, visiting the U.S. as often as twice a week… For the most part, they were middle-class individuals with the resources to obtain a border crossing card (BCC), given that the U.S. State Department requires that applicants "demonstrate that they have ties to Mexico that would compel them to return after a temporary stay in the United States", (USDS 2015) as well as proof of economic stability in Mexico. The BCC allowed these border residents to travel to and visit the U.S. as frequently as they desired… Given that the border was open and unproblematic for them, cosmopolitans in my study tended to see themselves simultaneously as Mexican and as "global" citizens; that is, as travelers who were unaffected by international borders (2016, 348)

In order to establish links and secure U.S. documentation as non-citizens and non-immigrants, Mexican border residents must establish and provide proof to their border rootedness by showing U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officers stationed throughout Mission Mexico's northern border Consulate Generals[3] documents verifying Mexican landownership, Mexican schooling and education documents, sources of income, vehicle ownership, tax declarations, and family members' U.S. legal status and background. Sarabia writes that cosmopolitans at the border[4] are "middle-class

[2] U.S. Department of State Border Crossing Card (B1/B2/BCC)
[3] From west to east, Tijuana, Baja California; Hermosillo, Sonora; Nogales, Sonora; Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua; Monterrey, Nuevo León; Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas; and Matamoros, Tamaulipas.
[4] Also uses, Global South Cosmopolitans or transborder citizens

Mexicans—with tourist visas to travel to the U.S." and thus, engaging in cross-border interactions, visiting the U.S. biweekly for shopping, leisure, and business (2014, 348).

I extend Sarabia's work by looking into the inherently shared border experiences between global south cosmopolitans and *fronteriza/os* living under the same cross-border Mexican roof. All *fronteriza/os* in this study, with the exception of one multi-generational U.S.-born respondent, were raised and continue to raise families in mixed-status households along with global south cosmopolitans, as Sarabia would put it (see table 3.1). *Fronteriza/os* in this study continue to form new families with border cosmopolitans as a strategy of class and legal, or, social mobility at the Mexican borderlands.

In a more recent publication, Sarabia (2016) studies the intersection between class and legal status in order to delineate how these transnationally interrelated factors can further complicate cross-border networks and affective relationships. Sarabia finds that a border crossing card (BCC) also impacts the transborder citizenship experiences and national attachments of Mexican border residents. Sarabia identifies two different citizenship practices along the border, transborder citizenship and transnational citizenship (2016, 342).

The theories of transnational citizenship and transborder citizenship are the result of an analytic juxtaposition of both privileged border commuters' entering the U.S. with a BCC, and disadvantaged border residents who, after their return from the U.S., are barred from entering legally due to their immigration history. Borrowing from Sarabia, this project also highlights how socioeconomic status intertwined with legal categories shape citizenship and identity for *fronteriza/os* in this study, re-memorializing and navigating present-day life at the Tijuana and San Diego

borderlands and while articulating the construction of a transborder legal consciousness (2016, 342).

For Sarabia, transborder citizenship refers to the practices that take place across the border and that require the actual crossing of the geophysical boundary, but not necessarily establishing social ties in the U.S. By contrast, transnational citizenship regards the social and physical connections across borders but does not necessarily involve border-crossing practices. However, and differing from transborder citizenship, transnational citizenship stresses how re-envisioning of the border shapes ties across international divides where exercising a mobility pattern does not necessarily engage in an "imagined community" across borders. (Sarabia 2016, 345). I advance Sarabia's (2016) findings by demonstrating how simultaneously combining privileged forms of legal, social, and cultural citizenship at the U.S.-Mexico transborder contexts (and echoing Iglesias-Prieto), seemingly indicates that *fronteriza/os*' transborder citizenship and legal consciousness oscillates somewhere between transborder citizenship and transnational citizenship, following Sarabia's theorizations.

TRANSBORDER FAMILIES

Transfronteriza/os are also members of transborder immigrant families, as defined by Raquel Marquez and Harriet Romo. Transborder families are units "who live as if there are no borders… they go back and forth on a daily basis to work, attend school, or tend to family needs," (2008, 2) and "include members who are undocumented, naturalized citizens, residents with various types of visas, US-born citizens, or citizens with dual nationality" (Marquez and Romo 2008, 2).

Literature suggests that much like transnational immigrants and due to their legal U.S. citizenship status, *fronteriza/os* will also likely choose to fully integrate in

the U.S. in the pursuit of a higher quality of life and more competitive labor markets (Orraca et all 2017, 401). However, few studies have looked at how the U.S. immigration system intended to privilege family processing continues to divide transborder families of U.S. citizens at the border (Gomberg-Múñoz 2016).

This has significant implications as *fronteriza/o* or U.S.-Mexican cross-border citizen demographic steadily rises at the borderlands. Since the border serves as a mechanism for social stratification, rather than a porous and opportunist jump-board, it divides families with mixed-legal status and separates *fronteriza/o* children from their non-U.S. documented and ephemerally "legal" families at the border.

In 1994, Norma Ojeda found that transborder families living and navigating life at the Tijuana and San Diego borderlands routinely include at least one U.S.-born child, at least one Mexican commuter worker laboring or student learning in the U.S., and/or, transnational family relationships and networks in the U.S. (1993, 18). Following this definition, my study neatly contributes theoretically to transborder family and individuals' experiences.

While transborder family networks (Marquez and Romo 2008; Marquez 2008; Ojeda 1994; Ojeda 2009), border labor practices and spaces (Chavez 2016; Heyman 1991); and transborder students trajectories and schooling experiences (Bejarano 2010; De la Piedra 2017; De la Piedra et all 2018; Iglesias-Prieto 2011, 2014; Franquiz and Ortiz 2017; Orraca et all. 2017; Relaño Pastor 2007) have been studied in-depth; literature looking at the experiences of U.S.-born Mexican border young adults' citizenship experiences, specifically, legal consciousness and mixed-status family proves scarce. My study attempts to fill part of the theoretical void where the studies between border and transnationalism, law and society, and mixed-status family experiences intersect.

TRANSBORDER FAMILY PRACTICES

While only a handful of quantitative and qualitative studies have examined the social phenomenon and experiences of Mexican border residing U.S. documented *fronteriza* mothers and families seeking private maternity healthcare services in the U.S. These studies, conducted over the last thirty years or so, provide important, generalizable and statistical data, thus illuminating relevant hypothetical inferences.

For instance, and prior to the 1960s, Mexican border towns lacked proper medical facilities. U.S. documented, upper-class and Mexican-rooted transborder families with the capital, legal status, and wealth to access private healthcare services mostly relied on the U.S. healthcare services. This was also partly due to the geographic distance and lack of transportation and highway infrastructure within Mexico and connecting Tijuana to near-by metropolitan cities, such as Monterrey or Guadalajara (Guendelman and Jasis 1992; Marquez 2008; Rivera 2014).

Notably, the *fronteriza/os* in this study cannot serve to explain that conundrum, given that Tijuana's health sector had met certified healthcare standards by the 1980's. The practice of giving birth in the U.S. also coincides with Tijuana's middle-class experiencing economic growth due to the boom of the *maquiladora* industry. For *fronteriza/os* , especially those who are second or third generation U.S.-born, the practice of giving birth in the U.S. is a traditional, cultural and socio-economic status practice expected amongst affluent and upwardly-mobile transborder families who have lived at least two generations at the U.S. and Mexican borderlands.

It was not until 1992, that public health specialists, Sylvia Guendelman and Monica Jasis conducted the first large-scale survey exploring U.S.' childbirth practices amongst Tijuana women, between the years 1982-1987 and across socioeconomic sectors. Guendelman and Jasis highlighted that Mexican-residing women sought U.S.

childbirths in order to secure citizenship opportunities, access safe and advanced medical services, and perceived financial and social advantages facilitated by the U.S. healthcare system (1992, 422).

Guendelman and Jasis' (1992) study provides the necessary theoretical grounding to understand *fronteriza/os'* early life experiences. As it provides statistical and qualitative findings proving how and why transborder parents continued to seek after U.S. childbirths during the decade of the 1980s and analyze how the expectations of transborder mothers of U.S.-born *fronteriza/os'* are further layered by their socio-economic class backgrounds.

While 47% of the women in Guendelman and Jasis' study delivered their children in the U.S. and to obtain birthright citizenship privileges for a new generation of *fronteriza/os*, another significant 45% percent of women delivered in the U.S. because they were offered better medical attention than in Mexico. Only 8% of Mexican border mothers reported to have chosen the U.S. healthcare system to obtain social welfare benefits and access accommodations such as, "food stamps, WIC, or a comfortable hospital stay" (1992, 422).

Guendelman and Jasis' survey reveals that obtaining U.S. citizenship privileges for 1980s' decade born *fronteriza/o* children and accessing better healthcare accommodations than those available in Mexico is almost as equally important to Mexican border parents. These findings continue to stand true and resonate for *fronteriza/o* respondents who echoed similar sentiments when discussing their decision-making process for choosing a country of birth for their children. Rather than choosing to derive U.S. citizenship status to a child born abroad in Mexico, or requesting a Certificate for Birth Abroad for their children, respondents to this study echoed that their strong inclination to give birth in the U.S. is due to accessibility to

better and safer healthcare accommodations and services than in Mexico or anywhere in the globe. However, and due to U.S.' *jus soli* citizenship laws, granting birthright citizenship regardless of parent's nationality of legal background, delivering a child on a U.S.-based hospital is inherently embedded to an automatic U.S. citizenship status. Seeking U.S. childbirth healthcare services cannot be untied from the 14th Amendments' citizenship by birth. This observation allows me to advance that access to better healthcare and global-north citizenship status exemplifies a transborder family cultural practice and expectation for mobility.

Working-class mothers expressed a desire to access basic healthcare needs, like proper sanitary conditions, feeding supplies, and "to be treated with dignity and respect" (Guendelman and Jasis 1992, 423). Nonetheless, working-class, often single-parent households or recent Tijuana residents expressed a fear of delivering in the U.S. and preferred to deliver in Mexico due to their familiarity with the local health care system. Women and mothers in the working-class sector suffer disproportionately because delivering in the U.S. is seen as "prohibitively expensive[5]" and effectively negates long term benefits associated with childbirth north of the border (1992, 423).

Attitudes of women in middle and higher socio-economic sectors operate in sharp contrast to those of working-class women. For middle and upper-class women, medical care quality and a relationship with their physician are of high priority, as well as technical aspects, such as state-of-the-art facilities and resources, professional staff, patient-physician accountability, and close health monitoring.

[5] By contrast, among the women who delivered in Mexico, 11.5% felt that Mexico's health care is of better quality. 75% of Tijuana women who gave birth in Mexico did so because of their greater familiarity with the health care system and entitlement to full insurance coverage (13.9%) (Guendelman and Jasis 1992, 422).

Guendelman and Jasis' (1992) work informs my study as I interplay with their hypothesis regarding transborder mothers' roles in shaping transborder mixed-status families along the Tijuana-San Diego border. Based upon that formative research, my study amplifies that long-term benefits, such as U.S. citizenship rights and privileges, as well as, access to adequate healthcare are the primary motivators driving transborder mothers to continually give birth to *fronteriza/os* in the United States.

Guendelman and Jasis' study clearly shows that the higher women landed on the socio-economic ladder, the higher their rate of births were in the U.S. This explains why only 5% of lower-income women in their study gave birth north of the border. This number is heavily contrasted by that of 78% U.S. birthrates amongst their middle-class counterparts. While Guendelman and Jasis estimate that through the decade of the 1980s, 1 in 10 low-income, Tijuana women gave birth in California, those numbers increased to 1 in 6 for middle and upper-class women (1992, 423). Of the women that gave birth in the U.S., 75% percent also secured prenatal care in California and in private hospital settings. They concluded that Tijuana mothers of the 1980's have a marked preference for utilizing California's formal healthcare system for prenatal care and childbirth. These women gave birth and became mothers to *fronteriza/os,* and the protagonists of this study.

BORDER PARENTOCRACY

Since 2010, some qualitative studies have seriously explored the experiences of Mexican border families birthing babies in the U.S. For example, Tessman and Koyama (2017) argue that due to economic, political, social instability, and securitization of the border, Mexican border resident parents engage in "border parentocracy," an

aspirational practice of upward mobility enacted by giving birth in the U.S., and consequently, those children benefitting from permanent citizenship legal status.

This form of "parentocracy" in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, as Tessman and Koyama argue, allows for familial and individual upward-mobility through the access to U.S. citizenship privileges like public education available to "*transfronterizo* youth" (Tessman and Koyama, 2017, 1). Generally in academic scholarship the notion of "parentocracy" is discussed as "a child's education increasingly dependent upon the wealth and wishes of the parents rather than the ability and efforts of pupils" (Brown 1990, 66, as quoted in Tessman and Koyama 2017, 4).

However, at the U.S.-Mexico border, Mexican parents sacrifice greatly in return for *transfronterizo* youth upward mobility through education. In some instances, "border parentocracy" means that parents relinquish their parental rights to a legal guardian that ensures *transfronterizo* youth education, retention and successful high-school graduation. Most border parents in their study were low-waged *maquiladora* or working-class families and provided no details regarding their U.S. legal status, for safety reasons.

Tessman and Koyama reconceptualize parentocracy to include the efforts of Sonoran border-rooted, working families who strategically effectuate a U.S. birth to then pass on U.S. citizenship status and privileges to their children living at the border (2017, 5). "Border parentocracy" at the rural Arizona-Sonora borderlands manifests mainly in the lives of Mexican undocumented parents, who: 1) give birth to the child in the United States; 2) send children to U.S. public k-12 education (to grasp English-language skills); and, 3) encourage aspirational binational upward-mobility through transnational labor markets.

By contrast to Tessman and Koyama's *transfronterizo* youth experiences, *fronteriza/os* in this study and their families also engaged in an affluent form of "border parentocracy" in the historical and economic context of the emergence of the *maquiladora* transnational capitalist class in Tijuana and San Diego borderlands. In my study, I uncovered that middle and upper-class transborder (or transnational capitalist, as I will later discuss in Chapter 4) families continue to engage in forms of "border parentocracy," re-theorized and complicated by their upper-class and U.S. documented status and experiences, and instead as a practice of "transborder parentocracy."

Tessman and Koyama's respondents' concerns and hesitation against sharing their U.S. documentation status due to fear of institutional retaliation (2017, 6) are juxtaposed against that of *fronteriza/os* in this study. *Fronteriza/o* respondents openly and confidently shared about their families' desire and expectation to birth U.S. children. My inquiries about their parents' motivation to birth *fronteriza/o* children in the U.S. confused and surprised my collaborators due to its normalized perception and ingrained practice of implied upward mobility and opportunity. Their surprise was not out of fear, but out of a sense of entitlement and normalization of these practices.

Tessman and Koyama reveal that despite Sonoran-families' fear of Arizonan anti-Mexican legislation, dating from 2000-present, deportation and border and customs' brutality, "they made conscious and risky choices to cross the border and give birth to their children in the U.S. to mitigate the lack of economic and educational opportunities on the Mexican side" (2017, 3). Overall, Tessman and Koyama demonstrate how Mexican-residing border mothers and fathers make "calculated, but risky actions—such as crossing the border to give birth to their children in the US or relinquishing their parental rights to a U.S. guardian—to ensure that their children can access U.S. education" (2017, 2).

However, this opposes some of the experiences of the middle and upper-class *fronteriza/os* in the Tijuana and San Diego border region. I cite class and legal status variability, as well as the differences given the rural-to-urban settings between this study's sample and that of Tessman and Koyama's *transfronterizo* youth. In order to foster specificity when studying borderlands experiences, I differentially describe middle-to-upper-class border parentocracy in the California and Baja California setting as "transborder parentocracy."

My study provides a complementary narrative on "border parentocracy" by centralizing transborder families' classed expectations to access spaces of higher learning and pay wage either in Mexico or the United States and at the urban border between Tijuana and San Diego. Despite the increased militarization and securitization of the San Diegan borderlands and Tijuana's urban growth, these practices continue to be an ongoing norm amongst U.S. documented Mexican border and transborder families and individuals who participated in this study.

Thus, I understand "transborder parentocracy," as the expectation and pursuit for U.S. maternity and child delivery healthcare services amongst upwardly mobile and U.S. documented Mexican border parents. In particular, I found that transborder parentocracy entailed: 1) giving birth in U.S. private hospitals and accessing transnational and privatized prenatal care; 2) sending children to private schools in Mexico (typically k-12 and potentially college) and/or the United States[6] (typically during k-12) to learn both English and Spanish in school settings; 3) encouraging

[6] Half of my study's sample had completed k-12 schooling and higher education in Mexico, without any previous schooling experiences in the United States. The other half had some experience with transnational education. And almost half had obtained U.S. college degrees while living in Mexico. One quarter of the respondents obtained their college and graduate degrees in Mexico. While the last quarter had some transnational college or high school education experience.

upward mobility through access to global labor markets; and, 4) securing Mexican legal documents through formal (dual nationality) and informal (dual registration) means.

TRANSBORDER U.S. CITIZENSHIP

Eunice Vargas Valle (2015) reveals that U.S. birthright citizenship positively impacts the upward mobility of *fronteriza/os'* academic performance in higher education in Tijuana, though lowering participation in U.S. public schooling (Vargas Valle 2015, 130, 155). Vargas Valle further demonstrates that lowering numbers of cross-border *commuter* workers confirms the greater difficulty in accessing labor markets while undocumented, or any non-U.S. citizen status. Moreover, cross-border labor migration circuits of *commuters*, regardless of U.S. legal status, decrease border crossers' opportunities for achieving higher education (Vargas Valle 2015, 130).

My ethnographic and oral history study texturizes *fronteriza/os'* schooling experiences in agreement with Vargas Valle. I examine how U.S. citizenship and legal status positively impacts access to privileged spaces of education within Mexican schooling systems. And while U.S. citizenship status facilitates *fronteriza/os'* privileged access to elite education in Mexico, this positive correlation does not translate inversely.

Due to transborder family mixed-legal status, *fronteriza/os* face limitations when attempting to access not only public or private education systems in the U.S. Their access to all education operates relationally to their parent and siblings' U.S. legal status, which is in turn tied to their socioeconomic class background. In this context, U.S.-birthright citizenship underscores arguably one of the most important avenues to access U.S. labor markets (Vargas Valle and Coubès 2017) and spaces of higher learning (Vargas Valle 2015).

As Vargas Valle and Marie-Laure Coubès (2017) have suggested, *fronteriza/os*' ability to continue cross-border interactions depends less and less on networks and geographic closeness, but, rather, more so on the socioeconomic capital amongst northern Mexican families and individuals, and in this case, Tijuana's upwardly mobile strata (2017, 78). Vargas Valle and Coubès (2017) show that Mexican border residents lead cross-border lifestyles and maintain these practices due both to their legal documents, and, of notable equal importance, their socio-economic class status and resources garnered while continually crossing back and forth between Mexico and the United States. Vargas Valle and Coubès (2017) also underscore that the post-September 11, 2001 border security order altered transborder family practices and daily routines, making them more precarious, dangerous, and hyper-policed.

They found that after the implementation of the Patriot Act, legal and class statuses also become inextricably intertwined amongst Tijuana residents and San Diego commuters. Border militarization and policing protocols created in response to 9/11 amplify "greater uncertainty and differentiated opportunities for cross-border interactions, where only a small section of society can take advantage of these opportunities to strengthen their socioeconomic position" (59). The decline in cross-border commuter workers, alongside spiking numbers of U.S.-born *fronteriza/os* at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands highlights that the borderlands represents a barrier of socioeconomic selectivity (Vargas Valle and Coubès 2017, 77).

In agreement with Vargas Valle and Coubès (2017), my study also makes the connection that U.S. legal status serves as a source of mobility, selectivity and stratification at the borderlands. Additionally, U.S. citizenship status does not only benefit the individual citizen, but also by extension and expectation, meant to support and privilege their mixed-status family's mobility and social status. However, Vargas

Valle and Coubès (2017) claim that the border serves as a "blockade for transborder interactions," no longer a springboard of opportunity (2017, 57).

Between 2000 to 2010, borderland "populations engag[ing] in cross-border links at the Mexico-U.S. border were more exposed to processes of socioeconomic selectivity, but less exposed to transborder [cultural] capital selectivity" (77). Closing borders and barring undocumented populations through hyper-policing mechanisms transforms the U.S.-Mexico divide into a "selective barrier" (77) where only those who are socially privileged —legal and class status—can continue to engage in cross-border practices, interactions, and linkages.

"Border interactions changed from 2000 to 2010," Vargas Valle and Coubès argue (2017), because conditions "became less dependent on the border location of the actors and cross-border social networks, and more on the position of the populations in the social structure and transnational links" (77). In my study, I also find that *fronteriza/os* engaging in border interactions, such as access to spaces of higher learning, visiting family members on the U.S.' side, were "the more privileged populations in terms of human capital and U.S. citizenship" (Vargas Valle and Coubès 2017, 77).

By analyzing the increase in border security and stricter immigration processes, Vargas Valle and Coubès illuminate that transborder family members' "aspirations to integrate with U.S. society could have grown, since a strong north-to-south inequality in economic and public safety terms continues to exist" (2017, 77). Thus, complicating the norm of cross-border routines and daily crossings. By lowering cross-border commuter labor, these shifts extend greater difficulties to access labor markets, especially for the undocumented and those without high school or higher education.

Vargas Valle and Coubès (2017) prove that U.S.-birthright citizenship seemingly and unilaterally determines access to U.S. labor markets (Vargas Valle and Coubès 2017) and spaces of higher learning (Vargas Valle 2015; Vargas Valle and Coubès 2017). I agree and demonstrably add that *fronteriza/os'* limited access to U.S. resources and opportunities from early childhood on intimately relates to their parents and siblings U.S. mixed-legal status.

Respondents' personal narratives also show how the post-9/11 border order negatively filtered out some *fronteriza/os'* access to desired U.S. labor markets and spaces of learning given their families' U.S. legal status. I add to this literature theorizing on *fronteriza/os'* lack of access to U.S. resources and opportunities in their childhood. Which, in turn, impacts their ability and confidence to access and navigate spaces of higher pay and learning in the U.S., where language barriers and lack of familiarity in navigating U.S. social structures deter their active participation to seek out the missing opportunities in their lives, and as echoed in their narratives. However, and to reiterate Vargas Valle and Coubès point (2017), the *fronteriza/os* in this study that had access to higher spaces of learning and higher-paying jobs in contrast to fellow commuter workers in the United State, are better able to exercise this type of mobility due to their higher socioeconomic background and cultural capital.

DUAL NATIONALITY IN TIJUANA

In 1996, when Mexican legislation passed a provision to allow for the "*no-pérdida de nacionalidad,*" or no-loss of nationality, it became one way to formally recognize the diasporas' contributions and ties with national economics, partisan politics, potency as an ethnic lobby abroad, especially within the United States, and the highest number of emigrants abroad in migration history (Fitzgerald 2005 183-184).

Dual-nationality is a foreign policy matter as one of its aims is to establish politically significant swing groups with strong ties to both Mexico and the United States, according to Michael Jones Correa (1004-1005) As a way to build a stronger constituency, the Mexican Secretariat of Foreign Relations, *Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores* (SRE), through its many consulates in the United States, has encouraged Mexican nationals in the United States to naturalize as U.S. citizens, while keeping their nationality as Mexicans as well (Jones 2001 1004-1005)

However, dual nationality looks and plays-out very differently in the Mexican border city of Tijuana. Through localized social networks built between civil society and local government offices, dual nationality is either hyper-present or hypo-present in the lives of *fronteriza/os* in this study. Later in Chapter 5, I theorize how *fronteriza/os'* transborder citizenship experiences and legal consciousness is further complicated by a limited and differential to Mexican dual nationality at the Tijuana border. Since *fronteriza/o* respondents' birth took place throughout the decade of the 1980s and before Mexican dual nationality was legalized, they also had heterogeneous Mexican legal statuses, or different set of legal documents, papers, *papeles*, and falling within four discrete *fronteriza/o* differential access to Mexican dual nationality categories:

(1) dually registered at birth;

(2) eligible Mexican dual national;

(3) Mexican dual national; or,

(4) ineligible Mexican dual national.

There is currently not a single study available or theory unraveling the diverse legal statuses amongst *fronteriza/os*. This is of invaluable importance as it demonstrates how Mexican border enforcement efforts further divide communities at the

borderlands. Even in this small and selective cohort of socially privileged *fronteriza/os*, differential Mexican legal status creates cultural and symbolic barriers between would-be community members at the busiest and one of the most asymmetric international border crossings in the globe. *Fronteriza/os'* capital, that is, bilingualism, biculturalism, binationalism, with intense family and social ties to the southwest and southern California, in particular, and northwest Mexico, falls in-between the cracks of nation-state structures at the borderlands.

LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS AT THE TIJUANA BORDER

My research suggests that *fronteriza/os'* quotidian and "commonsense understandings of the law" (Ábrego 2011, 341; 2019, 2), otherwise theorized as "legal consciousness," is not only shaped by U.S. status, but by their Mexican legal status as well. *Fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness is impacted by U.S. law as it shapes U.S. citizenship status in relationship to transborder mixed-status family member's U.S. papers. *Fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness is also implicated by Mexican law, and particularly, respondent's sometimes limited access or informal access to dual nationality. Transborder inter-generational family and social ties to the Tijuana and U.S.-Mexican border is another meaningful factor shaping *fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness. By looking into the intertwined relationship between U.S. and Mexican statuses upon the lives of *fronteriza/os*, I show how the *sui generis* context at the borderlands shapes *fronteriza/o* legal consciousness.

Leisy Ábrego (2011) analyzes how U.S. anti-immigrant racial paradigms question the legitimacy of immigrant citizenship status and impact U.S. citizens' sense of inclusion and exclusion. This shapes how immigrants understand legislation, individual rights, and responsibilities. Ábrego theorizes that immigrant's quotidian

and “commonsense understanding of the law” can manifest into a patterned “legal consciousness” (Ábrego 2011, 341).

My work contributes to the understanding and theorizing of Latina/o “legal consciousness.” In agreement with Ábrego (2011), my work coincides with the finding that Latina/os’ relationship to family members mixed-legal status shapes their U.S. citizen “legal consciousness.” Echoing Ábrego, my work argues that legal status also impacts the perceptions, expectations, and practices of transborder family-units as a whole, not merely individually.

Rihan Yeh’s work (2012) offers important findings between the relationship of U.S. legal status and Mexican socioeconomic class expectations in the Tijuana border context. Yeh finds that “legal, documented border crossings provide one of the most fundamental idioms of class distinction in Tijuana.” This connection of Mexican class status and U.S. legal documents reiterates how “U.S. recognition thus underwrites middle-class status ratchets to unbearable tension the inherent contradictions of projects for an authentically *Mexican* modernity” (Yeh 2012, 190).

Moreover, Yeh (2012) proves that Tijuana’s middle-class public (*à la* Michael Warner [2002]) “exerts a normative influence… on ideals of (neo)liberal democracy circulating in Mexico today (192-193).” In other words, Tijuana’s middle-class publics (which is not a bourgeoisie public) is,

> suspended between the United States and “the poor,” the masses of migrants constantly arriving from “the South,” Tijuana reveals with particular clarity that the “middleness of the middle class” in a country like Mexico is a matter not merely of its position in the class structure of its “own” society, but of a delicately negotiated suspension between the national and the foreign, the present and future, backwardness and modernity (Yeh 2012, 190).

I build-upon Yeh’s work theorizing on the interplay between Mexican class and U.S. legal status, evident in the experiences of Tijuana *fronteriza/os.* My case study also

advances Yeh's conceptualizing in that it theorizes that amongst California and Baja California's middle and upper-class, multi-generational, transborder families, that aim to secure permanent U.S. legal status, is both an expectation and normative practice.

Sociologist Sergio Chávez (2016) argues that the Mexican northern border is "a site of opportunity to migrants and due to the complex economies that flourish in the borderlands and as a site of constraint because the border creates inequality between crossers and non-crossers" (Chávez 2016, 6). In an era of increasing border enforcement, Chávez presents that gaining access to legal documents to enter the United States, and to a lesser extent, participate in Mexican civil society, becomes a fundamental strategy that savvy border residents use for turning structural obstacles into potential sources of opportunity (Chávez, 20016, 6). Thinking about Velasco and Contreras (2014) border as "opportunity" paradigm, I also build upon Chavez's work and examine the strategies employed by Mexican border residents seeking to transform border obstacles, thereby mitigating the social and political uncertainty at the borderlands into sources of opportunities in an ever-shifting landscape.

U.S. CITIZENS OF MIXED-LEGAL STATUS FAMILIES IN TIJUANA

In this study, I understand mixed-status families' and as previously defined, a unit where at least one parent is a non-U.S. citizen and at least one child is a U.S. citizen (Fix and Zimmerman 2001). Transborder families are those who engage in routine cross-border practices, routines, and daily journeys, while residing at the Mexican borderlands, and while having at least one U.S.-born child, at least one Mexican commuter worker laboring or student learning in the U.S., and/or, transnational family relationships and networks in the U.S. (Ojeda 1994, 18). I build upon the theorizations of Fix and Zimmerman (2001) and Ojeda (1994) to advance the

concept of transborder mixed-status families to describe family units with at least one U.S. citizen child and one non-U.S. citizen parent, living at the Mexican borderlands and engaging in transborder interactions, networks, and practices.

The 2010 National Mexican census reported that 600,000 U.S.-born children and youth of Mexican descent resided in Mexican households. Meanwhile 100,000 of the total U.S.-born youth of Mexican-descent currently resided at the border city of Tijuana (Mexican Census, INEGI, 2010). Recent survey data collected by the Colegio de la Frontera Norte's *Unidad de Servicios Estadísticos y Geomática* (2020) reported that out of the top-five cities hosting U.S.-born citizen adults at the Mexican border, the city of Tijuana leads with 66,601. These numbers are closely followed by Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua with 51,289; then going down by half in Mexicali, Baja California with 26,506; and Matamoros and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas with roughly 16,648 and 16,634 per city respectively (USEG 2020). While the data does not distinguish between U.S.-born citizens' ethnic background, I speculate that due to their Mexican residence, some of these numbers might also include *fronteriza/os* leading transborder lives, forming transborder family units, practicing transborder citizenship across U.S. and Mexico, and constructing legal identities based on two simultaneous sets of state laws: U.S. Citizenship and Mexican dual nationality.

U.S. legal statuses, U.S. citizenship, and immigration policy has a high impact on the daily lived experiences of some Mexican families living at the border. According to Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz, U.S. citizens also experience feelings of alienation and exclusion when confronting the state on immigration matters. In Gomberg-Muñoz words,

> when US citizens sponsor their undocumented spouses for lawful status, they find themselves at the center of immigration petitions. They are invasively scrutinized, treated with bureaucratic indifference, and separated from their loved ones. As this "politics of exception," which often targets migrants, is unleashed on US citizens, they learn that their citizenship offers little protection

> from dehumanizing treatment. Instead, restrictive immigration criteria, designed in theory to boost the value of US citizenship, in practice dehumanize US citizens and can alienate them from feelings of national belonging. (2016, 339).

In the case of *fronteriza/os* who are a part of Tijuana mixed-legal status families, and as Gomberg-Muñoz argues, they, too learn that a U.S. citizenship status "offers little protection from dehumanizing treatment" on behalf of Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in particular, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), regardless of their internalized, familial, and societal expectations. Amplifying Gomberg-Muñoz's (2016) work, and in the case of *fronteriza/os* who, despite their Mexican background and residence, their U.S. citizenship may be also negatively impacted by the interactions with the Mexican state, in particular, immigration and customs, government and social welfare agencies, as well as being grossly underrepresented in mainstream culture.

Mixed-status family literature has explored the experiences of Mexican-origin and Latino family units within U.S. boundaries (Capps and Fortuny 2006; Menjívar 2008; Dreby 2012; Ábrego 2014; Gomberg Muñoz 2016; Luibhéid et all 2018). Yet, as Medina and Menjívar (2015) point out, there is a need to look at the experiences of mixed-status families beyond U.S.' boundaries. Medina and Menjívar, for example, further uncover that due to increased anti-immigrant policies and enforcements in the U.S., "[M]exico has experienced the arrival of mixed-status families coming from the USA" (2015, 2123). Return mixed-status families' incorporation into Mexico is impacted by citizenship and legal status, which in turn is shaped by the context of their reception in the U.S. and the context of return to Mexico.

Medina and Menjívar find that both contexts are tightly connected, shaping family structure and incorporation upon return (2015, 2123). Like central Mexican return families of mixed-legal status, *fronteriza/os'* transborder mixed-status families

also face a set of challenges due to Mexican immigration policies (2015). The consequences of Mexican and U.S. immigration policies regulating the lives of U.S.-citizens of transborder mixed-status families may be doubly disruptive to households and transborder citizens at the border.

Menjívar, Ábrego, and Schmalzbauer (2015) have also looked at how the new structural barriers against undocumented immigrant lives and their ability to adjust their legal status creates another kind of spill-over effect upon the lives of U.S. citizen family members, especially children. The "spill-over effects" of living in a mixed-legal status family upon the lives of U.S. citizen children include, a limited access to social welfare services; declining use of public assistance despite their potential eligibility; the steep decline in welfare program participation affecting the life of the citizen children; most noncitizen households in the U.S. include citizen children; participation decline negatively impacts citizen minors lives; and, families applying for legal permanent resident status cannot become a "public charge" to be eligible for documentation status.

Thus, mixed-status families with an undocumented parent are faced with a tough choice, a) leave the U.S. along with the entire family, including U.S. born citizen children; b) have only the undocumented parents leave, creating a single-family in the U.S.; or; c) remain in the U.S. as an intact family, at the risk of getting caught and deported and then not being able to reenter for three or ten years (Menjívar, Ábrego, and Schmalzbauer (2015, 57). The difficult choices faced by mixed-status families point to the inherent tension between the goals of controlling "illegal" and criminalized immigration and the effects of U.S. birthright citizenship.

In the following chapters I also reiterate Menjívar, Ábrego, and Schmalzbauer's (2015) findings on the impacts of living in a mixed-status family upon the lives of

fronteriza/o U.S. citizen children and youth living in Tijuana and as echoed in the conversations with participants. Like Menjívar, Ábrego, and Schmalzbauer's (2015) findings on the lives of U.S. citizen children living in mixed-status Latino households, *fronteriza/os'* limited access to U.S. social and public resources and services is due to their families' mixed-legal status and sometimes. In some instances fronteriza/os had very limited contact to the United States, due to families' legal barring or fear of crossing the border while presenting U.S. citizen children in a mixed-status transborder family unit at U.S. ports of entry. I too found that U.S. citizens of transborder mixed-status families experienced limited access or were sometimes completely cut-off from social welfare services and resources, because they were a part of a mixed-legal status family unit that must also cross a geopolitical dividing border between Mexico and the United States.

Catalina Palmer's (2008) work provides important data on the magnitude of U.S. citizen children living at Mexican border households, and potentially, members of mixed-status family units. In addition, Palmer's work points to the growing trend of engaging in border and/or transborder parentocracy in northern Mexican border municipalities and states, like, Baja California, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Chihuahua. In a demographic report about Mexican children and youth on the northern border, which draws from the 2000 census data of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography in México (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía*, INEGI), Palmer found that the "large mobility of the population [is] evidenced by the proportion of foreign-born in th[e] zone (55)." Palmer reports that while only 0.4% of Mexico's adult-aged population was foreign born, in border municipalities this percentile rises to 1.2%.

But the trend of foreign-born Mexicans grows when looking at younger cohorts. The statistic for children aged 18 and under who are foreign-born stands at 0.7% at a national level, 2.0% at northern border state level, and almost 5% for border municipalities. It is unsurprising that 4.7% out of the 4.8% foreign-born in Mexican northern border municipalities are U.S.-born citizens. Palmer also finds that in small municipalities like Guadalupe and Manuel Benavidez, Chihuahua (both with total populations of less than 10,000 inhabitants) Mexican children born in the U.S. represent 10% of the population 18 and under.

Hence, Palmer concludes, "there exists a group of children and youth who live in Mexico, have a dual nationality, and they likely claim services (such as healthcare) on either side" (56-57). To understand the qualitative characteristics and life-value of this group of children as quantified in Palmer's study, I theorize as *fronteriza/os'* transborder citizenship practices and transborder legal consciousness. Most importantly, my work sheds light on U.S. citizen children's experiences and interactions into adolescence and young adulthood, at various levels U.S. and Mexican institutions. My study also confirms Palmer's findings where the practice of giving birth in the United States and seeking U.S. citizenship privileges for Mexican border residing children is not only a growing trend amongst parents living at the border, but I add also amongst the U.S.-born and Mexican resident *fronteriza/o* respondents in this study.

FRONTERIZA/O LEGALITY

Cynthia Bejarano (2010) finds that while the effects of anti-immigrant U.S. racial stereotyping against immigrant children at the border can threaten *fronteriza/o* school performance, due to their local rootedness to the borderlands, young Latina/o

schoolchildren create *resilience* (my own emphasis) rather than defiance while interacting with CBP and on their way to school across the border and in the U.S. Bejarano argues that *fronteriza/o* stereotyping and racial profiling at the borderlands affects school performance, but youth garner *transformative resistance* and reclaim their agency through their knowledge and "border rootedness" (2010, 37).

My case study reiterates while adding nuance to Bejarano's findings. *Fronteriza/os* in this study shared experiences in which they reclaimed their empowerment and agency vis-à-vis CBP agents and through their local and long-standing sense of belonging, or, "border rootedness," as Bejarano puts it, and knowledge in navigating the borderlands on their way to U.S.' schools. However, this image shifts when I looked closer and while carefully analyzing how the interactions and relationships between transborder mixed-status family members impacts *fronteriza/os'* agency and access to U.S. schooling. I found that agency and empowerment were overshadowed by a sense of heightened social and legal responsibilities, family expectations, shame and fear as U.S. citizens and members of a transborder mixed-status household sometimes unable to navigate the border crossing on their own and thus unable to attend school north of the border.

Similar to the citizenship practices and legal understandings of U.S. citizen children living in Los Angeles mixed-status households explored in Leisy Abrego's recent article (2019), *fronteriza/os* in this study also articulate a "relational legal consciousness of U.S. citizenship" (1). Where, and as theorized by Ábrego,

> narratives of citizenship as guilt, responsibility, and privilege reveal that legal consciousness about citizenship status is centrally and relationally developed through key mechanisms within the family. These include navigating unrealistic aspirations from relatives; maintaining silence about undocumented family members' legal status; managing their fear of family separation through deportation; and taking on financial and logistical responsibilities prematurely to help relatives. While US citizens' interactions with the state (Bloemraad 2018),

> neighbors, police officers, fellow students, teachers, and strangers relationally provide them with information about the meaning of their citizenship in different spaces, the deeply rooted relationships with loved ones most powerfully determine how they make sense of their juridical category (2019, 2)

To complicate Bejarano's finding's and in agreement with Ábrego (2019), for *fronteriza/os* in this study, the difficulties faced while facing insecurity at the border impedes their access and ability to navigate spaces in the U.S. as well as in Mexico, especially most recently with hyper-securitization and relational border policy agreements.

Ultimately, *fronteriza/os'* "relational legal consciousness of U.S. citizenship" in agreement with Ábrego, is also mostly shaped in relationship to the mixed-status families' affective relationships and practices while continuing to build and nurture cross-border networks. I found that constant contact with DHS and to a lesser extent with Mexican Immigration and Customs agencies routinely, undermined the agency and empowerment of *fronteriza/o* respondents not just while and during border crossings, but in their subsequent ability to access or seek out the support to navigate the challenges faced while living at the border both individually and collectively.

BORDER ANCHOR BABY

Currently, the U.S.-Mexico border does not offer "mechanisms of social mobility and instead exacerbates social polarization," as theorized by border theorists Eunice Vargas Valle and Marie Laure Coubès (2017, 78). American racial paradigms and stereotyping also become the normalized frames of reference when profiling *fronteriza/os* undergoing inspections and searches at border crossings on behalf of DHS agents.

Such is the case of the infamously popular “anchor baby” racist slur paradigm and stereotyping at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. For cultural anthropologist, Leo Chavez the “anchor baby” paradigm, whether used as an offensive term, or a noun to describe the child of a non-citizen mother in a country granting citizenship status by birth, fails to capture "the negative stereotypes that would become associated with the anchor baby image: an undeserving citizen, a burden on medical care and social services, a racial threat to the 'browning of America,' a harbinger of environmental disaster and ultimately a foreigner" (2017, 6).

Through discourse analysis, Chavez finds that, so called “anchor babies,” or children of non-U.S. citizens and foreign nationals are,

1) framed as undeserving/deserving citizens;

2) targets of fueling nativist anti-immigrant contestations over birthright citizenship throughout 20th and 21st Centuries; and

3) experience a diminished citizenship due to the social stigma of living in constant fear of structural immigration violence (350).

Chávez warns that because of the anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican Trump Era campaign against the “anchor baby,” U.S. citizenship status is not enough to integrate the children of immigrants into the American nation any longer (2017, 7).

This experience of exclusion despite citizenship also rings true for *fronteriza/os*. Literature suggests that much like transnational immigrants, *fronteriza/os* will likely choose to fully integrate in the U.S. due to the higher quality of education and a more competitive labor market facilitated by their U.S. citizenship status. (Orraca et all 2017, 401). However, few studies have looked at how U.S. anti-immigrant racial paradigms questioning the legitimacy of immigrant children’s citizenship status also impacts *fronteriza/os* as U.S.-citizen youth navigating the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. In this case

study and throughout Chapters 4 and 5, I show through empirical evidence, how the anti-immigrant racial paradigm also implicates *fronteriza/os*' legal consciousness at the border, fostering feelings of exclusion from the American nation and complicating their articulation of a transborder citizenship as a an uncritical off-shoot of the "American Dream," or, as I have come to understand it as the "Tijuana Dream"

Chavez argues that since the 1980s, criticisms against U.S. birthright citizenship and the Fourteenth Amendment have surged and have centered around jingoist notions of "American exceptionalism" and the "developed western democratic" practice of granting citizenship by blood, or *jus sanguinis* (Chavez 2010; 2017). Despite the rise in popular negative beliefs and stereotypes around the U.S.-born children of immigrants and foreign-born nationals as "anchor babies," (Chavez 2017; Chavez 2010; Rivera 2014); most *fronteriza/os* as in this study, as the U.S.-born children of transborder citizens and border cosmopolitans (Rivera 2014; Sarabia 2014, 2016), with the ability and privilege to practice cross-border mobility and "transborder parentocracy."[7] And while the term "anchor baby" may actually carry some positive connotations within Mexican land, as opposed to how it is understood in the United States, it is also accompanied by racially charged and anti-American slurs such as, "yankee (or *yanqui* in Spanish)" "ex-pat," "*pocho*," "*chicano*," or "*gringo.*[8]"

[7] While American nativist discourses against the U.S. citizenship of children of Latina/o and Mexican background is widely spread in the U.S., this study also suggests that anti-Mexican and immigration rhetoric in the U.S. is spilling-over to the Mexican borderlands, and as found in this ethnography (see Chapter 5)

[8] Unlike in the United States and the history of the Chicano Struggle, in mainstream Mexican culture the terms "*chicano*," "*pocho*" and "*gringo*" (when directed towards someone of Mexican or Latina/o ethnic background), continue to carry the negative connotations of treason and betray to the homeland (Mexico) and selling-out to a more developed and imperialistic power (the U.S.).

CONCLUSIONS

This interdisciplinary border theory reviewing on transborder citizenship practices and legal consciousness suggests that the literature stemming and building upon intellectual decolonial Chicana and Chicano Studies, Central American Studies, Latina and Latino Studies, and Latin American methodological, ontological, and political endeavors in the academe and beyond, rooted in the material realities and ties built between Global North and Global South transborder and transnational communities; will continue to lead the vanguard on how to shed light and bring justice to the historical and institutional invisibility of *fronteriza/o* history and society. By ceasing to view the U.S.-Mexico border as a metaphor, as either postmodern utopia or modern dystopia, I instead placed an emphasis on the voices and theorizations of "those of us who study, cross, and live on the geographical border," as urged by Socorro Tabuenca Corboda (1997, 92).

Instead, this literature review has problematized the material realities and tensions between people of Mexican descent living and navigating the Tijuana and San Diego border. In an effort to build upon and towards cross-border community and solidarity discourses, and following border theorist, Pablo Vila's encouragement, I reviewed critical border literature "to allow the community's differences surface, and to vent them publicly in the search for an alliance between different actors" (2003, 334). In the next four chapters I will discuss how these tensions implicate the disarticulation of a uniform transborder citizenship experience and legal consciousness, and in direct relationship to U.S. documented Mexican nationals living in border towns, repatriated Mexican U.S. immigrants, U.S. asylum seekers, and Chicanas and Chicanos.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSBORDER METHODOLOGIES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter Abstract: This chapter describes the interdisciplinary research design and methodologies employed in this project and divided into the following three parts. In the first section, I lay out the methodological approach used in this dissertation project, a combination of ethnography and oral history data collection methods. Methodological discussions include the theorizations on my positionality as insider ethnographer. The second section describes the research design that shaped this project, the guiding research questions, research sites and sampling approaches utilized to access respondents, which allowed for the documentation of Tijuana transborder citizens collective memories and articulation of legal consciousness via quotidian routines across conflicted nation-states. The final section provides a summary of the analytic processing utilized to evaluate the main findings, as well as a broad overview of participants' individual and family U.S. and Mexican legal background and trajectories, giving context to practices of legality, mobility, and citizenship at the border between Tijuana and San Diego.

INTRODUCTION

This project employs an interdisciplinary and multi-sited oral history and ethnographic research methodology to document and analyze the transborder citizenship experiences and legal consciousness of eleven (11) cross-border, 1980s' decade U.S.-born (otherwise known as, "millennials") respondents of Mexican background and living in Tijuana. Together, the two data collections unearth the layered normalized and quotidian transborder citizenship practices and construction of legal consciousness while centering *fronteriza/os'* lenses and memories. Doing so re-constructs a social history of the Mexican borderlands through the lens of those who navigate U.S. and Mexican legal, economic, and cultural institutions on a daily basis and through multiple generations. The research design cedes a novel perspective on mobility and citizenship in the Western Hemisphere through the 20th Century.

As a qualitative project, the scholarly goals of this study are not to produce statistically optimal findings on transborder citizens and border populations. Rather, this project places the subjective value on the recorded collective histories and lived

realities of *fronteriza/os*, and by placing them in direct dialogue with existing theories on transborder citizenship and legal consciousness.

METHODOLOGY

The interdisciplinary methodological approach employed in this research design, oral history and ethnography, aims to void the gaps between family histories, collective memory, individual narratives, the historical and present-day socio-legal contexts that shape subjective transborder citizens' experiences and the construction of a legal consciousness. This multi-sited and cross-border ethnographic and oral history study was collected and analyzed from January of 2013 and May of 2017, at the geographic cross-border space shared in-between the city of Tijuana and Los Angeles County[9].

The oral history collection encompasses 11 narratives tracing a century of Tijuana social history, while capturing a history of transformations of legal consciousness (Kennedy 1980, 5) at the Mexican border, and from the perspective of *fronteriza/os.* Comprehensively, the oral histories re-construct a collective memory of transborder citizenship practices in Tijuana, entangled in a cross-roads between the

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[9] In an earlier publication entitled, "Tijuana's Developing Urbanism: Bajalta California" (Rivera 2016, 21-28), I explore the socio-cultural and spatial ties between Los Angeles, Tijuana, and Mexico City's built environment. Michael Dear and Gustavo Leclerc (2003) propose that "in-between (or liminal) spaces, elements of different worlds simultaneously coexist and mutate" (xi-xiii). This third space, is what Dear and Leclerc term as the postborder Bajalta California, a geopolitically separated space, that is nonetheless culturally, aesthetically, socially, and economically integrated. Dear and Leclerc invite us to imagine otherwise, a geographical post border map of Bajalta California, re-drawn from Los Angeles in the north to Tijuana, Mexicali, and Ensenada in the south (Rivera 2016, 28).

onset of the 1920s post-revolutionary modern Mexican era, and, the Prohibition Era in the United States. The oral histories were collected from January 2013 to December 2015, and recorded utilizing a Sony ICD-PX333 digital voice recorder.

For the second data collection, I engaged in a multi-sited and cross-border insider ethnographic fieldwork approach carried-out between Tijuana and Los Angeles from January 2013 and May of 2017. The insider ethnography fieldwork collection includes 22 qualitative interviews (utilizing a *condensed* phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing), participant observation, and researcher journal entries and memoranda.

Both the oral histories and insider ethnography were conducted in English, Spanish, and Spanglish (mixed Spanish and English, also known as, *pocho* Spanish). Most of the interviews were collected physically, and to a lesser extent, virtually via smartphone and computer devices. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using online software and analyzed in their original languages with the invaluable support of two undergraduate researchers during the Spring of 2017. Comprehensively, I collected thirty-three (33) total interviews with eleven (11) respondents. Out of the 33 scripted, recorded, and fully transcribed interviews, 11 are oral history narratives and 22 are qualitative interviews collected utilizing a *condensed* phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing.

POSITIONALITY

Paulina Aquino López (1963- 1984), was murdered at the age of 21, along with the souls of 20 U.S.-Mexico border residents during the fatal July 18, 1984 McDonald's massacre in San Ysidro, California, one of the ten deadliest mass shootings in U.S. modern history (Helsel and Rosenblatt 2019). Paulina was a part of my transborder

family and before her death, my mother had asked her if she would honor me by becoming my *madrina*, or godmother, and as my expectant parents sought after a good role model to care after me in their absence and guide me as a fellow U.S.-born and Tijuana residing *fronteriza*. Sadly, Paulina and I never crossed paths.

I was born in a private San Diego hospital, exactly nine-months after my would-be *madrina's* tragic murder. I was raised as another member of Paulina's family and in a once vast and mighty, yet now inexistent transborder community, where dozens and at times, hundreds of working cross-border commuters raised families in the U.S.-Mexico border adjacent and downtown Tijuana *Colonia Independencia*. Growing up and building community with hundreds of "transborder citizens" of diverse ages, racial, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, and on a daily basis and from the mid-80s and into the 2000s, proved onerous for a U.S.-born, border girl of Mexican background.

During parts of my childhood and teenage years, I was made aware of my legal privileges as a U.S. citizen, and while traveling with fellow transborder commuters through U.S. ports of entry to attend k-16 education, to visit family and friends, volunteer at local San Diego non-profits, work at the border town of San Ysidro, and become an active union member of the United Food and Commercial Workers local 135, and by the age of 17. Yet, due to the 1993 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the implementation of the 1994 "Operation Gatekeeper," and draconian anti-immigrant U.S. laws and California state-wide policies passed during the mid-1990s; the transborder community I once called "home," slimmed to the point of extinction shortly right after the introduction of the 2002 created DHS.

My identity also became problematized as a Tijuana-residing child with no formal nor legal Mexican recognition. I could not attend Mexican public schools nor access the most basic human services, nor formalize my identity well into my teens

and after March of 1998, when Congress passed a dual nationality provision. Because I was one of the only U.S. citizens in my nuclear family, I had very limited possibilities to access and benefit from U.S. social and welfare services during my childhood and well into my college-years.

Bearing-witness to the slow and painful downfall of a once thriving community of transborder commuters and families due to neoliberal globalization, hyper-militarizing U.S. border security efforts and the Mexican state's inefficiency and failure, is what personally drives me to engage in this complicated and layered, yet, necessary project. My position echoes the simple *copla* (Spanish verse), so graciously articulated by border poet, Gina Valdés, where she faithfully agrees that, "*hay tantísimas fronteras/ que dividen a la gente / pero por cada frontera / existe también un puente.*[10]"

[10] There are so many borders / that divide people, / but for every border / there is also a bridge.

Figure 3.1 View of Tijuana border landscape from the commune where this author was raised in downtown *Colonia Independencia*, featuring the U.S.-Mexico border Wall, the SYPoE, and the Tijuana River Open Space Preserve in the back.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The literature review, in combination with the oral history collection and insider ethnographic fieldwork data collections, attempt to answer this research project's guiding questions:

1) How have U.S. and Mexican relational historical contexts, border and immigration legislation, shaped the past and present transborder citizenship practices and legal consciousness of *fronteriza/os*, Tijuana-rooted, cross-border, U.S.-born, millennials of Mexican background?

2) What is the relationship between transborder citizenship and legal consciousness in the context of the Tijuana border and amongst *fronteriza/os,* Tijuana-rooted, cross-border, U.S.-born, millennials of Mexican background?

DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE

I began this research journey on January of 2013, with a *reconnaissance* visit to the western-most part of the U.S.-Mexico border wall, or, "*el muro,*" at the beachy suburban neighborhood of *Playas de Tijuana*, which overlooks the luxurious San Diego Bay. I continued to engage in reconnaissance fieldwork from January 2013 to December 2015, both in Tijuana and south San Diego County, specifically the city of Chula Vista and the border community of San Ysidro. The *reconnaissance* fieldwork allowed me to re-familiarize myself to Tijuana and San Diego in a different way[11]. That is, to see the transborder community with "fresh (scholarly) eyes." During the *reconnaissance* fieldwork, I located meaningful sites where Tijuana's transborder citizens, cross-border commuters, and *fronteriza/os* live, leisure, and labor.

In addition to reconnaissance ethnographic fieldwork, engaged during January 2013 and December 2015, I also collected 11 interviews, using oral history methods. Then, from January 2016 to May 2017, I traveled at least once a month from Los Angeles County to Tijuana, and conducted multi-sited, transnational, ethnographic

[11] In addition to the oral history and phenomenological interviewing collections, I also conducted ten semi-structured interviews with the parents of Tijuana young adults, and grasped their expectations and motivations when birthing their children in the U.S. and thus forming mixed-status families at the Mexican borderlands. That is, I was able to have semi-structured conversations with the parents on their practices and expectations of "transborder parentocracy." Yet, I do not include the analysis of that dataset in these findings, as it is beyond the scope of the research questions guiding this dissertation.

fieldwork in diverse neighborhoods throughout the Tijuana and San Diego border region. However, most of my fieldwork took place at the Mexican border.

Visits ranged from month-long, week(s)-long, short visits, and even day trips to meaningful sites, events, and gatherings to *fronteriza/os* and transborder communities of Tijuana. The ethnographic fieldwork consisted in participant-observation, qualitative interviewing, and reflective research journaling. I utilized a condensed phenomenological approach to collect two-sets of qualitative interviews with eleven (11) respondents who shared their oral histories in an earlier round of recorded conversations. The first round of qualitative interviews centers the narrative on the daily lived realities of *fronteriza/os'* lived experiences in the contemporary era. The second set of interviews explores in-depth what transborder citizenship and legal consciousness means to *fronteriza/os* in the present. The 22 in-depth qualitative interviews were collected during January 2016 and May 2017, both physically and virtually, and in-between Tijuana and Los Angeles.

ORAL HISTORY

Oral history as a research method is "the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction" (Perks and Thompson, 2006 ix). By capturing the memorialized historical accounts of individuals and their communities, not just elite renderings of past events, oral history proves to be a democratizing approach to historicity. Oral history allows for the unraveling of "hidden stories" (Perks and Thompson, ix) within a social context that would otherwise go unnoticed. It brings to the forefront the experiences of underrepresented members of a society, or underserved stories in mainstream historical accounts.

Oral history, in and of itself, exemplifies an interdisciplinary approach, which combines sociological, anthropological, psychological and linguistic methods. Most significantly, with oral history, the researcher/historian is able to speak directly with the people who are stewards of a historical source captured in their memories and bodies. This is an active and decolonial form of conducting historical inquiry, which transforms traditional scholarly methodological practices and traditions by relying on personal memory and subjectivity as the primary source of knowledge. It is also a proactive effort to suspend the process of "forgetting" (Stern 2010, xxxi) as a conscious decision to re-construct, recuperate, or resuscitate the faded collective memory of *fronteriza/os*. I engaged in a decolonizing *praxis* of traditional scholarly production, by placing the positionality and subjectivity of a respondent as a primary source of historical research.

The oral histories enabled me to document *fronteriza/o* border rootedness, cultural heritage, and family histories in the pursuit of a permanent U.S. legal status, ceding upward mobility in Mexico and the U.S. Throughout the oral narratives, I listened carefully to how accessing U.S. legal status went hand-in-hand with the upward mobility of border residents at the Mexican borderlands. Oral histories also captured how access to a U.S. legal status became desirable and eventually, came to be a normalized transborder family practice. Thus, becoming one of the tenets of the "Tijuana Dream" narrative.

Documenting *fronteriza/os'* "hidden stories" provided a much more nuanced, richer, and palpable understanding of how the political contexts at the borderlands shapes and impacts transborder subjectivity, community practices, and the history of transformation of legal consciousness of transborder citizens. *Fronteriza/os'* oral narratives grant a deeper understanding of how the legal history of U.S. immigration

and border policy has implication upon their legal consciousness from post-Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and leading into the present with President Donald J. Trump's unmatched effort to "build a wall."

The oral history interviews centered *fronteriza/o* respondents' family histories of pre-migration and post-migration to Tijuana. I included questions to elicit answers exploring *fronteriza/o* maternal and paternal family background, such as places of origin, ethnolinguistic and racial identities, life before migrating to Tijuana (between 1889 and 1965), journeys to the Mexican northwest, social networks at the border, and experiences upon arrival, such as housing, employment, and the pursuit of a U.S. legal status.

It was through the oral history narratives that I was able to understand how transborder families are formed and build-upon cross-border social networks sustained throughout multiple generations living at the border. The oral histories also uncovered the long-term held cultural beliefs and social practices of *fronteriza/os* and giving rise to transborder citizenship, transborder family, and transborder mixed-status family experiences.

The oral histories also look into *fronteriza/o* respondents' birth stories and daily lives as a cross-border children and adolescents before the 2002 creation of the DHS. I was especially keen to themes of family dynamics, transnational education or schooling, interactions with CBP agents, relationships with U.S. and Mexican state institutions of power, leisure and hobbies, entertainment and culture, work, and neighborhood life.

I asked *fronteriza/os* about the obstacles that they faced as children and teenagers while crossing the border as U.S.-citizens of Mexican background and living in Mexican households, and often times also a part of transborder mixed-legal status

family units. The findings of the initial oral histories prompted me to further investigate what happened to *fronteriza/os'* lives and consciousness after the introduction of the 2002 DHS, as well as the passage of Mexican dual nationality laws in 1998. As echoed by the respondents and due to the fragmented and often incomplete family histories of migration due to war and violence, in addition to life in a border context, oral history interviews were brief and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, or even less.

INSIDER ETHNOGRAPHY

In addition to the oral history collection, this project also uses data drawn from almost two years of transnational and multi-sited ethnographic field research immersed in the daily life of Tijuana residing, cross-border, U.S.-born, millennials of Mexican background leading a "transborder lifestyle" (Falcón Orta and Orta Falcón 2018, 1). As an interdisciplinary trained, qualitative researcher and transnational social justice scholar-activist, I incorporated an ethnographic approach to also explore the present-day implications of 100 years of normalized transborder practices and capture the meanings tied to *fronteriza/os'* U.S. citizenship status and Mexican dual nationality. The insider ethnography collection allowed me to unravel how, at the turn of the 21th C., transborder citizenship practices are shaped and molded by the context of cross-border mixed-status family experiences shaping legal consciousness of *fronteriza/os* at the Mexican border region.

My earliest ethnographic experiences engaged from 2010 and 2012, includes working with politically active and civically organized, working, rural and urban communities. As well as, civil society in various Latin American countries, including central and southeast Mexico, and foreign countries where I was clearly an outsider to

the community. I also worked with highly politically active racialized rural communities in Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Veracruz, in localized contexts where a significant number of a small demographic had transnational family connections in the United States. As a person with U.S. documents and classed privileges, I would often be asked to bring care packages back to the U.S. and/or deliver goods, letters, videos, products, and gifts back and forth between sending and receiving communities in between Orange County and Los Angeles County, California, and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the Costa Chica region between Guerrero and Oaxaca and Yanga, Veracruz in Mexico.

As a Race and Ethnic studies trained researcher, documenting black mobilizations in Mexico between 2010 and 2012, I connected with local communities and grassroots organizations through my own networks as a then-Tijuana-based social justice scholar and activist back in 2005. Building rapport in Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Veracruz typically included participating in a local rite-of-passage, such as, participating in an important ceremonial event, helping with a meaningful task in the town, providing classes, skill-sharing, or partnering-up with resources to the local community. Trust was progressively solidified throughout a five-year span.

During my doctoral studies, I forged my expertise and formal training in *insider* ethnography research and methodology. By following into the footsteps laid out by foundational scholars in my field, such as, cultural anthropologist Renato Rosaldo, I engaged in this insider ethnographic data collection process as a Chicana/o and Latina/o Studies scholar and ethnographer excavating two main social aspects of my experiences as a *fronteriza*: legality and citizenship.

Radicalized by Chicana feminism, Third World feminism, Latina/o political theory, interdisciplinary border theory, pedagogies of liberation, I underwent a

generative journey of introspection, critically engaging with my *sitio y lengua* (Pérez 1991; Rivera 2014, 2015). As Chicana feminist and queer historiographer, Emma Pérez has poignantly theorized, I too understand "*sitio*," or, site as, social positionality, and *lengua*, or tongue, as intersectionality. Identity politics, politics of identity, positionality, or "personal as political," are also useful concepts and ideas to interpret Perez's distinctive cross-border theory of the *sitio y lengua.*

As Gloria Anzaldúa advocates, theorizing, healing, repairing relationships and harnessing resilience from *las culturas que traicionan* (2007, 37-38), the cultural norms and beliefs that betray, "Chicano, *mexicano*, and some Indian cultures," (2007, 40) gives rise to the politically empowered and agentic, new *mestiza* consciousness, "a constant state of nepantilism, an Aztec word meaning torn between ways" (2007, 100). Just as "*la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of one group to another," (2007, 100) like Anzaldúa theorized, *fronteriza/o* participants in this ethnographic study also expressed a new border consciousness. However, and unlike Anzaldua's new *mestiza* consciousness of radical liberation, while collecting *fronteriza/os* qualitative interviews and engaging in fieldwork, the aspirational and upwardly-mobile "Tijuana Dream" narrative only seemed to come into full life.

Sharing positionalities seemed fruitful for building almost immediate rapport and maintaining a desirable relationship between researcher and the community. Because of the subject matter of U.S. birthright citizenship amongst Tijuana's *fronteriza/os*, most of the potential respondents were extremely cautious and agreed to participate in the study only after reviewing some, if not all, parts of the research abstract, IRB approved interview guideline, and welcomed a thorough explanation on my dissertation proposal via telephone, video conference, or physical meeting. However, it proved challenging to actively recruit respondents willing to commit

participation throughput the entirety of the study and interviews due to conflicting schedules and work-life routines across borders. Reticence and fear to open up about deeply personal, political, and loaded topics like U.S. birthright citizenship and life as part of a transborder family unit also became an obstacle during the recruitment phases.

Potential respondents willingly considered participating in the study due to our shared positionalities, lifetime milestones, and birthright privileges. Yet, "sharing positionalities" turned out not to be a strong enough factor for most of the *fronterizo/as* who I contacted during the initial recruitment phases. I received confirmation of that prejudice when respondents who agreed to participate in this study would either share with me directly, with an affirmative statement, or, indirectly, with nuanced, in-between "insider" comments, revealing that the main reason why they agreed to participate was precisely because of our shared experiences. I interpreted this as an effort to share and build community together, which turned out to be only partially true.

However, amongst those respondents who agreed to participate in this study, some would occasionally refuse, refute, and pushback expressly towards some sections of the interview guideline. Most respondents felt perplexed, ambivalent, and uncomfortable when questions tying place, space, and identity would arise. Questions related to the topic of "community," such as, "what is community?," "how do you envision your community?," "what does your community look like?," or, "what is home?;" elicited perplexing push-back, awkward laughter, or expectations for me, "the local" researcher to "fill-in-the-blanks" on what "our" inherent notion and sense of community is or what a cross-border "home" should look like. Instead of an ethnographic researcher, respondents expected for me to become a teacher. Resisting

this teacher role became a point of tension throughout fieldwork and eventual point of departure in my relationship with a couple of respondents.

Yet, this double-edged sword also flared up gendered and classed dynamics. As a locally rooted, highly educated, cis-gender and femme-presenting queer woman, respondents expected for me to care for them through emotional labor and during the interviewing phases and while doing fieldwork, both presently and digitally. As an admittedly upper middle-class researcher, affiliated to an elite research institution in the U.S., respondents also expressed their classed expectations and projections of upward mobility, status, and prestige. For example, respondents expected that I would carry the latest and fastest international telecommunications technology available to contact them.

I found it odd and somewhat incongruent to navigate these expectations, especially from a highly mobile, digitally adept, cross-border millennial demographic. Some respondents also expected much more of my personal and professional time (i.e. engage in therapeutic and validating relationships, demanding for me to guide them through graduate school admissions process) and resources (i.e. requesting to meet at trendy and expensive restaurants and cafés; expecting to see me drive a new model vehicle; or to be enrolled in DHS' SENTRI/ Global Entry program) than in other contexts and fieldwork sites. Clearly, respondents expected to see me performing paradigms of their own projections in accordance to the "Tijuana Dream" paradigm.

To my disenchantment and demystification, executing ethnographic work in my community and as a "insider" researcher pushed me to question my approach to fieldwork and ponder layered conundrums between positionality and knowledge production. Thus, I borrow from the words of anthropologist Kirin Narayan pushing

back on notions of “authenticity” in the field of anthropology when she asks, “how ‘native’ is a native anthropologist?” (1993, 671).

However, instead of utilizing “native ethnography,” an established and recognized term in the field of anthropology, and employed by Kirin Narayan, I have utilized the term of “insider ethnography” to further prevent potential erasure of Indigenous peoples’ dispossession of the land in the context of two adjacent and relational settler-colonial nation-states. I am in agreement with Richard Meyers’ (2019) refutation of the “native” as an “otherized,” “primal, non-objective, and non-Western” archetype as the antithesis in anthropological thinking, and methodological reclamation that to be a native scholar is to revive ethnography in Indian Country (23).

Narayan assures that while the discussion between situated knowledge and partial objectivity became normalized in the field of anthropology by the 1980s, these realities persisted throughout the mid-1990s. While I am not an anthropologist by disciplinary training, but an interdisciplinary social scientist with ethnographic training, Narayan’s three decade old debate regarding “insider” scholars’ positionality in the field of anthropology could not have been more appropriate and suitable to partly theorize my fieldwork experience (1993, 671).

I agree with Narayan when she argues that there is another normalized notion in anthropology, that “insider” or “local” ethnographers are believed to, and unlike the “regular” Western anthropologist who must painstakingly study the Other, “write about their own cultures from a position of intimate affinity” (1993, 671). I further agree with Narayan’s call to question the notion in anthropology where academics view “insider” anthropologists as providing an impeccable and “authentic” lens due to their pre-existing connection to a site of study. I join Narayan’s evaluation in “that the extent to which anyone is an authentic insider is questionable,” and that such critique

must be integrated more practically in order to problematize the popular preference of the "insider" anthropologist in the field (1993, 671).

Narayan argues that thinking in terms of "insider anthropologist" does not serve neither the academy nor field of anthropology very well (1993, 672). Due to the current context of global economic, political, cultural, and mass media integration, "the accepted nexus of authentic culture/demarcated field/ exotic locale has unraveled" (Narayan 1993, 672). Narayan points out how the field is as increasingly flexible as the site of enunciation of so-called "insider" anthropologists of mixed cultural backgrounds (1993, 673).

Respondents and community members questioned my positionality as a "insider" ethnographer, that is, a Tijuana-San Diego raised, cross-border, community-engaged scholar and activist affiliated to a prestigious research institution in Los Angeles, while conducting this project. As a humanistic social scientist trained in ethnography research, contributing mainly, yet not limited to the interdisciplinary fields of Ethnic Studies, Area Studies, and Law and Society, I must also acknowledge and grapple with the paradox of theoretically fitting the description of "insider" scholar, and while practically being disrupted by the place of my background, the inherently heterogeneous communities living between the Tijuana and San Diego border. For example, my cultural heterogeneity surfaces within academic methodological discourses as an ethnographer that fits all multiple examples of "insider" scholar types described by Narayan: being a part of a Global South elite background yet acquiring advanced education in the Global North; a scholar of "ethnic minority" experience within the Global North; or, the "non-insider" researcher dedicated to long-term fieldwork (1993, 677).

Finding the ability to navigate the field while also performing and becoming cognizant of the multiple experiential lenses reserved for "insider" anthropologists became intellectually, culturally and psychologically loaded. It was heavy to navigate and, at times, perform different and contradicting versions of a "insider" ethnographer's positionalities simultaneously and intermittently. That is, attending conferences in New York City, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, or even San Diego as an elite and temporary member of the Mexican diaspora; to crossing U.S. Ports of Entry as a multi-generational border Chicana; or, conducting ethnography as a Los Angeles-based researcher with strong ties to the Tijuana and San Diego transborder community.

I echo Narayan's observation that studying one's own culture involves doing, and I add, the painfully inverted labor in addition to what scholars are typically trained to uncover when studying a diverse community of their own. That is,

> instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have preexisting experience absorb analytic categories that rename and reframe what is already known (1993, 678).

I advance this observation by problematizing and underscoring the arduous physical, intellectual, psychological and emotional labor involved in conducting long-term "insider" ethnography transnationally, that is, across borders, cultures, languages, and time.

Oftentimes, I found respondents perceiving and openly critiquing me for acting out of the ordinary as a "local," however congruent that may have been for as a insider ethnographer. Consequently, respondents would push back against the interviewing guideline or some aspect of the ethnographic research process when I would probe or follow-up with clarifying questions regarding normalized cultural practices at the

border. In my effort to "rename and reframe" while doing fieldwork, it resulted in both internal and external puzzles, as I switched around "insider" scholarly gazes, while holding multiple positionalities. The "renaming and reframing" act of the "insider" scholars' professional endeavor also created a painful distance between personal community membership, in an already heterogeneous and at times, culturally and fragmented border context.

RESEARCH JOURNAL ENTRIES

Constantly writing in my research journal helped me grapple with the inner challenges, theoretical conundrums, and inter-cultural negotiations of doing "insider" ethnographic fieldwork with U.S.-Mexico cross-border *fronteriza/o* communities in Tijuana and south San Diego County. Research journaling allowed me to critically face and discern the puzzling positionality of both "insider" and "outsider" to the *fronteriza/o* community. Or, as Narayan has theorized, "[t]o highlight the personal and intellectual dilemmas invoked by the assumption that a 'insider' anthropologist can represent an unproblematic and authentic insider's perspective" (1993, 672).

Nonetheless, I continue to agree with Ruth Behar's commitment to engage in "insider" ethnography, despite the challenges and obstacles it might entail. While Behar's commitment to "insider" anthropology stems also from an interdisciplinary Ethnic Studies and Latina/o and Chicana/o Studies scholarly tradition, I recognize that, and by borrowing her words,

> I am here because I am a woman of the border: between places, between identities, between languages, between cultures, between longings and illusions, one foot in the Academy and one foot out. But I am also here because I have an intellectual debt to the Chicano critique of anthropology and creative writing of Chicana authors (1996, 162).

Research journal entries, an epistolary Chicana feminist methodology of theoretical liberation, allowed me to profoundly understand, analyze, theorize, and connect ideas while doing "insider" ethnography, which felt isolating at times, and, particularly, while on the field.

Research journals also supported my practice towards consciousness-raising and healing from the trauma I experienced as a result of growing up and living in between U.S. and Mexican militarized border zones. I identified, studied, and theorized about violence, pain, trauma, as well as faith, compassion, and resilience by resonating with and finding my voice within the echoes of Latina and Latino scholars, from Chicana feminists writers' practice of self-representation, also forged by Chicano anthropologists, Renato Rosaldo (Behar 1996, 162). Albeit, it was the practice of Chicana and Latina feminist creative writers and theorists that placed women and the border at the center of inter-disciplinary discussions that served as my main methodological guide on how to write about contemporary violence, trauma, and resilience at the U.S.-México border (Behar 1996, 162). My research journal entries are overwhelmed by the emerging paradoxes of conducting "insider" ethnography in Tijuana and San Diego.

PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING

During my two years utilizing oral history and engaging in *reconnaissance* fieldwork to collect the preliminary data of this study, I conducted a thorough review of the literature blending oral history and ethnography. In my reviewing, I studied about the phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing as proposed by Irving Seidman (2011) in *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, and to also look at the present-day experiences of *fronteriza/os* in the Tijuana and San Diego border region.

The in-depth phenomenological approach to interviewing is a fusion between focused interviews and life history, with assumptions drawn from phenomenology. The phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing consists of a three-step method investigating the subjective experiences of research respondents through the following discrete and aggregated interview narratives. The first, excavates the respondents' life history. The second interview documents the respondents' present day and lived experiences. And, lastly, and upon previous and thorough analysis of the respondents' life and present day storytelling, in the third interview I recorded meaningful conversations on the key themes in respondents' transborder lived experiences, both past and present.

The approach laid-out by Seidman generated very rich content, total interview length (approximately 360-400 minutes) and timeframe (1-week in-between each conversation), resulted impractical, psychologically, emotionally, and physically tolling on both the respondent and myself due to the busy and hectic cross-border commutes, changing contexts, border closures across borders, and the topics of discussion. Thus I was only able to collect one interview utilizing a full-phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing and as proposed by Seidman with the respondents I refer to as, "Mariana."

In addition, I had already collected the narratives documenting respondents' family histories and life histories via oral history methods. Instead, I designed a *condensed* phenomenological interview outline for my qualitative interviewing and second data collection. The condensed interview approach resulted feasible and practical for a cross-border, multi-sited, and transnational setting. Most importantly, the condensed phenomenological approach to interviewing generated space for

sharing on U.S. citizenship and Mexican dual nationality, as it impacts *fronteriza/o* respondents legal consciousness.

Not only did the condensed approach help mitigate the practical challenges faced with the more traditional phenomenological approach, but also, respondents were able to share their experiences at a comfortable pace and without having to sacrifice the rich content of what it means to be a transborder citizen and how they currently understand U.S and Mexican law in their daily lives.

I also collected data using telecommunication software, such as WhatsApp, Skype, and social media platforms such as, Facebook Messenger. To capture the data, I used multiple computer hardware, such as, iPhone 4, iPhone 6, iPhone X, iPad mini, iPad, MacBook Air, iMac, and a Sony ICD-PX333 digital voice recorder. In between 2016 and 2017 I was able to collect 22 qualitative interviews that took an average of 80-120 total minutes, and instead of the average 300 minutes of the traditional expanded phenomenological approach to qualitative interviewing.

The qualitative interviews also explored the interactions and relationships that transborder young adults forge with fellow cross-border dwellers and borderlanders in Mexico and the U.S. I not only asked respondents about their south-to-north travels, but also and most importantly, on their experiences crossing north-to-south, and back home to Mexico. I became especially interested in how *fronteriza/os* interacted with fellow border commuters and Mexican nationals, and state agents such as, Mexican Customs, National Migration Institute officers stationed at the border checkpoints on their way back home to Tijuana, with as much importance as I observed and took note of interactions with DHS agents and U.S. border crossers.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

From January 2016 to May 2017, I also conducted extensive participant observations in one of the key sites to this study at the U.S.-Mexico border-adjacent and Tijuana's foundational neighborhood, *Delegación Centro* (Downtown District), or simply referred to as, *el centro*. Tijuana's downtown district includes the city's earliest urban layout. The relationship between the U.S.-Mexico geopolitical divide and downtown Tijuana is intrinsic. The geopolitical divide serves as both boundary marker as well as landmark to Mexican border urban planning.

El centro is a also a crucial site because it includes the earliest established neighborhoods currently undergoing through multiple development and improvement projects, and gentrifying efforts surrounding the tourist-catering *Avenida Revolución*[14]. Downtown Tijuana is also relevant to this study as it is the neighborhood that hosts the SYPoE, the Mexican port of entry of *El Chaparral*, historic *Colonias* (not exactly but similar to a *barrio* or a historic mixed-income neighborhood), and *Zona Norte* (Duty-Free Zone).

I was also able to accompany/ shadow a couple of respondents on their daily routines across borders. This enabled me to understand how some of the respondents lived, leisured, labored, and, loved at the border region between Tijuana and San Diego. I accompanied some respondents on their work commutes to San Diego County. Whenever possible, I also shadowed respondents during work shifts in Tijuana, especially in the case of entrepreneurs and self-employed professionals. I also accompanied respondents during a variety of domestic errands, such as grocery shopping, car washing, paying bills, picking-up children from schools or visiting family

[14] Revolution Avenue, originally named Olvera Street, or, Calle Olvera, honoring Agustín Olvera, former *Californio* land-owner of Tia Juana Ranch.

members in Mexico and the United States. I also participated in leisure activities, birthday celebrations, graduation parties, shared many meals together, etc.

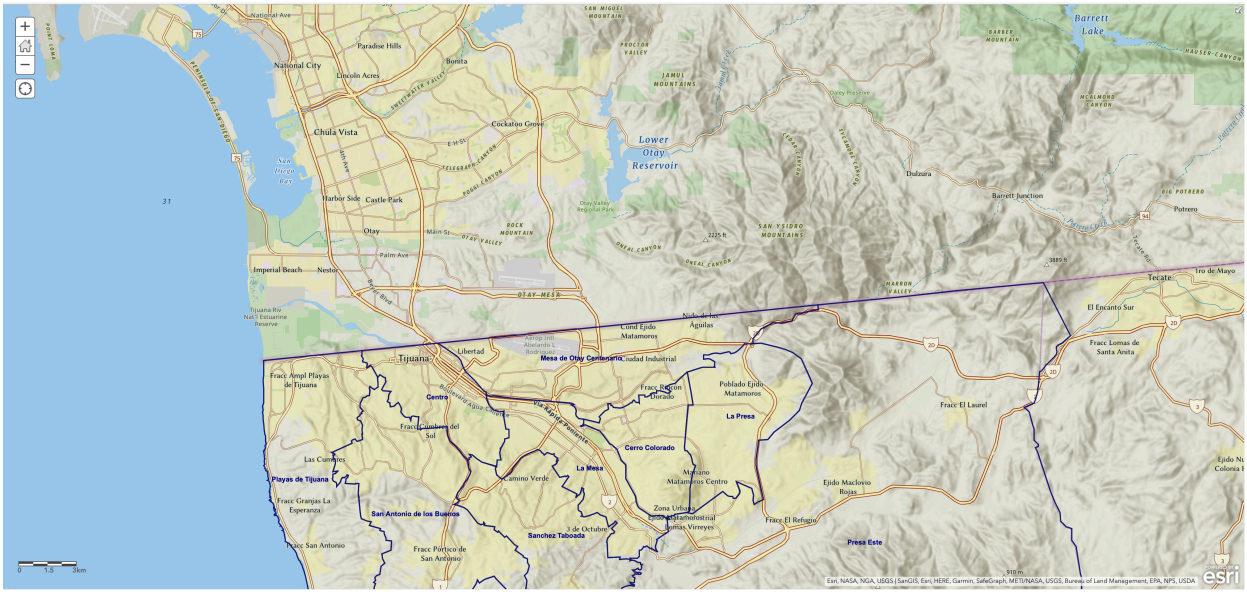

Figure 3.2. Map of the *Delegaciones del Ayuntamiento de Tijuana* (Tijuana County's delegations), and San Diego County's border cities.

RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND

All three interview guidelines were prepared and conducted in formal Spanish language. The data was collected in its original languages and as practiced at the Tijuana and San Diego border communities, that is, English, Spanish, and Spanglish. The datasets collected and analyzed were also translated from English to Spanish, and Spanish to English, by the author. With the exception of two respondents who did not feel comfortable enough speaking English, all 9 out of the 11 respondents shared their stories equally in Spanish and English. The two respondents who did not feel as comfortable about their English proficiency, interacted mostly in Spanish while code-switching to Spanglish and using English-words or catch-phrases, such as, "*él* American Dream."

Respondents' ages ranged between 20 and 30 years of age, all born in Southern California and raised in Tijuana transborder family units of Mexican background. All respondents crossed the border to the United States for tourism, work, education, commercial, financial or business transactions, and healthcare at least once a week.

As transborder commuter workers, respondents had different occupations at different sides of the border, ranging from retail store service workers, graduate students, CBO staff members, freelance artists, and even merchants. On the Mexican side, transborder respondents' occupations were of higher status and ranged from college and university instructor, successful business entrepreneurs, and white-collar professionals. Thus, all respondents crossed into the U.S. at least once a week, if not daily for a plethora of reasons falling into at least one of the following five categories: labor, learn, live, love, and, leisure.

RESEARCH SITES

Cross-border and multi-sited insider ethnography work was concentrated in three main sites: (1) fieldwork in respondents' places of residence, leisure and workspace around historic downtown Tijuana and principally around downtown Tijuana (see Fig. 3.1 above for exact location); (2) shadowing or accompanying some research participants during their commutes across U.S. and Mexican geopolitical border crossings at land ports of entry; and, (3) the digital space, mainly via telecommunications and photo and video sharing social networking services platforms, like, Skype, Facebook, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp.

Figure 3.3 Street view of tourist shopping strip, *Avenida Revolución*, formelly called, Calle Olvera, or, Olvera Street, and one of the main sites in downtown Tijuana.

The SYPoE, is a second, yet no less important, key site where I focused my cross-border insider ethnographic fieldwork. I was able to observe how the busiest land port of entry in the Americas was modernized and expanded into a "Port of the Future" (U.S. General Services Administration 2020). During the lapse of collecting this

ethnographic data and while drafting the findings of this dissertation project, the SYPoE underwent a $741 million dollar worth full renovations from April 2011 and through Winter 2019.

Figure 3.4. Pedestrian Border Crossers under an temporary gazebo installed by local Tijuana non-profit, “Tijuana Te Quiero,” or, “TJTQ” at the *old* and now known as the “East” SYPoE pedestrian crossing, while undergoing renovations and creating a Western pedestrian crossing.

Figure 3.5 DHS cage around pedestrian border crossers at the SYPoE, while undergoing renovations and security enhancements.

The renovations at the SYPoE led to a brand *new* land port of access called, "San Ysidro Pedestrian-West Facility," known on the Mexican side as, *Puerto Fronterizo "El Chaparral."* This renovation project meant that the old, pre-2011 SYPoE was bifurcated by 2019 into a two-headed cross-border mobility pipeline and global highway divided into the now *old* "East" SYPoE and the San Ysidro Pedestrian "West" Facility.

The recently renovated and re-opened SYPoE features state-of-the-art sustainable design and technology renovations to masque and hyper militarizing border surveillance, normalizing and even making it desirable through "Beauty at the

Border" aesthetics (Fernandez, 2019). For example, the white sculptured acronyms in giant Arial-font spelling, "TJTQ" featured in the images below (and above featured on a hanging poster), are the acronyms for the Tijuana-based grassroots, non-profit organization aimed at "dignifying" the border crossing experience only for documented travelers, and as stated on their media pages. "TJTQ" attempted to spread its message of unity at the border, or, "#borderunity," and by transplanting endemic cacti in a circle landing for the Mexican concrete spiral stair case right at the feet of the SYPoE. The "TJTQ" grassroots community intervention is an example of such border beautifying projects aiming to make the border crossing experience pleasurable and immigration and customs surveillance desirable, engaging, interactive, and normalized. All perfectly in line with the "Tijuana Dream" paradigm.

Figure 3.6 "TJTQ" Featured at the *Puerto Fronterizo "El Chaparral"* and SYPoE-PedWest.

It was difficult to logistically keep track of border renovations and closures, edification of barricades and new walls, re-fencing parts of the city with concertina wiring, and arbitrary tear-gassing around the U.S.-Mexico border. U.S. border renovations practically and physically shape all aspects of urban planning in the city of Tijuana, mainly by bottlenecking downtown area and border-adjacent neighborhoods, *Colonia*s, and roads. One of the unexpected tasks in this ethnography was manically racing through the confusing and spontaneous emerging border urban infrastructure to find roads, avenues, boulevards, alleys, bridges in and around Tijuana downtown's streets to access the SYPoE, both as a pedestrian or in a motored vehicle. The changes, renovations, and homeland security enhancements at the SYPoE are documented through the narratives, sound-recordings, fieldnotes, photography, video, images, and material artifacts collected both in the oral history collection and insider ethnography fieldwork.

I also and very occasionally crossed the industrial and east-Tijuana, Otay Mesa Port of Entry (OMPoE) with respondents in the merchandising business. Just as the SYPoE, the OMPoE is also currently undergoing a $137 million and fully-funded expansion taking place from May 2019 through Spring of 2023. These multi-million, militarizing projects neighboring Mexico bended and shook the ethnographic experience, turning into a dangerous task at times, especially while accompanying some of the respondents across their way to *el Norte*.

Sites at San Diego County are concentrated to U.S. borderland cities and neighborhoods, such as San Ysidro, Chula Vista, National City, and downtown San Diego, where respondents also work, reside, and consume daily-use products. Below is an aerial view map depicting the Tijuana and San Diego border urban density and lays-

out the space where daily routine land pedestrian and motored vehicle border crossings and inspections occur.

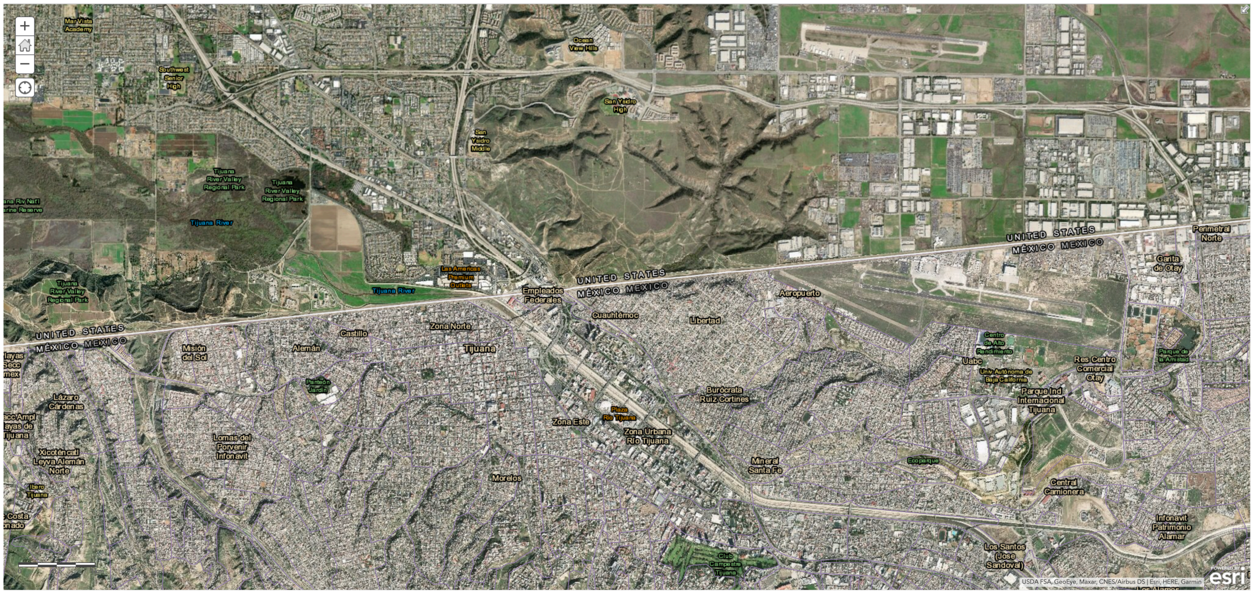

Figure 3.7 Aerial View Map of the current urban density in the Tijuana and San Diego border, including the names of Mexican *Colonias* and U.S. border neighborhoods (USEG 2020).

ACCESS

During the first round of interviews, all eleven respondents resided in Tijuana and led cross-border lives between Mexico and the United States. By the second round of interviews 2 out of the 11 respondents (Mariana and Erick) had moved north and became permanent California residents. Three more respondents, all working mothers with young children, were actively seeking opportunities to move north during the time of the interviews and ethnography.

Due to DHS' restrictions, I was able to shadow or accompany three respondents through their border crossing experiences. After 2007 and with the passage of the Western Hemisphere Travel Advisory (a joint travel security initiative between

Department of State and DHS), all travelers are required to enter the United States with a valid U.S. Passport, Passport Card, or, Trusted Traveler Program Card.

At the SYPoE and OMPoE, documented and privileged border crossers are scrutinized and lined-up based on the security level of their border crossing documents and mobility devices, such as motored vehicles. In that context, I was only able to cross-along with three of the research respondents and who shared similar security enhanced border crossing documents, such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), granting access to the speedier, "Ready Lane," and non-Ready Lane document holders, or, "regular," non-security enhanced documented border crossers.

Because the majority of respondents participate in the Customs and Border Protection "Trusted Traveler Programs"- SENTRI (Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection),[15] I was unable to physically accompany most of the respondents them during their border-crossings. There is also a classed component to the SENTRI pass, as it is also very costly. An average of $400 USD per applicant and without guarantee of obtaining the permit. Not only is it financially burdensome, but applicants cannot have a history of receiving any type of federal aid (from FAFSA filing, to MediCal, Medicare, or federal student loans) to qualify for the SENTRI fast-pass. Applicants must also demonstrate economic stability and upward mobility (through property titles, private vehicle ownership, bank statements, stable

[15] The SENTRI program is granted according to the applicant's relational family status and security clearance (regardless of whether or not all member of the family apply into the program). For this reason, applicants typically apply as a family unit. This program "allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival to the United States. Participants may enter the United States by using dedicated primary lanes into the United States at Southern land border ports. Travelers must be pre-approved for the SENTRI program. All applicants undergo a rigorous background check and in-person interview before enrollment" (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2018)

employment and preferably, transnational white-collar jobs). As a California public institution graduate student on federal aid, I would have been immediately barred from securing this fast-pass border crossing document. And thus, I could not shadow most respondents through their physical border-crossings at the Ports of Entry.

Figure 3.8 Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), or “Ready Lane” Motored Vehicle Inspection booth at the SYPoE.

SAMPLING

Through my years researching and working, as well as having a very tight personal connection to U.S. and Mexico border communities, I established social networks with diverse members of the Tijuana San Diego transborder culture and social justice communities. It was also through my shared and lived experience that I understood how impactful U.S. and Mexican legal categories can be for transborder citizen and families. I also understood that the intersection between U.S. legal documentation, socioeconomic class aspirations, and Mexican border rootedness is intricately connected and historically rooted to the founding on the city of Tijuana. In my experience as both "insider" and "outsider" ethnographer, I noticed that new forms of belonging and citizenship practices erupted from respondents' storytelling while negotiating between U.S. legal status and Tijuana-rootedness, in their search for cross-border upward mobility. This search took shape in the articulation of a "Tijuana Dream" narrative.

In Tijuana, conversations about how to get U.S. legal papers are common and have become highly capitalizable topics. However, the lack of or inability to secure U.S. legal status is a taboo subject (almost worthy of shame) and that information is mostly accessible through confidential intimate relationships, (i.e., close friendships, blood-relationships, or intermarriage). Thus, in the earliest recruitment phase, respondents were selected through convenience sampling. For example, in 2013, I invited a former co-worker, who I will refer to as, "Mariana" to be a part of this study. I met Mariana in 2005 while we were both cross-border college students in San Diego and co-workers in Chula Vista, living both in Mexico and the United States. Through our work relationship, friendship, and shared family and cultural experiences, Mariana and I

began having conversations about our inter-twined legal and family histories at the border, but only after working together for almost 12-months.

Upon completing an initial pilot recruitment phase using convenience sampling, I then engaged in purposeful and snowball sampling. I asked each respondent to suggest three to four potential respondents fitting the sample for this study. I would then be introduced to snowballed contacts by participant respondents via email, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Facebook Messenger. Despite institutional affiliation and IRB-approved protocol, many potential respondents felt skeptical about the potential uses and dangers of sharing private and intimate information regarding their families histories of migration to Tijuana and legal status backgrounds. After contacting 60 potential respondents, on average, only 1 out of 5, that is, less than 25% percent of the potential pool agreed to participate in this study.

This research collection may be missing a more thorough narrative of Tijuana-rooted, cross-border, U.S.-born, millennials of Mexican background of highest and lowest socioeconomic status (SES). It was difficult to find and meet with *fronteriza/os* of much more affluent background and higher socioeconomic status due to their recent displacement out of Tijuana and as a spill-over effect of War-on-Drugs violence in Mexico[16]. When I was able to contact a potential respondent of highest SES backgrounds, they showed quick disinterest upon reviewing the interview guidelines because it may have entailed challenging their normalized notions of the "American

[16] Simultaneously to the historic decline of immigration from Mexico into the U.S., and growth in return migration, scholars urge U.S. and Mexican states and communities to pay special attention to the increased participation of Mexican immigrants fleeing violence and insecurity in Mexico (Meza Gonzalez and Feil 2016). Recent data from the American Community Survey indicates that Mexican nationals arriving to southern border states in the U.S. are younger, more affluent and educated, and more likely to be U.S. citizens than in previous years.

Dream" or the myth of meritocracy, and perhaps even internalized racism. It was also tougher to physically meet with much more affluent potential respondents due to their busy international traveling itineraries, not just at the border region, but the broader globe. However, through the social networks and relationships that I have forged throughout the last decades with Tijuana's well-off communities, I am aware that some *fronteriza/o* narratives may be missing as they have physically and temporarily relocated to other parts of the world seeking safety against violent attacks from transnational organized crime violence.

On the other hand, this research collection may also be missing the histories of *fronteriza/os* from impoverished backgrounds, and mainly, because I conducted not all, but most of my recruitment online, and thus, potentially excluding those who may not be able to afford as much free time for web-browsing and social media engagement. Additionally, some potential respondents of working and poorer backgrounds who showed interest in participating, also felt conflicted and desisted from participating after reviewing the interviewing guidelines, agreement forms, and some even shared to have felt frightened and intimidated by the project.

Table 3.1- Description of *Fronteriza/o* Study Participants

Pseudonym	Genera-tions in Tijuana	Birth place, year	Work (Mexico)	Work (U.S.)	Schooling (Lifetime)
Erik	4	Los Angeles, 1982	Freelance graphic designer	Retail worker	Trans-national
Antonio	3	Los Angeles, 1984	Freelance filmmaker	Uber driver	Trans-national

Daphne	3	Chula Vista, 1985	Physician	N/A	Mexico
Julia	4	Coronado 1985	College lecturer	Youth CBO staff	Mexico
Vanessa	3	Chula Vista, 1986	Entre-preneur and Fashion designer	Merchant	Trans-national
Pablo	5	Chula Vista, 1986	Real estate developer	Designer	Mexico
Mariana	3	Chula Vista, 1987	N/A	Repro-ductive health CBO staff	Trans-national
Soraya	3	Coronado 1987	Home-maker	Retail worker	Mexico
Rafael	3	San Diego, 1988	Architect	Graduate Student	Trans-national
Helena	3	Chula Vista, 1989	College lecturer	Garment ware-house keeper	Mexico
Marco	4	San Diego, 1989	College student/ Produce vendor	Merchant	Trans-national

DATA ANALYSIS

The research data materials were analyzed in multiple cycles. The first round of analysis was conducted while collecting oral histories and ethnographic fieldwork, and mainly by journaling and drafting ethnographer's notes and memos. The second round

of analysis included the verbatim transcriptions of the thirty-three audio recoded interviews and utilizing the online software, Transcrive.wreally.com and Notability online applications, and, typing "Research Memos" on the online software, Evernote and NVivo (version 11). The third and final round of analysis included coding the data using qualitative research software NVivo (versions 11 and 12).

All respondents (except for Daphne) also claimed California as a place of residence, to receive income, file taxes, register vehicle ownership, attend college or graduate school, engage in banking and credit transactions, mailing and online shopping, own a U.S. registered vehicle, own a California driver's license, state identification card, and access state resident discounts and privileges while in the U.S. etc. Most *fronteriza/o* respondents in this study have dual residence in Baja California and California and lead binational lives in the United States and Mexico, with diverse Mexican documents, while all U.S. born citizens.

Respondents' family histories and backgrounds are fairly uniform and mostly settled to Tijuana during the first-half of the 20th Century and migrating predominantly from the state of Jalisco and traditional U.S.-Mexican migration sending states,[17] and repatriation. Complicating the foundational 1978 *Encuesta Nacional de Emigración a la Frontera Norte y a los Estados* Unidos (ENEFNEU), Tijuana *fronteriza/o* respondents are indeed a part of *retornado* (U.S. return migration) family units that became transborder families upon arrival to Tijuana.

[17] According to Alarcon Acosta et al. (2012) traditional sending states are located in the western-central region of Mexico, and composed by, Jalisco, Michoacán, Colima, Guanajuato, Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Querétaro, Nayarit, Aguascalientes; and parts of Ensenada B.C, Guerrero, and the state of Mexico (Alarcon Acosta et al. 2012, 78)

As members of family units that settled in Tijuana about a century ago, and as the children of Mexican-residing transborder commuters at their moment of birth, their ties to the Mexican border are strong, deep, intergenerational, and oscillate between three and five generations rooted to the Baja California and California region. Respondents' ancestors were also Tijuana earliest settler colonists who had access to inexpensive or "free," Kumeyaay occupied and stolen land in what is now the Tijuana and San Diego border region. Respondents' family ancestors were also the earliest U.S. non-immigrant visa applicants, or Border Crossing Card holders, registered since the early 20th C. at the Spanish fantasy revival-styled, Old Customs House in the San Ysidro neighborhood of the City of San Diego. Respondents' legal consciousness are framed by an intergenerational, U.S.-document and social status seeking Mexican border family expectations and cultural practices, preceding and laying the ground for the dreaming of an "American Dream" in Mexican land.

All respondents reported that at the moment of their birth, between 1982 and 1989, they were brought into transborder nuclear families composed of cross-border commuters from across socioeconomic sectors, mixed-legal status, and residents of Mexico. Most of the respondents' mothers legally entered the U.S. as non-citizens and with Border Crossing Cards and non-immigrant visa holders, at the moment of birth. Only one of the respondents' mother entered as a U.S. citizen and another as a legal permanent resident. However, respondents' fathers entered the United States with much of an array of much more permanent statuses, such as, legal permanent residents and U.S. citizens.

Respondents were delivered in private southern California hospitals and reported that their families covered their mother's childbirth and hospital expenses without medical insurance, and paying instead out-of-pocket and through a sliding fee

scale system. Respondents' parents opted to give birth in the United States with the support and guidance of U.S.-residing extended family members or friends. This practice was repeated and re-created by four respondents and mothers of the next generation of *fronteriza/os*. All *fronteriza/os* were raised in traditional, nuclear and/or extended families, however, in a transborder context and in a mixed-legal status unit of Mexican cross-border commuters leading a highly engaged transnational life between California and Baja California. Most respondents had some form of legal recognition in Mexico, either through dual nationality or dual registration (birth registered both in the United States and Mexico). Only two of the research participants had no Mexican identity documents.

While respondents' family history and pre-natal background resemble each other, individual life trajectories vary greatly due to socioeconomic class, race and ethnicity, language, gender, sexuality, religion, but most importantly, and in relationship to family members' legal status, especially when they do not share a U.S. citizenship. For some respondents, the border meant asymmetry, dehumanization, unequal categorization, and a site of family separation. Most respondents had witnessed how DHS revoked at least one parent's non-immigrant or immigrant visa legal status in dehumanizing ways. In all of the reported cases, transborder families were punished for legally giving birth to a child in the U.S. and as Mexican nationals and during the 1990s.

For other respondents, the border was a site of opportunity, allowing access to developed world resources and commodities, such as better education, higher wages, improved quality of living, access to nature and green spaces, etc. The unifying experience amongst all respondents is that at the moment of the interviews and ethnography, the border meant uncertainty, both as opportunity and asymmetry

operating in tandem. This uncertain relationship with the U.S.-Mexico border is reflected in the complicating "Tijuana Dream" illusion and metaphor to the "American Dream" in Mexico.

As young adults, respondents are setting the foundations for the rest of their adult lives. They do so by navigating conflicting identities, languages, cultural and social norms, classed expectations, racialization, schooling experiences, mixed-legal status, and occupations. Only two respondents have benefited from a formal Mexican dual nationality in their adult age and previous to the interviewing process. Two other respondents acquired their dual nationality during the ethnography process. Some have formed families of their own and have U.S.-born children living in Tijuana, and in doing so, they are also raising the next generation of *fronteriza/os*. All respondents' narratives, but mainly those who were married or are single parents, emphasized about the hardships and obstacles faced when navigating border policing as a transborder family with different international identification traveling documents.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter described the research design and methodologies employed in this first oral history collection and insider ethnographic study documenting a social history and lived experiences of *fronteriza/os*. The methodological discussions included a thorough discussion of my positionality as ethnographer, that is, both as an insider and outsider to this community of *fronteriza/os* and Tijuana transborder citizens. In the second section of this chapter I described the research design shaping this project, the guiding research questions, research sites and sampling approaches utilized to access respondents, document the histories and lived realities of a Tijuana transborder citizenship and genealogical formation of legal consciousness. In the final

section, I provided a summary of the analytic processing utilized to theorize the Tijuana Dream paradigm as a main findings, and overview participants' individual and family U.S. and Mexican legal background and trajectories, giving context to ongoing practices of legality, mobility, and citizenship in Tijuana.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSBORDER CITIZENSHIP AND THE SEARCH FOR THE "TIJUANA DREAM"

Chapter abstract: This chapter historicizes the rise of transborder citizenship and transborder families since the early decades of the 20th C. and by drawing from the oral history narratives of eleven *fronteriza/os,* Tijuana-rooted, cross-border, U.S.-born, millennials of Mexican background. I examine how the implications of U.S and Mexican immigration policy, border policing and global economic restructuring shape family configuration and culture, memories, longings, and narratives of transborder citizenship. *Fronteriza/os'* collective memories and tales of transborder citizenship practices further informs and sustains the discourse that the "American Dream" can be experienced south of the border, and none other than in the controversial border city of Tijuana. The "Tijuana Dream" narrative is historicized by employing border cultural historians, Josh Kun and Fiamma Montezemolo's timeline (2012) and approach to the city's history directly in line with the rise of global capitalism and consumer flows. The chapter thus is divided into two historical periods, 1) the age of tourism, from 1889 and 1965; and, 2) the age of globalization, from 1965 and into the present (5).

INTRODUCTION

> Just as the western United States was perceived to be a land of opportunity, Mexico's far northern frontier has been shown in this history of Tijuana to be a land of opportunity and greater freedom because of its distance from the center, and perhaps also because of its proximity to the United States (Proffitt 1994, 2019, 320)

> Both sides of the family moved 'north' due to the [Mexican] Revolution. My paternal line came from California and used to live right here in Long Beach. They were original Californios!... From my Mother's side, they also went "over there" during the armed conflict. But they returned to Sonora before settling in Tijuana in the 1930s[18]. (Julia, fourth generation U.S.-born *fronteriza*, 31)

When Julia's early *fronteriza/o* family members and *Californio* ancestors went in direction of "*al Norte*," or northward, they migrated both north and south of the U.S.-Mexico boundary. In Julia's memories and as passed down in family stories, "North" is a space somewhere south of Los Angeles and north of the state of Sonora, Mexico. To a fourth-generation U.S.-born *fronteriza*, Julia's imaginary, "*el aquí,"* or "here" is a place where Long Beach, California and Tijuana, Baja California coexist, and as it once did,

[18] Translated from Spanish by the author.

before the signing of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; a memory passed-down through her *Californios* forebearers.

Starting in the 1910s, Western Mexican families ventured to an imagined Promised Land, *El Norte*, to be forged in the Mexican Northwest. Initially, individuals came from Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Jalisco, Sonora, Sinaloa, and Guanajuato. Later their families migrated too and joined them in early 20th C Tijuana. They were searching for better opportunities, but most importantly, agency, as a land in-between and away from Mexican state structures, and closer to the U.S. economy. Tijuana becomes the in-between space that began with ground-up urban development, a post-modern city made with Mexican and U.S. recycled materials and re-imagined façades.

THE AGE OF TOURISM (1889 - 1965)

Josh Kun and Fiamma Montezemolo argue that it is during this era of early family cattle-ranching and extending through the American Prohibition-era development, that Tijuana emerges as a tourist site, and later, a *bona fide*, "sin city" and "vice magnet" for U.S. "pleasure seekers" all financed by California entertainment moguls, media tycoons, and resort barons. And while Tijuana's American tourist heyday began to decline by the late 1960s, "the age of tourism" remains imprinted in the imaginary as,

> the city remains forever locked in the sombreros and curio shops of tourists postcards, in a black-and-white 190s-tinted image of itself as a Las Vegas-Old Mexico hybrid of tequila hang-overs, casino smoke, and cheap dirty sex where the mythic Donkey Show still has some gravitational pull (Kun and Montezemolo 2012, 5)

"The age of tourism" also serves as a time period attracting migrant workers to the Mexican Northwest searching for freedom, land, and economic mobility. This is also the historical moment that gives birth to the "Tijuana Dream" narrative, which

celebrates the notion of establishing Tijuana as a city of destination in lieu if the U.S.; settling as far away from the central Mexican plateau and as closest as possible to the United States; articulating a parallel and/or competing narrative to the traditional U.S.-Mexico immigrant saga; securing cross-border employment; participating in international commercial trade; earning a U.S. dollar income; the desired and expected access to U.S. immigration documents (such as Visitor's Visa, Permanent Residence, or Naturalization); engaging in intentional and state-funded efforts to colonize the northwestern Mexican frontier epitomized in the founding of historic residential *Colonias*; anchoring to the Mexican border via family members' Tijuana birthright identity and background; and most importantly, catering to U.S. consumer and production markets both in Mexico and the U.S.

This border dreamy and aspirational narrative articulated by *fronteriza/os*' oral histories, is solidified as early as early 20th Century. The "Tijuana Dream" begins with the foundation of the first of the city's dwellings, estimated to be around 1889. There is some controversy over the foundation of the Mexican city of Tijuana. When secularization laws were passed in Mexico in November 1829, Santiago Argüello, then a Presidio Commandant, registered 10,533 hectares and named the property, "*El Rancho de Tijuana del Partido Norte de la Baja California*" (Proffitt 2019, 101). Argüello's died intestate, and the legal battle over land in present-day Southern California would shape and give rise to the current city of Tijuana.

In 1889, Santiago Argüello Jr. and Agustín Olvera began litigation over dueling claims over "Rancho Melijo" in Baja California, which included a small community settlement. An Ensenada judge ruled both in favor of the community and Argüello and Olvera. The community came to be known as "Villa de Zaragoza," and its foundation,

July 11 1889, begins the record for the history of the northwestern Mexican border city (Proffitt 2019, 103).

It is also noteworthy to establish that the name of "Tia Juana City" originally appears on U.S. maps. In 1887, Joseph Messenger purchased 65 acres along the U.S. border in South Bay San Diego, and baptizes the community as, "Tia Juana City." By 1927, the U.S. border communities of San Ysidro and Tia Juana City become enmeshed, and ever since the U.S. border town became known as community of San Ysidro in the City of San Diego, California (Hernández 2010; Zaragoza 2018, 143, 150). In the following year, the community of " la Villa de Zaragoza," located directly south of the border from San Diego, rid itself of the Cinco de Mayo homage to U.S.-born *fronterizo* hero, Ignacio Zaragoza;[19] and adopted the name of "Tijuana" instead. In 1929, former Mexican President Emilio Portes Gil "restores" the name of "Tijuana" back to the "rightful" Mexican border community of "the new pueblo of Tijuana" (Proffitt 2019, 103).

[19] The loss of the name was not well received by working communities with patriotic and nationalistic loyalties to the Mexican state. In turn, the still standing and first-ever Tijuana community based organization, the *Centro Mutualista de Zaragoza*, founded in 1924, remained its name in honor of the mutual aid networks and working communities that forged the border town in its early decades (Martinez 1996, 196)

Fig. 4.1 Remaining 1920s Agua Caliente Casino mural advertisement located on "C" Street in downtown San Diego, a present-day imprint of Tijuana's "Age of Tourism."

The oral histories of *fronteriza/o* and transborder family trajectories of migration are closely interrelated with the pursuit of U.S. documentation as well as a desire to remain south of the border. That is, a desire to establish a transborder family and experience through and across the Tijuana-San Diego geopolitical borderlands. Accessing U.S. documentation is sought after by individuals and families' upon arrival to the corner of Latin America. By surveying almost a century of *fronteriza/o* Tijuana transborder family oral histories, I found that throughout the 20th C., Mexican border rootedness, upward mobility, and status was established through a tradition of

transborder interactions facilitated by access to U.S. documentation and permanent forms of non-immigrant, immigrant, and citizen legal status.

Table 4.1 *Fronteriza/o* Family Background and Decade of Migration to Tijuana

Pseudonym	**Paternal-line Arrival**	**Paternal-line Place of origin**	**Maternal-line Arrival**	**Maternal- line Place of origin**
Julia	1910s	Alta California	1930s	Sonora
Pablo	1950s	California	1930s	Baja California
Helena	1930s	Jalisco	1930s	Jalisco
Daphne	1920s	Zacatecas	1980s	Jalisco
Marco	1950s	California (return)	1910s	Jalisco
Erick	1950s	California (return)	1910s	Jalisco
Antonio	1950s	Baja Cal. Sur	1950s	Jalisco
Soraya	1950s	Jalisco	1950s	Jalisco
Mariana	1930s	Spain	1950s	Sinaloa
Vanessa	N/A	California	1950s	California
Rafael	1980	Baja California	1980	Baja California

CALIFORNIOS FINDS A NEW HOME IN TIJUANA

Since the 19th C., Baja California and Tijuana have been sites attracting multiple global colonizing efforts (Cruz Gonzalez 2007; Castillo Muñoz 2017). Historians have widely surveyed how the urban history of Tijuana begins with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and how its urban growth has widely depended upon U.S.

institutions, markets, services, and goods and up until the 1930s (Zenteno 1997; Pineira and Rivera 2013).

Tijuana's first demographic and economic boom and fundamental shift from small town to bustling border city, occurred in the 1910s when American catering racetracks, bars, restaurants, and jockey clubs opened, attracting a subsequent and ongoing series of restaurant and tourism investments catering to affluent and escapist American, mostly Californian, tourists. In 1908, U.S. immigration authorities began recording land sojourners entering through the newly established California border in San Ysidro. The Ranch of Tia Juana experienced a steady demographic growth from 950 settlers in 1910, to the border town of Tijuana with 22,000 residents by the 1940s (Zenteno 1995, 108).

It is against this historical background when Alta California, north of the border, and Baja California, south of the border, converge in Tijuana that Julia's *Californio* ancestors searched for a better place "in-between" the early 20th C. chaotic domestic and international affairs between Mexico and the United States. Because of Julia's family desire to stay closest to what was once home in Alta California, they settled in Tijuana, close enough to the newly created, state of California, yet far enough from U.S. and Mexican political centers.

Remembering her family's motivation to settle at the northwestern Mexican frontier, Julia rhetorically poses *"¿qué es lo mas cercano entre México y Estados Unidos? Pues, ¡Tijuana![20]"* Rather than remaining in or resettling somewhere else in the U.S., Julia's ancestors found home only one hundred meters south of the borderline. It was

[20] Trans. "What is the closest [place] between Mexico and the United States? Well, Tijuana!"

in revolutionary Tijuana, where the young *Californio* family and their U.S.-born child would find home be in the search for better opportunities than Southern California could offer them.

Sitting at a table inside a two-by-two square foot kitchen of an early 20th C. adobe bungalow, Julia nostalgically recollects the stories of how her Long Beach *Californio* ancestors settled at the small Ranch of Tia Juana in 1915. Julia is especially fond of her ancestors, as they built the four-bungalow compound that she inherited and where she now lives along with her U.S.-documented Mexican citizen husband and U.S.-born boy husband, child, and naturalized citizen mother. Julia and her family live in the heart of historic downtown Tijuana's *Zona Norte*[21] and *Calle Primera* (First street), nestled in-between the late 19th C. historic cemetery, *Panteón #1*[22] and *el bordo*, the border ditch and fence.

Julia's sight fuzzes as she stares out from the tiny bungalow window and into the border wall. Julia ironically longs for an earlier time, immediately after the U.S. invasion and war against Mexico when her *Californio* ancestors became, "People stuck in between chaos... who were not Mexican or *estadounidense* (United-Statesian)[23]*!*" They were among the people living in-between the chaos of expansionists nationalist discourses and projects. *Californios*, were neither Mexican nor Americans. Rather they were something else, according to Julia. Her great great-grandparents wanted to remain closest to Southern California as possible, but couldn't live in the U.S. either. And while her "great-grandfather had lived part of his childhood in Long Beach... they

[21] Trans. to North Zone, referring to the early duty-free zone in Tijuana.
[22] Trans. First Municipal Cemetery. Famous and highly visited by worshipers of the popular saint, Juan Soldado.
[23] Translated from Spanish by the author

wouldn't return to Guanajuato[24]" where they had extended family ties. Julia's ancestors were three of Tia Juana's Ranch 956 registered residents in 1910 (Piñera and Rivera 22, 2013), searching for a space and place in-between Mexico and the United States. The small border post of Tia Juana was more attractive, opportunistic, and fitting space and place for the once *Californio* family.

FRONTERIZA/OS FIND WORK OPPORTUNITIES IN AGUA CALIENTE CASINO

During the 1920s the then called, "Villa de Zaragoza," became a safe haven for Prohibition Era escapists. In 1929, former Mexican President Portes Gil nationalized parts of the former Argüello and Olvera Ranch Melijo, and decreed that the former "congregation of Tijuana" was to be renamed as simply, "Tijuana." In that same year, American and Mexican investors opened a luxury casino in Tijuana, *el Casino de Agua Caliente*, or, the Agua Caliente Casino, catering to Hollywood executives and movie stars. The Agua Caliente Casino featured Arabesque Spanish Fantasy architecture, a luxury spa, pool, hotel, racetrack, restaurants, airport, radio station, airport, and a golf course. This first of its kind luxury resort also attracted regional internal migrants, and hired almost two-thousand unionized employees. The Casino and Resort also contributed to the town's growing economy. In the wake of the Casinto and Resort came the institutionalization of the nation's first chamber of commerce, and development of local middle-to upper-class residential neighborhoods of *Fraccionamiento*[25] *de Agua Caliente* and *Fraccionamiento Hipódromo*, reserved for the employees of the casino.

[24] Translated from Spanish by the author
[25] *Fraccionamientos* are mostly, affluent residential neighborhoods, that may or may not also be gated-communities.

Pablo is an energetic and highly industrious twenty-nine year old Tijuana entrepreneur and real estate developer who currently owns property and lives in *Fraccionamiento Hipódromo*. Pablo inherited his residence, originally "purchased[26]" by his great-great grandparents who were former Agua Caliente Casino employees. Pablo's great-great grandparents moved from Mexicali to Tijuana in the 1930s or 1940s searching for job opportunities in the growing luxury tourism industry,

Maternal

> My great-great grandmother migrated to Tijuana with her husband from Mexicali. They bought land at Hipódromo neighborhood when this was the outskirts of Tijuana… They bought the first available land for sale when *Fraccionamiento* Agua Caliente began developing in the 1930s or 1940s…[27]

Pablo's great-great-grandparents were Mexican-born workers searching for better employment opportunities in Tijuana. The young middle-class couple from Mexicali decided to birth their children in the U.S. The same pattern would follow for future generations. This practice would become an inheritance in Pablo's Mexican borderland family. To that end Pablo's great-great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother are all U.S. born. Like Julia, Pablo's family also settled during in Tijuana during the incipient tourism industry and early urban boom. Like his great-great-grandparents, Pablo still works in the tourism industry catering to U.S. visitors, but closer to the border Wall in downtown Tijuana, where the interview took place.

By the 1930s the Mexican government took notice of the development, resources and needs of the Baja California Territory. And when populist Mexican president, Lázaro Cárdenas del Río introduced the 1936 *Ley General de la Población* (General Population Policy) and the *Reforma Agraria* (Agrarian Reforms) it also

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[26] He later clarifies that it was not a purchase, but a former Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas del Río populist land grant.
[27] Translated from Spanish by the author.

affected Tijuana. During the 1930s, the Baja California territory experienced an economic downfall throughout the Great Depression, as well as an increasing fear carrying since the mid 19th C. and panic amongst Mexican borderland settlers and local leaders of a potential U.S. invasion (Cruz Gonzalez 2007, 102). The overpowering U.S. and foreign presence in Tijuana prompted the creation of the 1930s "*Plan de mexicanización*" (trans. "Mexicanizing project") attracting the settler-colonization of Mexican workers, seeking to reduce and ban Chinese migration (Chao Romero 2012), introducing the peso as currency and Spanish as the official language, and to recover the land owned by the U.S. Colorado River Land Company (Cruz Gonzalez 2007, 102).

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE RISE OF THE *COLONIAS* OF TIJUANA

During the 1930s Tijuana suffered from the effects of the Great Depression, especially unemployment and the U.S. government's Mexican Repatriation Program. This in turn, expanded the city's urban sprawl. In the wake of the Depression, Tijuana saw the emergence of the first residential areas for local Tijuana residents. *Colonias*, or settler-colonies and now, residential areas, were created to meet Agua Caliente Casino workers and U.S. repatriated migrants' housing needs. Upper-middle-class *Colonias* such as Castillo and Cacho were created in 1929, while middle and working class neighborhoods of *Independencia*, *Altamira*, *Morelos*, and *Libertad* were also founded.

Julia's family, originally hailing from Sonora, Mexico, took refuge in the city of Los Angeles during the Mexican Revolution. Her maternal family line was amongst the more than 1 million Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican descent repatriated during the Great Depression (Cárdenas 2010, 84) and from Los Angeles back to their place or origin in Sonora. Upon repatriation, Julia's Sonoran ancestors

decided to migrate northwest permanently. Only they would stay further south in Tijuana, according to Julia.

Due in part to inter-generational trauma, Julia timidly and briefly touches upon her family's repatriation during the 1929 "Mexican Repatriation Program." Instead, she narrates on the family's resilience returning north searching for better life opportunities and upon repatriation back to Sonora. It was cross-border job opportunities in San Diego and a U.S. dollar income that also attracted Julia's Sonoran family-line to re-locate in Tijuana. Julia recalled the stories of her mother. "*El hijo de mi bisabuelo estaba trabajando aquí en San Diego y les dijo que estaba ganando bien, y pues se vinieron para acá todos,*[28]" Julia cheers. They settled very close to the border crossing, in one of the earliest residential middle-class neighborhoods in downtown Tijuana *Colonia Castillo*. For the past three-generations, Julia's maternal family-line has engaged in cross-border labor, becoming what is now known as, transborder commuter workers living in Tijuana and working in San Diego using a variety of U.S. documentation and by continuing to live as closets to the U.S.-Mexico border wall in *Colonia Castillo*.

Helena is a third-generation *tijuanense* and third-generation U.S.-born *fronteriza* in her extended transborder family. Like Julia, Helena lives in the house that she inherited from her grandparents who acquired land at the edges of the affluent Zona Rio's *Colonia Postal* adjacent to the working-class community of *Colonia Libertad*. Helena's Jalisco relatives originally settled in *Colonia Libertad* upon arrival to Tijuana. As the family garnered local capital and networks, her grandparents received a land

[28] "Because my great-grandfathers' son was working here in San Diego and told them he was making really good money, and so they all came"

grant to populate the newly created *Colonia Postal*. Helena's family migration to Tijuana story is laced with stories of industrious cross-border entrepreneurship supplying traditional Mexican folk art to the city of Los Angeles, as well as Texas-Coahuila transborder family and first U.S.-born *fronterizo* grandfather. Helena provides a rich narrative of her family's migration to Tijuana, and in her own words,

Maternal

R: I'll start with the maternal family. My grandfather was born in Guadalajara and my grandmother was born in a town in Jalisco called Cuisillos. They came here in the '20s or '30s. My first uncle was born there, and they had their second child here in the city of Tijuana. They already had acquaintances who lived here but so close relatives. They only tell me that there were better possibilities. They came here and formed a family of fourteen children. Quite a lot.

A: And where do they settle?

R: They settle on the side of *La Libertad*, one of the oldest *colonias*. Later they settle and get a piece of land in the *Postal* neighborhood, which is in fact the house where I currently live. This *colonia* was given to postal workers. My grandfather was not a postal clerk, but he still managed to get hold of that land. My grandparents, since they settled here, never thought of the idea of returning to Guadalajara or Jalisco. My grandfather started doing a Mexican crafts workshop with an uncle. He is one of the few relatives that we know of. They began a small workshop to make piggy banks and crafts. He starts life here in Tijuana.

In the past, plots of land were quite large in Tijuana. This allowed him to have a house and a workshop behind it. In this workshop he had workers. He delivered merchandise, most of them were piggy banks and plates with some designs that my grandmother made. It was a family business all my uncles worked there. My grandfather begins to deliver merchandise here in Tijuana during the Revolution and later he begins to meet people who also go to Los Angeles and my grandfather begins to make trips to deliver all his merchandise there and specifically La Placita Olvera where my grandfather begins to do all of his business.

In fact, my grandparents always talk about their trips to Placita Olvera, and my uncles too because they used to go as children… I mean, it was not the Los Angeles that it is now. You know? Without all that crime and all *those* types of issues. My mother says that there were times that my grandfather would leave them for hours in a large family van parked outside of Placita Olvera, where he would go for business, make arrangements with clients, and drop-off merchandise. They still remember the flavors, smells, colors of La Placita very vividly. In fact my uncles still and spontaneously go, especially those who'd

frequent the most. They still go to Los Angeles to reckon. To remember. They go searching for that memory.

Paternal

My father's family, my grandfather was born in 1926. My great-grandparents are from the Coahuila border in Mexico. They went to Texas, and in Texas they had my grandfather. My grandfather told me that when he was three years old he came to Tijuana [in 1929]. My maternal great-grandparents had elementary schooling. My paternal great-grandfather taught at the boarding school that was established after the Agua Caliente Casino was closed, in fact he even studied there. My great-grandfather was a teacher and I don't know about my great-grandmother.[29]

It is interesting to note how the "Tijuana Dream" narrative is echoed throughout Helena's family history of migration to Tijuana. For Helena, the family's U.S. business in Los Angeles' Olvera Street and exporting Mexican crafts, that is, catering to U.S. consumer markets, establishing cross-border commercial networks, and hinting to a third-space that includes Tijuana and Los Angeles, is far more meaningful and relevant to her Tijuana-rootedness than her Texas-born fronterizo grandfathers' and parallel story to Helena and her U.S.-born child.

Similar to Helena, Daphne is a first-generation U.S.-born *fronteriza* to a multi-generational transborder family, is a public health non-profit founder, physician, and college instructor. She lives in an inherited 1950s mid-Century remodeled penthouse, originally built as a 1930s townhouse located in the heart of commercial downtown Tijuana's 11th street. The large property, located at what was once the outskirts of the bustling border town, was acquired by her late grandfather, a successful produce merchant from Zacatecas who once supplied fresh foods to the Agua Caliente Casino. But Daphne's grandfather wanted to expand his business beyond the Zacatecas and Mexicali-Calexico corridor, and set-up shop in Tijuana too.

[29] Translated from Spanish by the author

In a mix of sadness and horror, she recalls how her late grandfather, who despite already having a home, a young family and thriving business in Mexicali-Calexico, his desire to boom a produce empire at the border motivated him to kidnap an underage girl from the state of Sinaloa on his way from Zacatecas to the then, "Villa de Zaragoza." The kidnapped girl remained unmarried and bore one son, Daphne's father, while managing the Tijuana properties and commercial businesses on behalf of the Zacatecas produce merchant. Daphne recollects,

> Paternal
> My grandfather owned the whole block on 11th street, when those were Tijuana's outskirts. He was a produce merchant, and had been a produce merchant in Zacatecas before migrating to Tijuana. He already had a family, but he wanted to expand his family and business…
>
> Maternal
> My grandmother was living in Sinaloa and working at a café. She was very young and beautiful. So he [referring to the grandfather] kidnapped her and brought her to Tijuana in the 1930s.[30]

When Daphne's grandmother and father died, they neglected to leave a will. After years of litigation, Daphne, her three sisters, mother and the family's former nanny and caretaker, collectively inherited an entire block of downtown's prized real estate. They are co-proprietors of several mixed-use buildings in a formidable block between 11th Street and Tijuana's urban artery, Boulevard Agua Caliente (named in rememberance of the 1929 Casino). Daphne now shares the penthouse with an Anglo-American, New Jersey-raised, Rutgers University graduate and personal assistant.

Julia, Helena, Daphne, and Pablo's Mexican family history can also be found at Washington's National Archives catalog and database, under "Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service 1787-2004." Many of these early migrants to Tijuana have a recorded history in early immigration records, in which migrants were

[30] Translated from Spanish by the author

categorized according to ever changing political realities in the Mexican or American political centers.

For example, and from 1908 through 1950s, the Bureau of Immigration recorded 152,000 individual "alien arrivals" through the San Ysidro (Tia Juana) port of entry (National Archives Catalog). Between 1900 to the 1930s, U.S. authorities divided border-crossers as, 1) immigrants, migrants planning to settle in the U.S.; and, 2) non-immigrants, admitted foreigners who did not plan to settle in the U.S. and living in Mexican land (National Archives Catalog 2016)

From 1933 to 1957, "alien arrivals" were re-classified as, 1) Quota immigrants, migrants admitted under quotas established for European countries, Pacific Basin, former colonies and dependencies; 2) Nonquota immigrants, spouses and children of U.S. citizens, clergy and professors' families; and, 3) Nonimmigrants, "nonresident aliens" returning from a temporary visit abroad, "such as tourists, students, foreign government, people engaged in business, people representing international orgs and unmarried children of all these individuals and agricultural workers of the West Indies" (National Archives Catalog 2016).

Tijuana's transborder families and individuals have been defined in part by the U.S. immigration system and its effects on belonging and mobility for traditional Mexican transborder families. By traditional Mexican transborder families I mean, intergenerational families living at the borderlands and upholding a traditional pattern of cross-border migration and community network building.

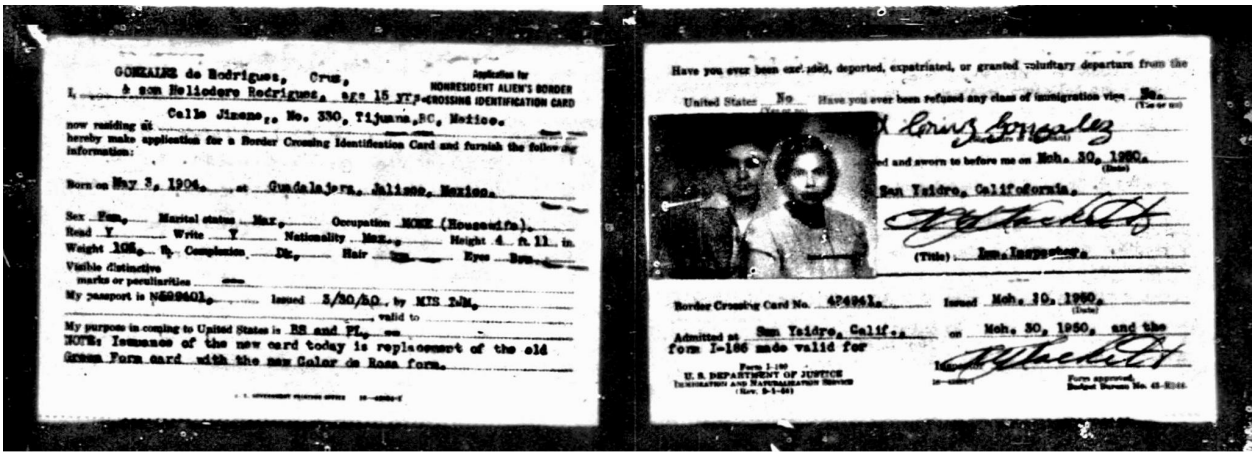

Figure 4.2 Non-Resident Alien Border Crossing Identification Card of the author's great-grandmother, Cruz González de Rodríguez and her great-uncle, Heliodoro Rodriguez (National Archives Catalog 1950)

One of the main factors facilitating access to U.S. documentation along with Mexican border rootedness is geopolitics. Tijuana as an urban site was founded on July 11, 1889. By April 21, 1908, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization[32] had established a customs post and instituted one of the earliest official ports of entry from Mexico into the United States in Tia Juana/San Ysidro California. In 1914, Tijuana's *Registro Civil* (Country Clerk) office opens.

Between 1900-1940, Mexican returning migrants had higher paying-jobs than rural and suburban Mexicans migrating further west from states such as Sonora, Coahuila, San Luis Potosi, Jalisco, Sinaloa, and Zacatecas. Former governor of Baja California, Abelardo L. Rodriguez incentivized U.S. investment in Tijuana in the 1920s. Yet, by the 1930s Rodriguez had shifted loyalties to "nationalize" the Mexican border with the United States and fulfill the "patriotic mission" to "mexicanize" the territory

[32] Predecessor to the Department of Labor, Bureau of Immigration 1913-1933, and later, Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Services 1940-2003. Currently operating as Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection Office. *Manifests of Alien Arrivals at San Ysidro (Tia Juana), California, April 21, 1908 - December 1952*, NARA microfilm publication M1767, 20 rolls. NAI: 4486361.

of Baja California (Cruz Gonzalez 2007, 102). With the introduction of Land Reforms and General Population Policy, Tijuana's population doubled going from approximately 8,500 to 17,000 residents by the 1940s.[33]

The experience of migrants to Tijuana in the 1940s and 1950s is illustrated by Marco and Erick. The fourth-generation, Tijuana-rooted siblings, Marco and Erick are first-generation U.S.-born. They live in a single-family home in a shared-dwelling in the diverse *Colonia Independencia*. Marco is 27 and Erick is 33. Together, they share single-family homes between *Colonia Independencia* and South San Diego along with their Tijuana-born Permanent Resident parents. The siblings' maternal great-great grandparents migrated from Guadalajara, Jalisco to Tijuana in the 1920s and became one of the earliest residents of the historic, *Colonia* I*ndependencia*. Due to early childhood trauma crossing the border, Erick, cannot recollect much about his family's history and during the time of the interview collection. Whereas the youngest, Marco vividly recalls when asking him about their families' migration to Tijuana,

Maternal

> My parents are from Tijuana. Born in Tijuana. My mother's side of the family is from Jalisco. The history of the family begins in Tijuana mainly because they settled here in the city more or less in the 40s, 50s. I am not sure but by the 50s, they were already second generations of the maternal family line.
>
> My grandparents on my mother's side were merchants, and I never heard from my grandfather that they were interested in crossing into the United States, or migrating to the United States, but rather, being in Tijuana. His family settled very well here in Tijuana, his brothers and him.

Paternal

> My father's side of the family is from Zacatecas and Guanajuato. On the part of my Pa, I'm still not sure when his relatives arrived, but by the 60s we were settled in the city of Tijuana. In Tijuana you have a young city, it will be around 120 years or so, and that's how it has developed: fast. It is a border city and I

[33] As argued by Norma Cruz Gonzalez, Cárdenas efforts in Baja California during this period were not only to colonize the territory, but creating conditions and infrastructure to facilitate communication to and solidify relationships with the rest of Mexico and Mexico City (2007, 103)

> have always kept in mind the history of Tijuana on the part of my father… I keep the history of my family very present. I am proud to be part of a family that has developed in Tijuana over the past eighty years, if not a little longer. I am proud to be part of *that* Tijuana community, of this border city. In Mexico we are not considered neither from the United States nor from Mexico, because we are in between but in the same way we are an area of importance due to what trade, culture, that exists between the two countries, since Mexico and the United States have a participation in most of its activities as are their mainly economic countries and it has always been like that.
>
> Since the beginning of Tijuana, there has always been a close relationship between these two cities, between the border cities, between the border states, everything, good communication between the two cities since it depends on the economy of many families.
>
> My grandfather interestingly, the man came to the north of Mexico looking for new adventures and without realizing he left Mexico and came to United States and from a job offer that they made to him in the United States, he obtained Permanent Residency in the United States and in a very, very old way, right? How good was the relationship before in the '40s, 50s that a Mexican could cross the border by walking and without realizing had arrived in another country that offers you a residence in exchange for a job. Between '43 and '45 he was already working in the United States. My father tells me that his father had already been in the United States for a while when he came to Tijuana to live and where he met my grandmother. But he was here in the city of San Diego or Los Angeles, but in the United States, he was working for the government cleaning warships that came from the Pacific.
>
> A: What motivated your grandparents or great-grandparents to migrate to Tijuana?
>
> Maternal
>
> R: Mainly families that immigrate to Tijuana are looking, or were looking for a new place. A fresh start. My family did not try to cross into the United States. But, they did seek new economies and cities in-formation[34]

Later in the narrative, Marco narrates how his grandfather arrived to Tijuana via Los Angeles, and by deciding to relocate to Baja California and commute to work in San Diego, California instead. The story of how Marco's grandfather chose to relocate to Tijuana and quit his job in Los Angeles, only confirms his pride for being a "part of a family that has developed in Tijuana over the past eighty years, if not a little longer."

[34] Translated from Spanish by the author.

Through those more than 80 years, Marco's family has continued to forge social and cultural networks across borders, while maintaining a deep sense of pride in building the "Tijuana Dream" narrative.

THE BRACERO GENERATION IN TIJUANA

During World War II, the U.S. and Mexican governments agreed to employ Mexican workers in American agricultural fields through a guest worker program, better known as, *el Programa Brac*ero. By 1951 guest worker recruiters actively sought after to employ non-Mexican border residents, and instead travel to areas with highest levels of unemployment in the states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, and Michoacán. Upon the termination of the six-month work contract, most *braceros* decided not only to resettle in northern Mexico, but to bring their families to join them and together build a new life in *el Norte*. Thus and by the 1950s, Tijuana's demographic explosion allowed for the Baja California Territory to enter the United States of Mexico, as a formally recognized federal state. In addition to consolidating trade between the peninsula and the rest of the country, re-distribution of land, investing in education, developing the Free-Trade Zone, the newly created state attracted settlers by touting the idea of "colonizing the land" (Cruz Gonzalez 2007, 118) and inviting Mexicans to dream of an "American Dream" in Mexican land.

Such is the paradigmatic case of Antonio's Western Mexican family lines that migrated to Tijuana in the 1950s from Jalisco, Sonora, and Baja California Sur. Antonio's paternal family actively participated in consolidating trade and economic integration of the Baja California Peninsula and searching for better educational opportunities for their children. Antonio's paternal line was seeking family integration and reunification during the *Bracero* guest worker program era. In Tijuana, the Bracero

family found a common ground between Western Mexico and California and new home. Antonio provides a vivid reflection of his family's migration story to Tijuana, how his family became one of the first residents of the displaced neighborhood of "*Cartolandia*" or, "Cardboard land" in 1970, where the affluent and corporate Zona Riío area now rests. Antonio code-switches to English and shares his family's romantic migration story to the Mexican Northwest. In Antonio's words,

Maternal

> My mother's side of the family comes from a small town called Tepatitlán, located in an area known as "*Los Altos de Jalisco"* [code-switches to Spanish] and so they migrate to Tijuana because my grandpa was a Bracero, part of a guest worker program. He was a part of the Bracero generation! He was one of the guest workers in California, and I believe that he was working in Salinas.
>
> He met my grandmother, and they married, they had kids in Tepa[titlan] and so they said, "Let's go! I don't want to be away from you and so they just migrated from Tepatitlan. My grandma grew up during the Cristero War over there. She had some quite traumatic childhood over there because of the bloodshed and the war. She saw her own father executed by, we still don't know if it's the Federales or the Cristeros. But somebody accuses my great grandfather supporting the other side and his ranch was raided. They tied him on the back of a horse and they dragged him around for hours. It was a very common form of execution. My grandma grew up with that experience and until her dying day she would talk about it when somebody would ask about Tepatitlan or her childhood. So it was very, very traumatic. But anyways a little bit of… I mean that was a little bit relevant but it's part of the culture of Los Altos of Jalisco. So she met my grandpa. My grandfather was a guest worker. So they had the option to stay there or come back. My grandma decided to go and she became one of the first settlers in *La Colonia del Río, Planta Baja*, in Tijuana. They had seven kids. My grandpa would come and go, come and go, and my grandma would just wait here with the seven kids.

Paternal

> From my Dad's side of the family, my grandma is from a small town called La Purisima in Baja California Sur. It's a small oasis in the middle of the highlands. My parents grew up in Tijuana, but they would tell me stories about that small town, La Purisima.
>
> My grandfather, my father's father, was born in Sonora to I believe, Oaxacan immigrants. I am not quite sure how they made the trip from Oaxaca all the way to Sonora. But turns out my grandfather was a chauffeur, a truck driver and his route was Los Cabos all the way to Tijuana.

> He would just pretty much drive, but would stop to get gas or other types of goods and services. So they met at her [grandmother's] town. My father's family made it to TJ because of the opportunities and mostly, schooling. Tijuana was a much more developed city. We had the choice of Mexicali, Tijuana or La Paz. Tijuana was more appealing because of its development and during those times in the 1950s or 1960s they benefitted as urban earlier settlers and the influx of American dollars. They decided to settle there and they lived in a house in *la Colonia del Rio* and then they were displaced when the canal was built in the 1970s. I believe it was one of those shanty houses or small houses.
>
> A: ¿*Cartolandia*?
>
> R: ¿*Cartolandia*? I am not sure that was the case, but that was when the canal was opening near Las Huertas. My Dad then moved to Cantamar and he was commuting from Cantamar to el Tecnologico where he met my mother at el Estadio Tecnológico en Tijuana.
>
> K: And your parents were born in Tijuana?
>
> R: Yeah, born and raised in Tijuana!

Upon termination of the 1964 guest worker program, many more Mexican families migrated to the Mexican northern border, awaiting the renewal of the six-month labor contracts north of the border. The demographic expansion and migration patterns that parallel the *Bracero* guest worker program migration flows, brought guest workers' and migrant families from Western Mexico and to the Mexican northwestern border. This is the generation that was able to solidify that export-industrial model. When the rest of Mexico was going through Import Substitution Industrialization, the local Tijuana economy had already been participating in export-oriented economic models. It is this same export-oriented model, which later became globalized and brought the maquiladora boom of 1980-1990. The families that migrated during this time accessed documents with the intention on developing micro-export oriented industries and commercial services.

Such is the case of Soraya's family, who began producing traditional Mexican figurines and souvenirs, popularly known as *"curios"* and distributed around Southern

Californian “old Mexican” gift shops. Soraya is a first-generation, U.S.-born, *fronteriza* and mother of two U.S. born *fronteriza/o* children. Similar to Daphne, Soraya lives on the top fourth floor of a mixed-use building which she inherited from her late maternal grandmother, and that she now rents to a kindergarten school and a Protestant church on the street level floors in the middle-class residential community of *Fraccionamiento El Rubí.*

Soraya narrates how her family migrated from the western state of Jalisco to Tijuana in the 1950s searching for better employment opportunities and settles in the heart of tourist Tijuana’s *Avenida Revolución*, catering to American military tourists and Mexican knick-knack collectors. Soraya joyfully remembers the childhood that she shared along with her mother and maternal aunts and uncles, hopping around historic arcades, serving American tourists, and making Mexican “curios” at the locally referred to as, “*Pasajes.*” Soraya recalls her childhood at *Avenida Revolución* tied to her family’s migration history to Tijuana as,

Maternal

R: On the maternal side of the family they come from San Juan de los Lagos, Jalisco, and my grandfather is from Guadalajara. They came here almost 60 years ago. My mom is born here in Tijuana. I guess they came for the opportunities. My mom was born here in Tijuana! [respondent repeats] My mother and all of them [maternal relatives] live in the heart of downtown Tijuana, on Third Street, where it has now become a very fashionable neighborhood. But the Gómez Arcade and the Rodríguez Arcade were previously [residential] homes. That’s where my family arrived, opened store fronts, and later moved from the arcades closer to the Teniente Guerrero Park.

A: What did they tell you about how people lived in those times?

R: I AM also very well rooted to downtown Tijuana because I also grew up there. I was also raised in downtown Tijuana! Right across the Teniente Guerrero Park, I think it is “F” street, on the opposite corner. It is now a car wash. So that's where we lived, it's where I was born. My childhood home seemed more like a kindergarten on *Zona Norte* [Free-Trade Zone and Red-light District]. [My grandmother] sold plaster figurines in a shop on Third Street. My uncle sold blankets and papier-mâché arts and crafts. They sold marble figures, that is, everything that was a [Mexican] curiosity. They had three stores at that time.

> They rented but they were doing very well. They were even able to employ up to six workers. My grandmother had a plaster shop, and I helped her paint the piggy banks. I loved that time.
>
> They also tell wonders of *those* times. They say that back in those days servicemen and tourists from the Navy came and purchased in bulk. Many people came to Tijuana just to buy, they couldn't even supply for all the sales and demand. It was an incredible inflow of money. With that my grandmother bought her house. My uncle, too. They bought their houses from there. From there they fed their families and they did very well. But as you know, little by little it all fell apart.
>
> My uncle kept two stores, then there was only one left. For the same reason: the rents were so expensive and there was no money left to pay the rent. My grandmother closed her shop. Now my uncle produces his own merchandise. I don't know if you saw the figures that I have there on the stairs. He makes them. He makes the molds and he sells them right here in Tijuana. He also sells in Rosarito and Ensenada. He also exports to Old Town, San Diego. It is in Old Town where he sells the plaster figures as if they were imported from Colima. I grew up across the street to the Maxim store and in downtown alleys. It was my life. I grew up happy on the corner of Third Street and *Avenida Revolución*.
>
> Paternal
>
> My Dad's side, my grandparents are from Guadalajara, and I suppose they came for the same reason. About 60 years ago. My Dad was born in Guadalajara, but he came here when he was 2 years old[36].

Soraya's family story resembles Helena's story of family migration to Tijuana and entrepreneurship upon arrival catering to American tourists looking for Mexican knick-knacks in Tijuana and Southern California Mexican-themed souvenir shops. Like Helena's family and uncles who continue to visit Los Angeles' Placita Olvera, longing for a yesterday when border commerce was less competitive and much more profitable for Mexican border residents and entrepreneurs, Soraya also longs for an earlier time when her family catered solely to San Diego military base Tijuana visitors while building a "curio" shop empire.

[36] Translated from Spanish by the author.

MADRES AND *MAESTRAS* ARRIVE TO THE TIJUANA BORDER

Mariana is a first-generation, U.S.-born *fronteriza,* University of California, San Diego graduate, married to a Mexican national and legal permanent resident. She shares life between Tijuana's *Playas de Tijuana* (Tijuana Beaches) neighborhood and San Ysidro, where she works as a community clinic public health specialist. Mariana's paternal grandmother is one of Tijuana's most mentioned and remembered elementary school teachers in the collective memory of Tijuana public schooling, as she was a strict disciplinarian and well-known by multiple generations of downtown children. Mariana's maternal foremother migrated to this city as a young widowed mother of four young children and lured by the promise of reaching the "American Dream" on the northern-side of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Both of Mariana's foremothers migrated to the city of Tijuana in the 1960s as young widows searching for employment and better housing for their young children. Mariana colorfully shares how her maternal grandmother from Mexico City and paternal Spanish grandmother arrived at the Mexican Northwest border, and after briefly living in the Western states of Sinaloa and San Luis Potosi, respectively. Mariana shares,

Maternal

> R: My mother's family is from Mexico City. [They migrated] and settled in Culiacán. My mother and part of her brothers were born there. There are eight, the four of the first half were born in Culiacan, the other half were born in Tijuana. My mother's father died in [Culiacan], and my grandmother's sister [Tía Rosa] had moved to the border. She married a "Navy" man in San Diego
>
> So, "Tia Rosa" tells my grandmother, "Yes, they are giving visas!" and that, "it is very easy to find a visa in Tijuana!" This was like the 1960s. My mom was very young. My grandmother came with her 4 kids to the border. They settled in Tijuana, but they don't get a visa, or anything like that.
>
> Then, my grandmother has another husband, they have four other children, and then the other husband dies. Eventually, through her oldest daughter, my oldest

aunt, who also marries an American from "the Navy", and that's how my grandmother becomes a citizen. But, the rest of her children stay in Tijuana.

Eventually, in fact, everyone ends up migrating because of this Tía. Interestingly, they lived as undocumented all their lives. It's really weird! It is a family that half is undocumented and half is documented, and there are a lot of struggles. But, oh well… My mother arrived in Tijuana at 4-5 years or so, and she grew up in *Colonia Altamira*.

Paternal

R : And my Dad's family is from San Luis Potosi. His mother, they come from… Now, as all Mexicans say, my grandparents are from Spain! [in a sarcastic tone. Both author and respondent giggle]. But she is Spanish for real! She is Spanish for real! They settle in Guadalajara and change their surname.

A: And why do they migrate from Spain?

A: My Dad and my Aunt say they come because they were Jews escaping [Francisco] Franco. They come in the early 1940s. Maybe a little earlier in 1935, more or less, and when the revolution in Spain is in full swing. My grandmother arrives in Guadalajara.

A: *Maestra* Carmina Espinoza? [confirming]

A: Yes. Carmina Espinoza, but she had another last name. The famous teacher Carmina Espinoza! They arrive in Guadalajara, and settle there. Eventually my grandmother meets my grandfather in San Luis Potosi. My grandfather is apparently killed, apparently because he shared some salt mines with his brother. That is a whole other *telenovela,* about how my Great Uncle killed his brother.

So, my grandmother becomes a teacher (I love history!) She becomes a rural teacher and they travel throughout Jalisco teaching temporarily. They were in a town for 3 to 6 months, and that was back when the teacher did everything in town. My grandmother was midwife, doctor, and built small schools in booming towns, to then, migrate to another town to found another school. They eventually migrate to Tijuana when my Dad is 8 years old. They settle in *Colonia Altamira*, the two of them [referring to her parents] as children. But they don't meet each other there. They later meet while working at the department store [Dorian's].[37]

It has been argued that the earliest Jews arriving to Tijuana in the 1940s were

Sephardim[38]. Later in the 1950s, another 40 Eastern European Yiddish speaking Jews of

[37] Translated from Spanish by the author.

[38] T.D. Proffitt has also found how between 1896 and 1938, the idea of a Zionist Jewish homeland and state was set forth in the Baja California Peninsula, along with Palestine

Ashkenazim background arrived in Tijuana. From 1950 to 1967, Tijuana Jewry was divided into two ethnolinguistic groups that met at separate temples. Mariana later sadly recalls how her father continued to face discrimination at Tijuana workspaces due to his racialized Jewish background. Her father would only be employed by fellow Jewish merchants and business owners in Tijuana. However, due to his Sephardim and Mexican *mestizo* experience, he was considered, in the words of Mariana, a "*no Judío*" (not a Jew) by fellow Eastern European Jewish co-workers and employers. Thus, Mariana's father was never able to reach upper-management position despite dedicating 45 years of labor in the department store formerly known as Dorian's (purchased by Sears Mexico and currently owned by telecommunications tycoon and billionaire, Carlos Slim). Eventually, this would inevitably cancel her now retired parents opportunities at securing a slice of the "American Dream" in Mexico. Mariana's parents migrated to the U.S. as legal permanent residents after her father's forced retirement

Vanessa, a third-generation, U.S. citizen *fronteriza*, was raised in Tijuana's former cattle-ranch of El Rosario, popularly known as, the coastal resort city of Rosarito, and since 1995 a municipality of the state of Baja California. Her grandmother was a farmer of Baja California's Wine Country, Valle de Guadalupe, and her grandfather a farmer of Santa Ana, California. Like Daphne's family story of migration to Tijuana, Vanessa's shares that her grandfather a U.S. born Mexican American kidnapped her grandmother and left her to watch over his properties at the *ejido Mazatlán*[39] at El Rosario. In Vanessa's words,

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and Uganda. During that time period Jewish migration to Mexico was also encouraged by North American Zionists (2019 123).

[39] communally owned land distributed during President Lazaro Cárdenas del Río's populist agrarian land reform.

A: My grandfather was from Santa Ana, California, and my grandmother was from Valle de Guadalupe [in Ensenada]. They met in Rosarito. He kidnapped her on horseback. He relocated her to Rosarito, where he left her living. I don't know how the *ejidatarios* [ejido communal land-owners] used to operate. I imagine something like, "from here to there is mine and here is my wife [to take care of my property]" So he left her there living in Rosarito and he worked in Santa Ana. In Santa Ana he dedicated himself to the fields, he worked with a family and he was in charge of everything that was of the field. My grandmother did not have a television, so each time he came down to visit, my gradmother would then have a child, and then another, and another. In total, they had seven children there in Rosarito.

The oldest gas station in Rosarito at some point belonged to my grandfather and then they sold that part because the house where I grew up is on the side of the gas station. My grandfather built our house where my grandmother stayed with her seven children. My grandfather passed away when my mother was four or five years old. My grandmother became a single mother with seven children. All born between Tijuana and Rosarito. My grandfather left my grandmother with permanent resident papers. When my grandfather died, she began to get Green cards for her his children.

A: Was your grandfather born in Santa Ana? Did you live there or did you grow up there?

R: I understand that he was born in Santa Ana.

A: Do you know where his family was from?

A: I understand that he was born there. One of my uncles, the oldest, went to the Vietnam War. The oldest one married a man here in Tijuana and in fact that aunt did not emigrate because a boy from here in Tijuana married and never had that need. She got married and made her life here in Tijuana. All the others, including my mother, were emigrated, but they always lived in Rosarito.

Vanessa's U.S.-born grandfather managed to secure a Permanent Legal Resident status for the mother of his children. Upon his death, Vanessa's grandmother petitioned to establish U.S. residency status for her Mexican residing and ranch-raised children. By establishing early cross-border mobility and U.S. legal status, Vanessa's family has been able to reap the benefits of both Mexican and U.S. legal systems and continue to do so well into the present.

SEARCHING FOR THE "TIJUANA DREAM"

Daphne, Pablo, Julia, Helena, Soraya, and Marco are all U.S.-born Tijuana residents under the ages of 31 (and at the time the interview was collected) who have inherited large properties in and around the perimeters of downtown Tijuana. The 2008 U.S. economic recession and the Merida Initiative funded "War on Drugs," negatively impacted Tijuana's economy while devastating the local social fabric.

After the height of the "War on Drugs," the 2010s brought a sort of localized cultural renaissance and spatial reclamation of the city's downtown, centered around the idea and projections of urban renewal paying homage to Tijuana's "Golden Age", defined here as, "the Age of Tourism," following Kun and Montezemolo's theorizations, and particularly evident in historically affluent and tourist catering neighborhoods or *Colonias* of downtown Tijuana. Since 2010, Tijuana's downtown has undergone a gentrification and revitalization process also led by local binational, or *fronterizo* creative elites, such is the case of Vanessa and especially, Pablo, who is one of the leading real estate venture capitalists in the Tijuana-San Diego transborder region, catering to millennial "commuters" and "transborder citizen" homeownership.

Downtown Tijuana high-rise and mixed-use residential properties are currently being offered for $500,000 to no less than $100,000 USD (where it is also common practice to set property value not in Mexican pesos, but American dollars). In Mexico, foreign-born people cannot own property, but instead can hold a renewable century long trust. None of the *fronteriza/os* respondents' names appears on the property lien for the buildings and land that they have inherited around downtown Tijuana. None of them made mention a trust or lien for the properties they so proudly care for and live off of. Nor did they seemed preoccupied by the fact that as Tijuana becomes more economically competitive, and as the history of the city has shown, land disputes and

dispossession of property seems to rule unfavorably to private U.S. citizens attempting to hold property at the coveted northwestern Mexican borderland. Instead *fronteriza/os* appeared to be content to enjoy the fruits of their grandparents' transborder labor facilitated by U.S. legal status easing social mobility without concern of potential legal disputes. The "inherited" (or intergenerationally passed-down) properties and Tijuana's downtown gentrification reminds respondents that they are the rightful heirs to the "Tijuana Dream," laid out by their forebearers and throughout the first half of the 20th C.

According to respondents' narratives and memories of family migration during the "Age of Tourism", the "Tijuana Dream" centered around the following notions: immigrating to Tijuana as a city of destination; seeking a place as far away from the central Mexican plateau and closest to the United States; articulating a parallel (or perhaps, competitive) narrative to the traditional U.S.-Mexico immigrant journey; establish transborder labor and commercial trade routes; secure a U.S. dollar income; expected access to U.S. immigration documents (such as Visitor's Visa, Permanent Residence, or Naturalization); efforts to colonize the northwestern Mexican frontier in the founding of historic residential *colonias*; anchoring to Mexico via family members and parents' Tijuana birth; building U.S. and Mexico cross-border civil society and community networks; and most importantly, catering to U.S. consumer and production markets both in Mexico and the U.S.

Despite the trauma, violence, war, and bloodshed that prompted respondents' family migration to the northwest border with the United States, memories of migration highlight moments where the "the pursuit of happiness" and ancestral "merit" are at the center of their agentic trajectories. Since the inception of the "Tijuana Dream," *"aquí"* or "here" is an imagined space where Los Angeles County,

Orange County, San Diego County, and Tijuana co-exist; and "*el allá*," or "over there" is the rest of the globe, with the exception of the U.S.-Mexican border region and Southern California transborder U.S.-Mexico communities.

1965 INTO THE PRESENT AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

After the U.S. *Bracero* Program ended and families from all over Western Mexico immigrated to Tijuana, the transformations of the mid-size city into a metropolitan global hub begin to emerge (Kun and Montezemolo 5). Starting in 1965, "Tijuana became one of many international cities that felt the brunt of widespread deindustrialization campaigns and drives toward outsourced manufacturing," argue Kun and Montezemolo (2010, 7). As David Harvey has pointed out, it is in the post-1965 era that the uneven geographical distribution of capital and development takes place in the shape of globalization (2000, 78). It is also in this era that the city of Tijuana shifts from a tourist catering economy to export-oriented industrialization models.

Later in the 1980s when the oil glut hit the world market, Mexico' economy collapsed. As an oil-exporting nation, Mexico went through a wrenching external debt, economic inflation, overvalued peso *vis-à-vis* the dollar, fiscal and trade deficit, stagnant agricultural activity, weak industrial structure and increasing interest rates. Capital flight was triggered, oil prices fell drastically, and the country's economic meltdown began. In an act of post-revolutionary demagoguery, former Mexican President, José López Portillo declared in a 1981 national press conference that he "would defend the peso like a dog[40]" in the crumbling economy. One year later, Lopez

[40] "*Defendamos a nuestro peso. Ésa es la estructura que conviene al pais. Esa es la estructura a la que me he comprometido a defender como perro*"

Portillo appeared teary-eyed on Mexican national television instituting the nationalization of Mexican banks and accusing investors of being "unpatriotic[41]" (El Debate 2015)

Paradoxically, as Mexico experienced one of its most profound post-revolutionary economic downfalls, Tijuana grew and went through a period of bonanza. Tijuana's 1980s economic prosperity was due to its privileged geographic location, the establishment of a free-trade zone, growth of the *maquiladora* industry, and availability of a more realistic currency exchange vis-à-vis the dollar (Zenteno 1997, 123-124). And while supply-and-demand for imported goods diminished throughout the rest of Mexico, border cities' commercial and service industries grew.

It was during the 1980s that Tijuana became an important site to purchase cheaper imported goods and afford services at a lower prices than in other parts of Mexico. For example 6,000 new commercial and 9,000 service industry establishments opened during the 1980s in Tijuana (Zenteno 1997, 125). Also during the decade of the 1980s, Tijuana is better able to solidify its position as an important urban center for the "new" export-oriented industrial model attracting global markets, investors and low-waged workers to the northern border (126-127).

By 1987, Tijuana had become the most important *maquiladora* industry hub, hosting almost a third of the total twin-plants in the border region. From 1980 to 1990, *maquiladoras* quadrupled meanwhile, employment rates multiplied almost six-times.

[41] By February of 1982, the exchange rate to buy American dollars had increased by almost 75% and was set at $46 pesos by Banxico (*Banco de Mexico*, the Mexican Bank). By the following year, Mexico had formally entered an external debt crisis and the price of the dollar vis-à-vis the peso increased by 470% and amounting to $149 pesos per dollar. By the end of that year, the dollar worth reached $161 pesos. In 1984 it increased to $210; $453 by 1985; $913 in 1986; $2225 in 1987; and, $2298 in 1988. In six-years, the worth of the dollar increased almost sixteen times in the Mexican national economy (El Financiero).

By the end of that decade, Tijuana's *maquiladora* industry had created more than 65,000 jobs. However, studies show that extreme poverty was experienced relatively similar in Tijuana and other major Mexican cities, such as, Ciudad Juarez, Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Ciudad de Mexico. However, the income for the top 25%, 50% and 75% in Tijuana was almost double than the same cohort in Mexico City and Guadalajara (Zenteno 1997, 25). As a result, immigration to Tijuana grew exponentially during the same decade. For all these reasons, Tijuana became an important migrant destination in the 1980s (Zenteno 1997, 129)

For example, Rafael, is a second-generation U.S. citizen, originally from Ensenada, whose parents migrated to Tijuana securing upper-level management employment at one of the main *maquiladoras* in the border city. So is the case of Pablo, whose parents returned from Mexicali to Tijuana with a white-collar job offer at local *maquiladoras*. Daphne's Guadalajara-born mother also migrated to Tijuana during the 1980s, after meeting and marrying Daphne's father during her doctoral studies in Psychology at the Universität de Barcelona, Spain. Upon earning their doctoral degrees in Psychiatry and Psychology, the aspiring young couple returned to Mexico and opened one of the first methadone licensed rehabilitation treatment clinics in Latin America.

TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALIST CLASS AT THE TIJUANA BORDER

In order to provide context to the economic upward mobility experienced by transborder families in the post-1965 maquiladora era, I briefly share Leslie Sklair's concept of "transnational capitalist class." Leslie Sklair has theorized how the global and local wealth inequality created by the maquiladora boom of the 1980s created a "transnational capitalist class" at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (1992, 96). While

maquiladora workers, as well as Mexican workers in general, suffered a serious economic decline and standards of living during the 1980s, a "border ruling class" emerged—what Sklair calls, the "*maquila* transnational capitalist class" (1996, 96). During the 1980s, the maquiladora industry replaced the mining, agricultural, ranching underclasses with an industrial proletariat at the borderlands, mainly in Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana (Sklair 1992, 98).

Sklair theorizes that "transnational capitalist class" at the border, tends to think globally rather than locally and include people from many countries (mainly North America and Japan) (1996, 95). Sklair, quoting Salas-Porras, argues there are four groups of people that make-up the "border ruling class": 1) global and local executives and affiliates; 2) globalizing state bureaucrats; 3) capitalistic politicians and professionals; and, 4) consumerist elites (merchants and media) (Sklair 1992, 95). This new post-*maquiladora* transnational capitalist class differs from colonial and traditionally landed and agricultural oligarchies of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands region.

The *maquiladora* transnational capitalist class is "a new bourgeoisie in a considerably Western capitalist sense" (Sklair 1996, 97). Quoting Salas-Porras, Sklair describes that locally, the transnational capitalist class' base relies in services for *maquiladoras*, instead of productive investment; and exploitation of the "private-public sector symbiosis" in their favor and against the public interest[42] (1992, 97). This

[42] Sklair further explains "transnational capitalist class executives tend to be from manufacturing backgrounds, while their local affiliates tend to be from administrative or financial background, though this is changing as more Mexicans become plant managers… Many maquiladora executive have come through assembly operation in one or more countries apart from the USA and Mexico and they are more aware of corporate level strategy then might otherwise be the case… The nature of Mexican business elites… may also be changing, as some key domestically oriented and internally directed familistic groups are gradually being transformed into globally oriented and externally directed corporativistic groups" (1992, 97)

transnational capitalist class furthers the interest of "the global capitalistic project" above narrow national interests (Sklair 1992, 102).

Accordingly, the "culture-ideology of consumerism," favors the purchasing and import of American goods and services. While there is a history of "culture ideology of consumerism" in northern Mexico (Sklair 1992, 103), the *maquiladora* industry also helped boost the values and practices of this ideology with infrastructure. The main roads surrounding the *maquiladora* industrial parks link factories workers to U.S.-styled shopping malls, grocery stores and warehouses, restaurant chains, and consumer goods.

PARENTOCRACY AND TRANSBORDER FAMILIES AT THE TIJUANA-SAN DIEGO BORDER

Fronteriza/os and their transborder family members' seek a U.S. socioeconomic class and legal status via U.S. birthright citizenship. Through the oral histories the values and belief systems upheld in transborder middle-class Tijuana culture of aspirational upward mobility surfaced. Transborder families' desire to secure a U.S. birthright citizenship for their offspring resulted in an aspirational upward mobility, celebration of the myth of meritocracy, re-affirming Mexican border residence, while aiming to dodge the advancement of U.S.-Mexico border militarization.

I argue that by the second and third generation residing in Tijuana, U.S. birthright citizenship becomes a far more desirable legal status than any other forms of U.S. statuses amongst available for the majority of *transborder* families, as respondents have shared in this study. Borrowing from Tessman and Koyama (2017) I theorize that transborder parentocracy, includes the diverse efforts carried-out by Baja California border-rooted, U.S. documented, and affluent parents who strategically

choose a U.S.' birth to then pass on U.S. citizenship status and privileges to their border children (5).

Transborder parentocracy is paradigmatically articulated by Antonio. As a Los Angeles born, cross-border filmmaker, Antonio is conscious of how his family and extended family members with Mexican-border rootedness, U.S. documentation, and parent with a college degree, unequally benefitted from the growth of the *maquiladora* industry. This rapid upward mobility, in turn, allowed Antonio's family to afford an elite U.S. private birth delivery service at the border. However, not necessarily driven by desire to access U.S. public education and healthcare, as shared by the respondent,

> I was born into Mexico's privileged side. I went to private school for the first fifteen years of my life. I saw Mexico through the eyes of someone who was basically sheltered by parents who were mildly successful and part of the new professional class of Tijuana. This professional class who benefitted from the *maquiladora* boom and developed *maquiladoras* or businesses. My father's *compadres* and my father benefitted from this early investment in Tijuana. My parents were above average everybody else in Mexico, now that I see it… because if I compare myself and my family to someone who, let's say [from] *el DF* or in Chiapas, or in Tabasco you can definitely see that we were part of the middle, upper-middle class in that spectrum. I mean the income was somewhere between $15,000 and $20,000 dollars a year and so that definitely puts you in the middle class, for a family of five. That is, going from middle class to upper middle class in Mexico.

Antonio's class consciousness reflects the normalized unequal wealth distribution in Mexico, while also understanding the 1980s local professional class experienced upward mobility. As Sarabia has theorized, this is due in part to their class-status, Mexican-border rootedness, English language skills, and access to U.S. documentation. In addition to these factors, I include the multi-generational border settlement as a factor impacting the transmission of cultural capital and wealth, from one transborder generation unto another as a classed a familial expectation.

Like Antonio, all respondents reported that, regardless of moment of family migration to Tijuana and U.S. or Mexican legal status, their families benefitted from

upward mobility during the 1980s. This in turn may have also impacted Tijuana families' aspirations and expectations of intergenerational upward mobility, consumption practices, and wealth accumulation. As Antonio narrative shows, another way that upwardly mobile and affluent transborder families translated that economic boost was through a U.S.' birth. Amongst transborder families, whether in the Baja California-California and Arizona-Sonora borders, U.S. birth delivery is not an uncommon expectation amongst U.S. documented and Mexican border-rooted families. Scholars have theorized this practice broadly as flexible citizenship (Ong 1999; Fong 2011) and more locally, as border parentocracy (Tessman and Koyama 2017).

When I asked Pablo, a twenty-six year old transnational urban developer and entrepreneur, what being a U.S. citizen meant for him as a *fronterizo*, his story was framed around multi-generational cross-border family rootedness and cultural heritage. In Pablo's case, his biracial white and Latino father wished for his son to be born and raised in Mexico. However, Pablo's mother, a multi-generationally U.S.-born *transfronteriza* was adamantly against the father's position. Pablo recalls,

> My father wanted for me to be born in Mexico. But my mother said to him, "how are we going to limit Pablo's opportunities?!' … After many arguments, it was decided that I would be born in the United States... My mother is also a U.S.-born citizen, and so are my grandmother, and great-grandmother. We are all *fronterizos*! Legally, I am All-American… I am fourth generation U.S.-born from my mother's side. From my father's side, I would be second-generation U.S.-born *fronterizo*. From my mother's side, I am fourth generation U.S.-born *fronterizo* [respondent repeats due to pride]. She was also born in San Diego… We were all born in San Diego... I know we were all delivered in Southern California private hospitals. I was born in Hermosa Heights. For my mother, it was an automatic decision...It's our heritage. It's very automatic. If you are to have a child... You deliver them over there! You give birth to them over there! That way, they can also be American.

While middle-to-upper-class Tijuana families benefited from the post-*maquiladora* transnational economic restructuring, they also understood that their local capital and investments in the globalizing economy would be undermined by

global and neoliberal values and expectations. In this new game of globalized neoliberal economy, global capital is the leading advantage. Local capital, on the other hand, which is place-specific, tends to be subjugated to global demands and marginalized (Heyman and Greenberg 2012, 249). I theorize, following Heyman and Greenberg's suggestion's on neoliberal capital and mobility at the border that, transborder cosmopolitan families strategically planned U.S. births in order to avoid children suffering from the grips of global capitalism and ensure the preservation of transborder cosmopolitans lifestyle and participation in neoliberal, global and local processes alike (2012, 249)

For example, Raphael was born in the city of San Diego. His parents planned for his birth in the United States to allow him to enjoy better possibilities and opportunities, such as, a better education and better employment as an adult. Rafael's grandparents supported the family through this process by renting out a one-bedroom apartment in downtown San Diego and make sure that the mother to be and newborn child had a temporary home in the United States. But, most importantly, the downtown sublet was secured to avoid any birth complications and prevent Raphael from being born in Mexico at all costs.

Mobility and legal status, risky gendered border-crossings and immigrant networks are at the center of transborder cosmopolitan birth stories. *Fronteriza/o* legal and class consciousness is marked by the social expectations of the *maquiladora* transnational capitalist class and value system. Transborder cosmopolitan birth stories are in conversation and affirmation with, rather than in contestation towards transnational capitalist classed expectations of mobility and status. Transborder cosmopolitan birth stories reveal internalized and often times, decontextualized notions of mobility and inequality at the Tijuana-San Diego context.

Vanessa's birth story centers gender and legal expectations of a transborder *ejidatario* (common-land shareholding) family in Rosarito, when it was still Tijuana's farmland. Vanessa's mother became pregnant after a "one-night-stand" with a Mexican-immigrant tourist at her local town of Rosarito. As the youngest and unmarried daughter of a rural *ejidatario* (land-owning) traditional family, she was disowned and pushed to migrate to the U.S. in search of an opportunity for her and her unborn child.

Fortunately, and due to Vanessa's grandfather U.S. citizen status and grandmother's Permanent Resident Status, Vanessa's mother also benefited from Permanent Resident Status. With no high-school degree or cash, but with a "Green Card" in hand, Vanessa's mother left rural Baja California for National City in southern San Diego County. Vanessa's mother arrived in the U.S. with a duffle bag and a few personal documents. Vanessa's uncle and aunt were a U.S.-Mexican-immigrant recently married couple who had just purchased a single-family home in National City. The couple offered shelter, support, and love. As Vanessa shares her mother's story,

> My mother got pregnant at age twenty after a one nightstand. My grandmother got so upset that she kicked my mother out of the house. Meanwhile, my mothers' oldest brother and wife were living in National City. My mother had nowhere else to go but to my uncle's. She stayed with him throughout her pregnancy and until I was born. I don't even know where my Mom got the money from, but she came up with a plan and declared, "I will birth Vanessa here!" That is how I was born over there.

Due to a lack of resources to receive prenatal care in Mexico, giving birth in the U.S. became the most viable option given that Vanessa's mother was unmarried with no money, employment, or healthcare to afford a Mexican delivery. As a legal permanent resident and single-parent, Vanessa's mother would have much more access to social and healthcare services for her new family living in the United States than in Mexico. As Vanessa put it, the only way out of her single-mother's destitution and provide opportunities and a future for the unborn child was by giving birth in the U.S. Doing so

would guarantee Vanessa's mother proper medical attention and access to technologically advanced facilities, and most importantly, a U.S. citizenship status, which would later translate into better education opportunities, healthcare, and access to social services for her newborn daughter.

While U.S. documentation and middle-class status are important factors impacting Mexican families' aspiration and expectation to give birth in the U.S., having immigrant networks on the other side are also influential for middle-class women and families. Had it not been for the class status, homeownership, and Vanessa's family networks in the Southern California, it is uncertain how her mother would've been able to afford the resources to give birth in the U.S. It was through family intergenerational wealth, institutional knowledge, and U.S.-immigrant networks that Vanessa's mother was able to "reach her goal" and give birth to Vanessa in the U.S.A.

However, newborn Vanessa and her mother did not have a sustainable living situation in Southern California either. Vanessa was taken to Mexico after three-weeks, as her mother had no other sustainable avenue to support a newborn girl and herself. She was raised in rural Rosarito, by her grandmother, mother, aunt, and cousin. Vanessa recalls her mother's cross-border newborn return-migration trajectory,

> About three weeks after I was born, she took me to Rosarito, so my grandmother could meet me. My grandmother fell in love with me and said, "You bring back my granddaughter to Rosarito!" So, my mother brought me back from San Diego to live and be raised along my grandmother, great-grandmother, aunts, uncles, and cousins in Rosarito. I grew up in Rosarito. My mom got married to a U.S. citizen in Rosarito and I even have two younger brothers who were born there [San Diego]. And we always lived in Rosarito.

Eventually, Vanessa's mother married a U.S.-documented cross-border commuter worker and had two more children in the U.S. all while living in Rosarito. Vanessa grew-up as an upper- middle-class heiress to her grandparents' *ejido* and first Pemex gas station in town, while attending private all-girls schools in Tijuana.

The importance of immigrant support-networks is echoed in middle-class Soraya's experience. Unlike Vanessa, Soraya is the second U.S.-born daughter into a middle-class transnational family. Soraya's parents may have had tourist and work visas during the pregnancy and the cash savings to afford a U.S. birth. However, Soraya's parents hadn't planned to birth their children in the U.S. until a close family friend of Anglo-American descent suggested that to the family. Soraya remembers the Texan family friend who made sure Soraya and her oldest brother had better educational and work opportunities in the U.S. The Anglo-Texan work manager eventually becomes "*Nina Kitty*," godmother to her eldest sibling and the parents' *comadre.*[43] Soraya recalls,

> My Dad worked as a bus driver in Mexicoach. My Grandfather worked in yellow taxis. It was there they met an American lady, who was a Texan, a very good person with them. You see they say that Texans who are very racist and do not know what? ... She was such a dear! She worked in Mexicoach with my dad. Was she the one who told them [parents / family?], "Why don't you have your children on this side? I'll help you!" She helped my mom and they had a really good friendship with her. She's my brother's godmother, she's our Nina Kitty,[44] she'd live over there, but would come a lot to this side because she was the manager for Mexicoach.

Cross-border labor and civil society networks facilitate transborder family upward mobility. It was due to Soraya's father and grandfather's access to unionized jobs in the binational tourism industry and labor markets, English-language skills, sensibility with Anglo-American and mainstream American culture, which facilitated Soraya's U.S. birth and by consequence benefit from citizenship status.

Mexican-border rooted families' access to spaces of privilege are impacted by their U.S. legal status. Due to her family's intergenerational U.S.-documentation

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[43] Trans. a "co-mother," that is, a friend or family member chosen to serve as a co-parent/mother and mentor to the child, following religious and cultural Catholic practices.
[44] Endearing short term for "*madrina*," or godmother in Spanish.

privileges, including work visas, a blue-collar U.S. income, and inter-ethnic borderland-allies and close-friendships, Soraya's family was able to access a developed world medical healthcare and U.S. birthright citizenship for their children.

However privileged and entitled Soraya's family may have felt to aspire to access private medical healthcare and gather the money to pay for the U.S. birth out-of-pocket, Soraya's mother feared that it may one day place her at-risk *vis-à-vis* Immigration and Customs Officials.[45] Because Soraya's mother did not enjoy a U.S. income, workers visa, and U.S. healthcare institutional knowledge, she feared that one day she would be denied entrance and punished for giving birth in the United States as a legal "non-immigrant." As Soraya narrates the story of her birth, she warns,

> It was a risk for my mother ... with a visa? Then my mom, always had many fears, of "They are going to catch me!", Or, "They are going to return me!" She took a risk, but she did it! But it was… *yes,* and with the help of *that* person. And obviously, they ran with all the expenses ... they paid for everything out-of-pocket. It was not like now, with MediCal and all that. They paid all the expenses in a private hospital ... I do not even know that hospital, but, that's what they say…[46]

Even though her mother would not technically be breaking the law, she continued to fear for future immigration and policy changes which might jeopardize her temporary U.S. status. Soraya's narrative gives a sense that her family's merit, or classed ability to access and afford U.S. private medical services with legal documents and cash-flow, entitled them to acquire U.S. birthright citizenship for their children. All the while ignoring the fears and anxieties of Soraya's mother, which unfortunately became true by the mid-1990s.

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[45] A fear that proved to be true in the mid-1990s when Soraya's mother lost her BCC/tourist visa when a Customs and Border Patrol officer accused her of "illegally working" in the United States. I will further discuss loss of visa privileges of transnational mixed-status families, in the following chapter.

[46] Translated from Spanish by the author

As part of an aspirational transnational capitalist class family, Soraya's mother was expected to give birth in the United States, not just by her Mexican-rooted family, but U.S. borderlanders too. Soraya's mother was a woman of modest and working-class background before marrying the cross-border bus-driver and employee of "Nina Kitty." Despite Soraya's mother border-rootedness, her classed background and legal status impacted her hesitation and fear against a U.S. delivery. But as Soraya reaffirms, it was due to the encouragement of her Anglo-Texan *comadre* and dollar-earning husband that her mother overcame her fears and "*logró,*" or fulfilled transborder family U.S.-delivery expectations.

The myth of meritocracy and uncritical notions of inequality and mobility are simultaneous articulated in Helena's birth story. Helena is the second-born and only daughter of a transnational capitalist merchant family. When I asked Helena what she knew about her family's motivation to deliver her in the United States, she framed the story by a simultaneous class and legal consciousness and internalized notions of meritocracy. Helena internally negotiates as she recalls the story of her birth,

> My brother Fabian was born here in Tijuana and he has another dad. I think its important to note. I had ... well my dad had the possibility of paying for a cesarean in the United States, being able to be in a hospital, and then to give me a better option. My third brother ... this, then, is… umm… [long pause]. That is when my mother's visa was taken away ... and all that ... My father procrastinated, so as my mother could not cross, they had him here in Mexico and after fifteen years my brother became a naturalized citizen through my father..[47]

The story of her birth begins and ends with her Mexican-born "under-privileged" siblings, whom for classed or legal obstacles, were not able to fulfill expectations of transborder parentocracy.

[47] Translated from Spanish by the author.

Transborder parentocracy as merit fragments and creates distances amongst siblings. Helena's opening clarification contrasting her parents' mobility and socioeconomic and legal status at her moment of birth with that of her siblings' reveals a classed double standard. Impacted by middle-upper-class family expectations, Helena distinguishes between her "half" and "full" blood-line family. On the one hand, Helena contrast between the half-U.S.-documented, upwardly-mobile and middle-class nuclear family, with the "other," non-U.S.-documented, Mexican-born and half-sibling, Fabian.

While both male siblings were born in Mexico, grew-up in Tijuana without U.S. documentation and lived under the same roof for the majority of their lives, transnational capitalist class and a meritocratic value system impact Helena's lens. On the one hand, Fabian, the older brother from another father is marked as "other" due to the classed differences between the transnational capitalist class and *maquiladora* working class backgrounds[48] which marked their birth stories. On the other hand, Helena understands her younger and "full-bloodline" sibling's story and circumstance with empathy and critical awareness to the legal immigration context. However, Fabian's similar circumstance (vis-à-vis transnational capitalist expectations) is framed by lack of merit in contrast to her and youngest sibling's father who had "the opportunity to pay for a cesarean at the United States, stay at a hospital, and grant me better opportunities.[49]"

Procrastination is even preferable than lack of class privileges and upward mobility. Helena justifies and excuses her father's fifteen-year plus lag and

[48] Later in the conversation, Helena mentioned that her mother divorced her former husband due to failed classed expectations and mismatching aspirations of upward mobility.
[49] Translated from Spanish by the author

procrastination extending U.S. citizenship rights to his wife and youngest son. However, skewed classed assumptions inform Helena's view and understanding of her older sibling's class and legal background. While the youngest sibling suffered from downward mobility due to her father's "quirkiness;" Fabian's "otherness" and destiny is marked as underserving by socioeconomic and legal border status markers, and his father's *maquiladora* working-class, peso-earning, non-U.S.-documented background.

Transborder parentocracy as merit also fragments and creates distances amongst siblings from the same blood-line and skews notions of love and care. "*Yo soy la única hija planeada. ¡A mí me planearon con amor, me querían!*[50]" Daphne self-righteously exclaims as she opens-up about her birth story. For Daphne merit and exceptionalism is equated to love, not inequality or class struggles. In Daphne's words,

> R: I am the only planned child. I was planned with love. I was loved.
>
> A: Do you know what motived your parents to give birth to you in the United States?
>
> R: Oh yes!! So many things! For starters, they wanted for me to have dual citizenship. My Dad wanted for me to be president of the United Stated of America and he would really say that to me! Also to purchase American cars. They wanted for me (us?) to have the opportunities offered by dual nationality, and what the United States had to offer. My Mom was interested in having a safe birth. For my Mom, the idea of giving birth in the United States would appease her. Oh! And one other thing. My Dad wanted to go to psychiatry school in the United States, but he was not admitted. He wanted for us to have much more opportunities than he had because he was Mexican. Because my Dad was not admitted for graduate school in the U.S., he had to go to Spain instead. His first choice was not Spain, but the U.S. [51]

Daphne is the second-born daughter of a philanthropist and healthcare executive family. Her parents are both graduate school educated in Spain. During

[50] Trans. "I am the only planned daughter. I was planned with love, they [parents] wanted me"
[51] Translated from Spanish by the author

graduate school, Daphne's oldest sister was born. Yet due to Spanish *jus-sangunis* or bloodline citizenship laws and the parents' lack of institutional knowledge at the time of her birth, the eldest sister grew-up without a citizenship status for the first five-years of her life. As Daphne points-out, her parents were not expecting to give birth to a child in Spain, but rather, earn their doctoral degrees in the medical field. Daphne's transnational capitalist family planning included U.S. childbirth and citizenship status. Which may explain why her eldest sister's Spanish birth is marked as "unruly," unplanned", and undeserving of admiration, in contrast to her exceptional American birth story

U.S. birthright citizenship status and binational privileges are the driving factors motivating upper class and elite women to birth in the U.S. Guendeleman and Jasis (1992) argued that because upper class and elite women's strong binational ties and mobility, they prefer to deliver in the U.S. than Mexico. As one of Guendelman and Jasis respondents put it, "enjoyment of two cultures is one of the beauties of living on the border and the ability to adapt to both societies is something we want to transmit to our children" (1992, 423) Another way to re-understand upper-class and elite women's binational sensibility is, "transborder parentocracy."

The normalization of transborder parentocracy practices at the Tijuana-San Diego border are echoed by Marianna, the youngest of four-U.S. born *fronteriza/o* children part of an upper-middle class Tijuana household,

> I was born in San Diego on October 1987, at a private hospital in South San Diego County. My siblings were also born in the same hospital, same room almost, as a matter of fact, that hospital room was reserved for my family[52] [Sarcastically chuckles].

[52] Translated from Spanish by the author.

With multiple generations expecting and accessing privileged forms of U.S. documentation status, such as U.S. citizenship, fed aspirational upward mobility via legal status unclear. This in turn impacted transborder families dependence and interconnectedness with communities in California, and particularly, San Diego County. This chapter has shown how Mexican border rootedness is tied to aspirational upward mobility, pursuit and desire to access U.S. labor markets, educational spaces, healthcare services, and upscale cultural practices; and without having the desire or future plans to permanently settle north of the border.

Transborder parentocracy as merit is evidenced in most of the narratives in the rendition of the family planning and ability to birth a child in the U.S. and entering the country "legally" through Mexican white-collar jobs or blue-collar jobs with American incomes. However, there is a lack of critical consciousness of families classed, ethnic, racial, and legal privileges. This lack of critical consciousness exists alongside parents' lack of knowledge in navigating U.S. institutions, relying on transnational immigrant network at the borderlands, and ability to save thousands of American dollars to pay the cost of a U.S. birth. In sum, transborder parentocracy shows the multi-generational aspect of this transborder border family practice and expectation. And, transborder parentocracy is heightened as an economic strategy to solidify class standing and not a form of social and national belonging.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the turn of the 20th C., Mexican borderland families have settled at the Tijuana and San Diego borderlands, and lived, labored, learned, and loved through U.S. cross-border networks, routines, and social practices. In order to secure and facilitate a cross-border lifestyle, individuals and their families have sought after inter-

generational U.S. legal documentation, allowing them to enter the country for leisure, consumption of goods and services, business, labor, and schooling. In this chapter I have highlighted the context of transborder families' histories of migration to Tijuana and U.S. legal backgrounds spanning through the 20th Century, when internal and U.S.-return migrants settled at the Tijuana-San Diego region and formed transborder family units and community networks across nations.

Through an oral history collection with eleven U.S. born *fronteriza/os* part of transborder family units, this chapter contextualized how Baja California and northern Mexican residing families established intergenerational networks across California and the U.S., while experiencing gradual upward mobility in Mexico and due to their U.S. legal status and privileges. This gradual, inter-generational, Mexican upward mobility is epitomized in border parents' pursuit of U.S. birthright citizenship for their 1980s born *fronteriza/o* offspring, and a practice that I describe as "transborder parentocracy." While cross-border labor, schooling, economy, environment, and demographics have been widely studied, the experiences of transborder families with a U.S. citizen child and diverse U.S. legal statuses, or what I call, transborder mixed-status families, have been considerably overlooked in academic literature, and is a further topic of discussion in the following chapter.

Transborder family formation and transborder parentocracy are two practices epitomizing the "Tijuana Dream" narrative, i.e., the idea that one can experience the "American Dream" in Mexican borderland. To reiterate, I found that the "Tijuana Dream" narrative includes assumptions, notions, practices, and expectations, such as, Tijuana is a city of immigrant destination; seeking close contact with the United States and distance from central Mexico; articulating a competitive story to the traditional U.S.-Mexican migrant saga; cross-border employment and trade; an American income in

dollars; expectations to attain U.S. immigration status; actively participate in colonizing efforts in northwestern Mexican frontier; culturally anchoring to the Mexican borderland via family members birth in Tijuana; fomenting transborder civil society and community networks across U.S. and Mexico; and most importantly, catering to Mexican and the U.S. affluent and globalized consumer and production markets; and, childbirth in the U.S.

CHAPTER 5

FRONTERIZA/O LEGAL CONSCIOUSNESS: U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND MEXICAN DUAL NATIONALITY

Chapter Abstract: In this chapter I examine how U.S. citizenship and Mexican dual nationality laws shape the legal consciousness of *fronteriza/os*. Through ethnographic fieldwork collected between 2013 and 2017, including 22 qualitative interviews, participant observations, and researchers' journals and memoranda, I argue that *fronteriza/os* legal consciousness is presently shaped by differentiated access to Mexican dual nationality, while U.S. citizenship is shaped by routine searches at DHS' regulated U.S. Ports of Entry and as part of a transborder mixed-status family unit. I theorize that *fronteriza/os'* articulate a transborder form of legal consciousness as one that oscillates between normalizing draconian anti-immigrant U.S. and Mexican border policies, practices against border crossing and residing communities, and while abstractly rejecting some of these same policies. Altogether, *fronteriza/o* transborder legal consciousness, characterized by differential Mexican nationality and their transborder mixed-status family membership, continues to sustain and celebrate the "Tijuana Dream" narrative. Understanding the impact and implications of cross-border U.S. citizenship and Mexican nationality legislation in the legal consciousness of *fronteriza/os* can be theorized through the commodified, meritocratic allusion and sets of practices promising an exceptionally privileged and unique way of living the "American Dream" at the Mexican northwest border, particularly in Tijuana and sustained by U.S. and Mexican binational social structures privileging upward social mobility at the border.

INTRODUCTION

> Many people in my family have a U.S. citizenship. All 1989 born cousins are also born "*over there*." Only one lives on the other side and the other three of us, practically share the same situation [long pause] ... That is… [hesitates] Our mothers had us "*over there*," we were born *there* in the United States.
>
> It is something very common in my family. It is also very usual to have [Mexican] dual nationality. For outsiders this is something strange. That is why I do not talk about it a lot with other people. Is it shame? Maybe. I am not one to be, "I AM A [U.S.] CITIZEN!" Because I know that for many people, it's a desire. As well as having dual citizenship… Actually, more than anything, being an American.
>
> To me it was something normal. I would never say, "I AM SO PROUD!" Many people who would later found out would tell me, "You are a citizen! You have so many more possibilities!" You know? like "él American Dream."
>
> I would like to emphasize, that I have always lived and studied in Mexico, while having the possibility to leave and go "over there." The issue here is to understand my childhood [Long pause]

> Practically none of my brothers could cross. I used to cross with my father on Sundays, on his day off work. I would cross the border with him, we would go to the grocery store, clothes shopping, and run family errands all day. I lived that kind of [American] life a bit more closely that my siblings. But we would never go to fancy department stores or malls. NO. My dad always took us to the Swap-Meets. NO. Wait. He would *only* take *me* [Long pause]
>
> Years later and as we grew older, we were finally all able to cross the border together as a family[53] (Helena, 3rd generation U.S. born *fronteriza*, 28).

In the previous chapter, I discussed how *fronteriza/os'* transborder citizenship and transborder family practices takes shape in the "Tijuana Dream" narrative, that includes a set of assumptions celebrating meritocracy and affluence as readily available to U.S. citizens at the Mexican borderlands. Also in the previous chapter I discussed how according to respondents, the imagined communities of the "Tijuana Dream" narrative sharing space "*aquí*," or "here" is irrespective of geopolitical borders, and includes places from Los Angeles County, Orange County, San Diego County, and all the way south of the border, to include, Tijuana, Baja California. As articulated in *fronteriza/os'* family histories of transborder citizenship practices, *"el allá,"* or "over there," refers to all other parts of the globe, except for what Carlos Vélez-Ibañez has theorized as the "Southwest North American (SWNA) region" shared between Mexico and the U.S. (2017, 11).

When discussing both Mexican nationality and U.S. citizenship legal status, and as evidenced in Helena's opening epigraph, cultural spatial paradigms shift. Contrary to the oral histories, in the present, and as articulated in the 22 qualitative interviews, "*el aquí*" or "here," is no longer an imagined transborder "third" in-between space. Rather, "*el aquí*" is strictly demarcated as anywhere south of the U.S.-Mexico border, and within the confines of the Mexican Republic. By flipping the narrative, *"el allá,"* or,

[53] Translated from Spanish by the author.

"over there" is no longer the central Mexican plateau, but north of the U.S.-Mexico border, and it is utilized to refer discreetly to the United States of America.

The findings in this chapter have important implications both in academic literature and for U.S.-Mexico cross-border communities. Despite the ongoing popularity of the identity term, "*transfronteriza/o*" in spaces of higher learning, media, transportation, and civil society, none of the participating respondents who would otherwise neatly fit the theoretical framings of this form of exceptional cross-border politic, as according to Iglesias Prieto (2011), self-identified as such. Instead their identities continued to be framed around the confines of Mexican state and U.S. state legislation, by employing terms like, "Mexican American" and *je dure* and/or *de facto* "Dual national." For this reason, I theorize on *fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness and argue that it is shaped in tandem by two sets of nation state legislations: U.S. citizenship and Mexican dual nationality. This is a process that I characterize as *fronteriza/o* respondents articulation and construction of a transborder legal consciousness.

Throughout this chapter I will continue to argue how *fronteriza/os* 'construct and articulate a transborder form of legal consciousness. In my attempt to better explicate *fronteriza/os'* relationship with Mexican dual nationality and U.S. citizenship, I theorize "transborder legal consciousness", taking into consideration both Mexican and U.S. legal structures and in tandem with each other. By peeling the contemporary 21st C. layered legal understandings and relationships that U.S.-born Mexican border crossers construct around ideals of Mexican nationality and U.S. citizenship, I further argue that *fronteriza/os* "transborder legal consciousness" can be theorized through the notions of "differential nationality" to characterize their relationships with the

Mexican state and "transborder mixed-status family" to describe how they relate to the U.S. nation-state.

Ultimately, I argue that transborder legal consciousness, sustained by dual and simultaneous understandings of Mexican dual nationality and U.S. Citizenship, all contribute to the aspirational and carefully curated narratives of the "Tijuana Dream." Altogether, the conceptualizations of "transborder legal consciousness," "differential Mexican nationality," and "transborder mixed-status family," give meaning to the often uncertain, layered, complicated, shifting, and conflicting realities that *fronteriza/os* must grapple with on a day-to-day basis, along with their mixed-status families and having some to none Mexican legal status, and at the hyper-militarizing and U.S.-Mexico border context.

FRONTERIZA/O U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND TRANSBORDER MIXED-STATUS FAMILIES

U.S. legal status is central to *fronteriza/os'* transborder family members at the Tijuana border and it also implicates and shapes *fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness. The different sets of U.S. legal statuses also impacts the relationships and experiences amongst transborder family members with different sets of U.S. legal documents, otherwise known as, mixed-status families. Different U.S. legal statuses allow for stratified forms of incorporation or participation into U.S. *and* Mexican institutions. Undocumented and non-citizen transnationals have limited access to U.S. and Mexican institutions and spaces. Whereas, U.S. documented and citizen privileged transborder citizens, on the other hand, benefit from and have better access to developed education, labor markets, and culture.

In the following sections I will demonstrate how *fronteriza/o* transborder legal citizenship is shaped in relationship to their transborder family members' mixed-legal

statuses. Because *fronteriza/os* transborder citizenship experiences and legal consciousness are mainly affected in relationship to transborder mixed-status family members' legal status and access to the U.S. and its institutions, I argue that while U.S. privileged status means that *fronteriza/os* find some agency and empowerment in their social mobility, they are also overwhelmed by feelings of exclusion, disempowerment, and shame due to border violence and trauma, fear of *la migra* (CBP agents), and inflated expectations of upward mobility.

An example of how these feelings of exclusion, shame, and disempowerment manifest are evidenced in respondents' twenty-two qualitative interviews. Helena rushed into her initial interview because her busy cross-border schedule only allowed three free hours each month, which she agreed to spend by sharing about what a U.S. citizenship status meant to her. She was unassumingly sitting across from me in the brand-new hotel boutique lobby chair where she requested to meet for the interview. She sported a pair of light blue jeans and a light grey Banana Republic cashmere sweater, a low ponytail with a baby blue satin ribbon tied around her contrasting pitch black and straight hair. She candidly opened up the conversation with, "Ok! Let's talk about *la ciudadanía*! Helena was excited to share how she understands her U.S. citizenship. "What do you want to know?" she said and then went straight into the conversation.

Helena is a part-time lecturer at the local Tijuana public teaching institution, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California-Tijuana. She is also a lesbian feminist activist and mother of a four-year old fourth generation U.S.-born child, who I will refer to as, "Ian." Helena lives with her son in her childhood home in the middle-class postal service unionized housing neighborhood of *La Postal*. She is also a seasonal commuter

worker at the local Las Americas Premium Outlets across the border in San Ysidro, California, and during the holiday season between November and January.

Figure 5.1 Street view of Helena's seasonal workplace, the border factory Premium Outlets of Las Americas in San Ysidro, California. The Border Wall is visible in the background runs along the mall's southern perimeter. Tijuana hillsides and television antennas are also visible in the distance.

Helena's younger brother, mother and father are all U.S. citizens. Helena's oldest sibling is a Mexican citizen with a Border Crossing Card. However, Helena's family's U.S. status has tremendously shifted from undocumented siblings and "punished" mother, to Mexican dual nationals (which I will discuss further in the following section).

Helena answers her opening question stating and almost defending herself with, "Look! I AM MEXICAN. I was only born in *el otro lado* (on the other side). And I don't feel special for being a U.S. citizen." Later in the conversation I find out that it is because of her mother's inability to cross the border for more than ten-years awaiting for *El Castigo* (ten-year immigration restriction on foreign-entry) to clear and "the Pardon" petition to regularize her status through a U.S. legal process in the mid-1990s and 2000s. Helena shares that it is because of her mother's inability to cross that her youngest brother *had* to be born in Mexico, and according to the arguments in this study, due to the failed expectations on transborder parentocracy.

Unable to have her mother or sibling to accompany her on the way to school in San Diego and across the U.S.-Mexico border, Helena regrets having to attend Mexican public schools out of necessity and due to a lack of *"acompañamiento"* or someone to join her during the daily cross-border commute. Helena understands that her and her family's U.S. status impacted her educational opportunities, which she now laments. Helena speaks very little English and while she is a college lecturer, she feels insecure about her Mexican public education. Helena's child attends a private bilingual Montessori school in Tijuana. Helena hopes her child can grow up to be a happy professional and follow his dreams in Mexico or the United States, without a cultural or language barrier, unlike her.

U.S. legal statuses, U.S. citizenship, and immigration policy impact the daily lived experiences of transborder families living at the Mexican border. While the experiences of mixed-status families living beyond U.S. boundaries have not been typically conceptualized in this way, my study demonstrates that it makes complete sense to think of transborder families as also being impacted by U.S. mixed-legal status. Border spaces give rise to mixed status families, which in turn fragment families lived experience at the border. This fragmentation can truncate *fronteriza/o*s' and U.S. citizen children's access to U.S. spaces of learning, or placing adult responsibilities on *fronteriza/o* children while in the U.S., such as, caregiving, translating, or, serving as cross-border family liaison.

The legal status of parents in the study shifted over time and in part due to immigration policy privileging family unification. For example, Helena, Marco, and Erick's parents applied for Permanent Resident Status as soon as their eldest born turned 21 years of age. In all three cases, parents had applied for naturalization and are now U.S. citizens living in Tijuana. They are no longer a mixed-status family, but a U.S. citizen family of *fronteriza/os* living at the Mexican border. Out of the three respondents with non-immigrant visa parents, only Mariana's petitioned for Permanent Residence for her parents and after the 2008 recession, when they lost all financial security in Mexico and migrated to the U.S. instead and now work at a San Ysidro Swap Meet.

Legal documentation is utilized as a strategy to enter the United States, and part of a deeply rooted daily routine in Mexican border residents experience. As expressed by Helena, U.S. legal status is an expectation amongst Mexican borderland families, or what I call, "transborder parentocracy." Just as much as legal documentation is expected, the absence of it is also a shameful reality that families live with even while

in Mexico. Speaking about legal documentation is quotidian. It is the daily bread. It is neither great, proud, disgusting, nor joyful. As expressed by Helena, it is as plain as, "Your name in Helena, born in 1989 in the city of Chula Vista." Just normal. However "normal," Helena experienced privilege compared to Mexican border working families and residents in the rest of Mexico.

U.S UNDOCUMENTED TRANSBORDER PARENT AND CITIZEN CHILD

Legal documentation is simultaneously a class status symbol, a mechanism for upward mobility, and a strategy to prevent border violence *vis-à-vis* CBP officers. This practice is very specific to the city of Tijuana during its transition from nation-state led modernization, to neoliberal and privatized development. As expressed by Marco's recollection of legal documentation during his childhood and the role that urban development had and impacting his childhood,

> As a child… [long pause] There is something very important I need to clarify [Pause. Takes a deep breath]. As a child, I don't remember the United States that much. I don't remember the United States that much because my parents wouldn't cross into the United States. I grew-up as a U.S. citizen of Mexican parents who couldn't cross into the United States due to a legal visa dispute. And it was very simple. My Dad was denied entry and was punished for having a tourist visa. After ten years, he would be able to request a visa. Which happened, and he is now a Permanent Resident, about to become a naturalized U.S. Citizen, if all goes well.
>
> Thus, I grew in the city of Tijuana in all aspects, education, coming-of-age, fashion and trends of the 1990s and early 2000s. It was a very prosperous time and place, so I faired very well. I did notice how there were increasing options for malls, urban growth, and booming city infrastructure. You could see the increased movement and flow of wealth throughout the city. By 2000, things begin to take an even more accelerated pace, and I did feel as if everything was going too fast. Like, city growth, the urban sprawl, and media attention after former PRI presidential candidate [Luis Donaldo] Colosio's death. It was after the '90s that Mexico put an eye on Tijuana.[54]

[54] Translated from Spanish by the author

Despite class privileges, social mobility, and legal status, transborder mixed-status families experience violence at the border and are constantly under threat to non-routine inspections on behalf of U.S. CBP agents. Because of the presence and American control over Tijuana's economy, U.S. immigration legal documentation matters a lot at the Mexican borderlands. For example, high-paying, white-collar, more desirable jobs at the Mexican borderlands are available to Mexican citizens who possess U.S. legal documentation. Because Marco's father was barred from entering the U.S. for almost 15 years, his upper-managerial job opportunities in Mexico were limited, despite his college degree, being a part of an intergenerational transborder family in Tijuana, and local connections and networks. This also restricted Marco's ability to attend school in the U.S., visit his beloved family members and friends throughout Southern California, or feel comfortable stepping into the land that rejected his father.

Legal documentation as a class status symbol is reminiscent of cosmopolitan elite practices of "citizenship by desire," or flexible citizenship as scholars have theorized (Ong 1999; Fong 2011). However, these Mexican border dwellers are not simply elite cosmopolitans from China, or even Mexico City. The transborder families of respondents also have family connections in the U.S. borderlands. These transborder mixed-status families especially U.S. citizens in upper and middle-class families, experience both cosmopolitanism and immigration.

For Antonio, the stakes of holding a U.S. Citizenship amongst his transborder family, extended beyond the borderlands. Mainly, Antonio shares about a childhood experience where the meaning and stakes of holding a U.S. citizenship in a mixed-status family is a shield against border violence. In the following excerpt, Antonio

narrates how his legal status served a border-violence safety coat towards for his mother who was a Border Crossing Card holder during his childhood,

> I remember my mom just having her visa. Her border [visa]… *visa de la frontera* [border crossing card B1/B2 visa]. So it's a special visa for people who live in the border. People from Tijuana, Mexicali, from all these different parts at the Mexican borderland and were frequent crossers (so less questions were asked.) And, if you had a kid who is a citizen, even less questions asked!

Antonio is very aware of how the U.S. immigration legal system works and is well versed in the visa protocols and policies regulating non-immigrant Mexican border residents access to the United States. By acknowledging that his mother could cross the border with little to no violence *vis-à-vis* the US immigration officials, Antonio understands the powerful role and the stakes of his physical presence while crossing the border with his mixed-status family members.

"I remember the different types of papers we'd show the customs agent or the border officer) when we would cross into the [United] States. *They* [referring to his parents] had their Mexican visas. *I had my U.S. citizen along with my cousin* (emphasis by the respondent)." U.S. legal privileges also helped Antonio's cousin during family reunifications. As narrated in the above excerpt, Antonio describes how he "shared" U.S. citizenship papers as a child with a first-cousin born on the same year. Antonio's cousin had been a repatriated child migrant from Los Angeles in care of Antonio's parents in Tijuana.

Antonio "shared" U.S. citizenship papers with his cousin so that he could occasionally reunite with his nuclear family in Los Angeles. The family would make use of Antonio's birth certificate to cross the border along with the repatriated child migrant. In Antonio's words,

> I have clear experiences of what crossing the border as a U.S. citizen means to me. I have a close cousin who is about my age. I think we're seven months apart. Every time he would cross with us… [Pause] No! Actually, every time *he* would

> cross, *he* would use *my* birth certificate. That is, whenever we'd have a family a reunion in LA at my uncle's. We'd have to cross the border at the same time. And, I would just say, "U.S. citizen!" "U.S. Citizen!" He would use my birth certificate [to cross]. That's when I [saw] that there was a difference between his status and mine.
>
> We were practically identical. He has green eyes and has fairer complexion than I do. Yet, he was born in TJ and I was born in LA. And, he was raised and LA and I was raised in TJ. When we would go to family reunions, the discussion between my parents [would be on] how we use *the citizenship* to cross and see our family in LA. Citizenship meant that, some of us had it and some of us didn't have the privilege and ability to *just to cross the border with only a certain type of obstacle* (emphasis by the respondent)

Antonio's families border crossing practices and what risk they would incur was a family affair. Antonio was equally involved and had high stakes in strategizing informal activities with, and facilitated by his parents, all for the sake of extended family reunification. As narrated in the excerpt above, all Antonio had was his entitlement to U.S. birthright citizenship and his still developing self-confidence as a *fronterizo* child *vis-à-vis* the border patrol agent.

U.S. citizen children at the borderlands (and especially while crossing in a mixed-status family) carry loaded expectations and assume a sense of entitlement. In Antonio's case, he would be equally involved in making the decision on whether or not the nuclear family would take the risk of crossing the border to reunite his underaged cousin with his nuclear family. Family reunification trips lasted only hours, as Antonio family would feel anxious and nervous of over-staying and running legal risks. Border-crossing isn't obstacle-free, even when legal documentation is at hand, according to Antonio.

For mothers in transborder mixed-status family units, crossing the border with a citizen child continued to be a form of protection against U.S. Customs and Border Patrol and state violence. Border interactions and searches became less violent

in the company of U.S.-born citizen children. For U.S. citizen children, however, this carried a burden and disruption to their life and development.

As a child, Julia would have to confront racialization at the border along with her mother. Julia shared one vivid and traumatic episode during her childhood, when she had to accompany her mother and cross the San Ysidro border at midnight and around the early 1990s. As lamented by Julia, for example,

> I remember when I was very young… Ugh! My Dad is such a princess!...There was a time when my father would get out of work at midnight. He had never been on public transportation and we only had one car back then. Mom didn't want to leave me home alone. So, on school night and midnight, we'd have to cross the border to pick-up my Dad and bring him home from work across the border and back to Tijuana. I remember being asleep, being little. Being very young. I was eight years old, and Mom would say, "Wake up! We are going to cross." I didn't even have a U.S. passport back then. I only had that *pinche* birth certificate, looking all sorts of ugly, with scotch-tape running all over it. Nobody would even pay attention to me. It was only to be good for goodness sake and not upset the [border officer] because we might get in trouble, even when we are all citizens in the car. Just the simple thought that they can harm you ingrained. That's why I am terrified of *pinches migras*[55].

Julia's father was a transborder service worker in San Diego and unfamiliar with public transportation in the U.S. In the mother's effort to diminish the chances of the father facing violence at the border crossing back into Mexico and especially at late hours of the night when there is less people and border crossers to bear witness to unusual police violence, Julia would accompany her mother and boost her credibility as a "good traveler" to the U.S. while crossing the border. However, as a child crossing the border with her Border Crossing Card holding mother, Julia felt disrupted and invisibilized when forced to cross the border to make sure the border officer wouldn't harass her citizen mother. While it seems that she understood her role in the border-crossing process and making sure her father got home safely, it is also the source of her fear

[55] Translated from Spanish by the author.

and anger towards *los migras* (Customer and Border Patrol Officers). Helping her mother crossing the border and picking-up her father regularly at midnight and during school night is also the source and event in life where Julia understood the stakes of holding a U.S. citizenship. It is both a source of privilege, as much as it is of anger, resentment, and fear towards the "*pinches migras*" (F@#$%^! Customs and Border Patrol Agents).

U.S. LEGAL IMMIGRANT TRANSBORDER PARENT AND CITIZEN CHILD

When I asked Rafael, a second-generation U.S. citizen *fronterizo* whose family hails from Ensenada, what a U.S. citizenship meant to him, he quickly related it back to his families' legal status. Rafael focuses on reassuring how being a U.S. citizen is both intentional and expected in his transborder mixed-status family originally from Ensenada and residing in Tijuana since the mid 1980s. He regrets his mother's procrastination applying for U.S. naturalization. In Rafael's words,

> A: Did you always know that you were an American citizen?
>
> R: Yes. Always.
>
> A: How was this topic discussed in your family, in what way was it discussed, or was there a dialogue?
>
> R: No. Not that I can specifically remember. There was always this notion that my sister and I were Americans because we were born there. It was intentional, for my mom to go into labor in San Diego so that we would have citizenship. It was always intentional on the part of my parents. At the same time, I was openly talking about my parents' situation. The legal process of my parents. About the naturalization of my father and the Amnesty, the truth is that we didn't talk much about it. It is not something we understood as children. We knew that we [referring to his sister] were not born in the United States, and that it was somehow a procedure and he got the papers. My mom… [Pause. Changes tone of voice to echo disappointment] Well, my mom is a resident. She is not a citizen. Well, we suppose that it was a procedure that you carried out to have that status. She *is indeed* in the process of obtaining citizenship, but alas,

> she has already been in that process for about 15 years. Let's see if she ever goes through with it and gets her naturalization one day[56].

I asked Rafael whether or not he was aware that he had been U.S. born throughout his life. Not only was his answer positive, but he further elaborated by explaining how in his family it is expected to have U.S. citizenship, either via naturalization or birthright. That is why Rafael's mother resorted to U.S. private healthcare in Southern California, and guarantee not only comfortable and high-end medical care, but a U.S. citizenship status, per expectations of transborder parentocracy. Nonetheless, Rafael's tone of voice lowered when sharing about his mother's Permanent Legal Resident status. For Rafael, it is a mix of disappointment and shame that she has been unable to apply for naturalization.

FRONTERIZA/O ANCHOR BABIES

When I asked Antonio, a twenty-nine year old documentary filmmaker, what it means to be a U.S. citizen, he also shared that,

> We are not anchor babies because our parents' intentions when giving birth to us in the United States was not for us to be the "anchor" so they could one day migrate north. The background that you and I share is that our parents are part of Tijuana's *maquiladora* professional class, with the ability to pay for a child delivery at a U.S. private hospital. This gave their children the option of peacefully living in Tijuana and San Diego and the privilege to come and go across borders. We are not "anchors" in *that* sense. But we do benefit from U.S. birthright citizenship privileges**...**
>
> While I was growing up, my parents would tell me, "You need to visualize yourself over there, figure things out and learn how to make it on your own"... It is a tremendous privilege, if you compare it to folks who are born south of the border... It just so happens that we are born on that side, and we have that privilege because we are benefitting from an American law, which is, if you are born here, you are granted citizenship. Of course there are reactionary groups that want to take that away and they work towards that. Take the case of Germany, which doesn't grant citizenship by birthright. I am someone who has benefitted from U.S. citizenship privileges. But, with the promise that one-day, I

[56] Translated from Spanish by the author.

> would have to become a contributor to the American economic system. That means, paying U.S. taxes, and participating into the bigger sphere of revenue to the American economy[57]

Antonio's narrative fits within Chavez's observations that it is not just the children of working-class and undocumented migrants who birth "anchor babies." Even the children of affluent and documented Mexican border crossing expectant mothers seeking private U.S healthcare are perceived by critics as advantageous undocumented immigrants, as it is assumed that "[because] they are born here they end up funding the needs of the entire illegal alien family." (Coe, quoted in Chavez 2017, 26). *Fronteriza/os* are also framed as undeserving citizens, suspected of mischievously taking advantage of a loophole in constitutional law, and to some extent, U.S. immigration law.

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 removed nationality quotas to immigrants, and instead gave preference to family and labor networks. It was under this context that U.S.-born children of immigrants became a focus of American public discourse. But U.S.-born *fronteriza/os* in this study are not the children of recent immigrant families; rather they are the members of transborder family units who have led lives across the U.S. and Mexican borderlands since the early 20th Century. In addition, *fronteriza/os* are not just part of undocumented immigrant families; rather, they are part of units that also include documented non-immigrants (Border Crossing Card, B1/B2 visa holders), documented immigrants (Green Card holders), and U.S. citizens (by naturalization or birth). Due to family networks and rootedness to the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, *fronteriza/os* also inherit a cross-border lifestyle and expectations.

[57] Translated from Spanish by the author

Regretfully, the collaborators legal consciousness', as witnessed in the narratives, reiterate Chavez's speculations on the negative impacts of anti-immigrant racializing discourses, where *fronteriza/os* as, "so-called anchor babies… internalize the stigmatizing characterizations and demeaning practices that questions their citizenship, rendering them docile and accepting of the idea that they are undeserving members of society" (2017, 84). For example, Marco, a twenty-five year old and fourth-generation *fronteriza/o*, shares that while he was born in San Diego into a multi-generational transborder family unit, who owns property and resides both in California and Baja California, Mexico, he does not consider himself a member of U.S. society. In Marco's words,

> I was born in the city of San Diego, which is the neighboring city and the border with Tijuana. I was born on July 3, 1988. In a strange way, that date has always linked me with to the July 4th holiday. That date has always had an impact on my birthday. I was born in San Diego but I have never considered myself an American, nor a San Diegan. Although, I feel completely Mexican for the simple reason that I have also lived all my life in Tijuana. However, I always, always, always have to go to the United States. I am in constant contact with the United States and I always, always have to go. A *fronterizo* always has something to do to in the United States[58].

Fronteriza/o Marco does not feel American, San Diegan, or Californian. I speculate that due in part to the social stigma and anti-Mexican immigrant xenophobia, and facilitated by their privileged socioeconomic and legal status, *fronteriza/os* and their families chose a rather unconventional form of migration, one where there is no permanent settlement in the U.S., or in Mexico and a foothold in each country.

[58] Translated from Spanish by the author

Figure 5.2 Accompanying Marco through his cross-border work commute from downtown Tijuana to downtown San Diego's Barrio Logan, or, Logan Heights.

Unexpectedly, even those who grew-up in non-mixed status families, that is, all members with U.S. citizenship also experienced feelings of being undeserving, challenged, and inferiority while at the ports of entry and in the larger borderlands contexts. However, their experiences also confirm why *fronteriza/o* family members would seek out more permanent and irrevocable statuses. That is because no matter the harassment or discrimination at the borderlands, individuals with U.S. permanent legal status were almost always allowed to cross the border. Nonetheless, the collaborators that grew-up in all U.S.-citizen households attended schools and higher

education in Mexico, their families worked in Mexico as well, and accessed the U.S. mostly for leisurely purposes like visiting family, or shopping and commerce. It is also noteworthy that both collaborators who grew-up in an all U.S.-*fronteriza/o* households were of inter-ethnic and white descent, specifically, Anglo-American, Irish-Mexican, and Ashkenazim, or European Jew.

Julia, a thirty-year-old and fourth generation U.S.-born *fronteriza* mother of a U.S.-born transborder young boy, has been racialized as an "anchor baby" throughout her life. The way in which CBP agents have racialized Julia, which in turn informs how she understands and puts into practice her rights as U.S. citizens, confirm Chavez's fears of the effectiveness of the "anchor baby" paradigm "meant to mute the political power of a vulnerable class of citizens, fostered by those who fear demographic change" (2017, 84). But Julia is not an anchor baby. She is instead, a *fronteriza*. Raised at the borderlands community around downtown Tijuana and San Diego, she is now a U.S. and Mexican citizen and cross-border educator and social activist. Despite her transborder community practices and belonging, Julia laments and even cries when recalling the violence she has experienced on behalf of CBP agents.

Julia's binational sensibility and inherited values of meritocracy are echoed in her multi-generational entitlement to U.S. citizenship. When I asked Julia what motivated her parents' to plan her delivery in the U.S., she captiously argues against the notion of an "anchor baby." In Julia's words,

> "¡¿Anchor baby?! Ha! I mean, I am fourth generation [U.S.-born] after all! My son is also a US citizen. When I was pregnant, the *migras* thought I was going to give birth to an anchor baby! Just how it happened with my great-grandfather! Right? I mean, if we are talking about anchor babies, right? They [*la migra*] don't know that I was born in Coronado, the city with the largest Republican demographic concentrated on the west coast [makes disgruntling face] [59]

[59] Translated from Spanish by the author.

A mixture of upper-class entitlement, fear of *la migra* and defensiveness against anti-immigrant xenophobic rhetoric paint a picture of Julia's complicated transborder legal consciousness. For middle-class multi-generational U.S.-born Julia, transborder parentocracy continues to be overshadowed by the looming and xenophobic and racist slur, "anchor baby," and is still read through the birth story is weaved between narrated in relationship to the long-line of U.S.-born Mexican border resident, like herself and in connection to her family members' legal status and child.

The public discourse over "anchor babies," whether nationally or locally, produces people we can refer to as, "suspect citizens" (Chavez 2017, 40). *Fronteriza/os* as "suspect citizens," were, and are, subject to a set of negative characterizations in public discourse, which also turns them into a national threat (Chavez 2017, 40). Thus, conversations around citizenship and immigration must also include the experiences of *fronteriza/os,* who traverse geopolitical borders and must confront social stigma and institutionalized border violence routinely, impacting their sense of U.S. belonging. *Fronteriza/os'* experiences must be further discussed as it also provides a window into the lives of American citizens and immigrants who live within our borders and are also members of two countries simultaneously. This untraditional form of migration, one where the border context and transnational phenomenon meet; also tells the story of those who have lived, learned, leisured, labored, and loved in two opposing nation states for multiple generations and continue to do so despite increasing border surveillance and anti-Mexican immigrant rhetoric. Even with these structural challenges, when listening to *fronteriza/os* experiences, there is a much richer and more holistic understanding of American citizenship, national belonging and U.S. immigration in the 20th and 21st Centuries.

FRONTERIZA MOTHERHOOD IN A TRANSBORDER MIXED-STATUS FAMILY

Julia's "dread for the *pinches migras*" exploded when crossing the border while pregnant. CBP officers began racializing her as a threatening hyper-fertile Latina. Julia reproaches the paradigmatic racial category of the "anchor baby," as she narrates what a U.S. legal status means to her as a mother of a transborder U.S. citizen married to a Mexican national with a non-immigrant visa status, and thus, living in a transborder mixed-legal status family unit. Julia shared,

> The *migras* would harass me because I crossed the border pregnant … I think it bothers *them* [referring to CBP officers] that my husband is Mexican and is not interested on getting papers even though we are married and his son is a *ciudadano*. I am OK with him not wanting papers and I really don't care about what people think. Even though my husband's mother had the money to pay for a childbirth "over there [in the U.S.]" she chose not to due to fear of future military drafting. But my husband has had a tourist visa since he was two-months-old and he has never had a problem crossing the border. Until, we started crossing together. They only pick fights at the two of us crossing together. And, yes, we keep crossing together. But only with the child, that way they don't harass us. If we cross with the child they don't say anything. But if its's just us two together, him and I alone, there's almost always a problem. It's weird, isn't it? I really don't know why. When we go together as a family, we don't face problems. But when it's just us as a couple, there's trouble[60].

Julia suspects that it is due in part to her family's mixed-status background that she faces so much violence at the border. In a similar way that Julia would accompany her mother as a form of legitimizing her family's border crossing, Julia's U.S.-born son is now the alibi to his parents' legality at the border. "I dread the *pinches migras*..." Julia admits, "but crossing the border while pregnant was the most horrific thing in the world. I would get sent to secondary inspection every time I crossed the border... that is why I despise the *pinches migras*." This feeling of exclusion has implicated an aversion towards U.S. police and border authorities informed by a lifetime of

[60] Translated from Spanish by the author

experiences crossing the U.S. border as a *fronteriza* child, teenager, and especially as an expectant mother married to a documented Mexican tourist.

While sitting on the office lounge chairs of Vanessa's downtown boutique on *Avenida Revolución* in downtown Tijuana, Vanessa shares and grieves how stressful her pregnancy became because the family couldn't agree on the newborn's birth location. While it is expected of upper middle-class, multi-generational U.S. documented *fronteriza* mother to give birth north of the border, Vanessa was hesitant to doing so due to her husband Enrique's U.S. undocumented status. Vanessa even laments that she birthed baby Mateo in the U.S. almost against her will because it was far more important to her and the young family of three to be together, than to have access to U.S. medical care. But that was not the end of Vanessa and her husband, Enrique's journey. Their journey towards legalization begins earlier even before they met.

In a possible attempt to amend previous stigma in his family, as soon as Enrique heard the news about his wife's pregnancy, he quickly gathered income, land-ownership, and education documents to solicit a border crossing card visa at the U.S. Consulate General in Tijuana so that Enrique could support his wife during the prenatal care, and be present for his first-born's birth. Vanessa shared that although they had been planning to have a child, they wanted to wait until Enrique had documents to cross the border through a formal port of entry. Vanessa and Enrique's planned their child's delivery around immigration bureaucratic processing and not health, age, or income. Vanessa narrates the relatively short, nine-month long, yet exhausting journey the young couple went through as soon as they heard the news about their unexpected pregnancy,

> I did not expect being pregnant ... I went for my annual checkup to Planned Parenthood and the nurse gave me the news ... The problem was that Enrique does not have a visa ... We researched the fastest way for him to cross and be present during labor... but because he had no previous papers to cross the border, an immigration visa [commonly known as a "Green Card"] was going to take much longer to process ... The "easiest" way was to ask for a tourist visa at the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana. But they denied him a visa. Again. So when I heard that they had not given it to us, I was devastated. Obviously my reaction, when they did not give it to me... I mean, us, was "Okay, they did not give you the visa? Well, then the child is going to be born here [in Tijuana]." And at that moment the discussion [with my husband] shifted to, "No! The baby is going to be born over there [in San Diego]!" I'd reply "No. The baby will be born here because they [visa consular officers] denied you the tourist visa. The baby will be born here!" For me it was super important for the three of us being together. But the discussions continued, and with my mom and Enrique telling me, "The baby has to be born over there, and not here. Over there! Over there!" Some way or another, they convinced me to birth baby Mateo in the U.S. But I really wanted for the three of us to be together. For me it was much more important for the three of us to be together, than the baby being born over there[61].

Vanessa and Enrique's first pregnancy and birth was marred by her husband's U.S. undocumented status. In Vanessa and Enrique's hope to fulfill both familial birthing expectations and share one of the most meaningful moments in their marriage and family formation, they experienced the perils of a denied entry to the United States as a parent of a U.S. citizen child and mother. Despite being surrounded by loving family members, such as, aunts, uncles, siblings, and parents, Vanessa resented that Baby Mateo was born into a transborder family separated at the border.

Enrique's documentation status determined their transborder family formation and interactions. Not only was Enrique unable to accompany Vanessa to prenatal care and hospital visits in San Diego, but Vanessa was left carrying the brunt of crossing *la línea* on her own and while pregnant. Even though Vanessa, as a U.S.-born citizen, can extend citizenship privileges to her son, the family's fear of repressive U.S. immigration policies drove them to birth Mateo in the U.S., rather than Mexico. It was a

[61] Translated from Spanish by the author

tough negotiation Vanessa and her husband had to undertake. But "because Enrique had *that* problem and we didn't want for Mateo to face similar obstacles," shared Vanessa, it was worth the sacrifice and pain of being "separated at the border." However, separation at the border not only marked the young family's experiences at birth, but also impacts the family's relationships and individual growth.

Although Vanessa envisions a life in Los Angeles, where she can expand her Mexican design boutique business, Enrique can have better job opportunities as a graphic designer, and Mateo can be immersed in a culturally diverse community; they will have to wait at least ten years until Enrique's pardon goes through. In the meantime, Vanessa and five-year old Mateo now face criminalization and separation at the border and refer to the U.S. Port of Entry as "*la maldita línea*," the damned borderline. For Vanessa, the Port of Entry "is a very ugly place that should not exist" as there "should be no borders." And struggles to understand American imperialism and "why the United States has to be that way: take upon that forceful role, allow for those dudes to behave that way towards us. It's really bad. It's really, really bad that they exist and how they treat you." Vanessa's biggest concern when crossing the border is Mateo's experience and how witnessing border police violence against him, his mother and his community might damage the child's emotional and physical well-being.

Unlike Julia, whose Mexican citizen (with a U.S. tourist-visa) husband supported her decision to give birth in the U.S., or, Vanessa, whose undocumented husband convinced her to give birth in the U.S., Soraya and her Mexican citizen husband utterly disagree where their children ought to be born. Soraya, is a fourth-generation *fronteriza* mother of two U.S.-born Mexican residing children. Soraya's family passed on a very transborder mindset around birthing in the U.S. Not so for her husband, an internal Mexican migrant with a tourist visa. He and Soraya disagreed on the location

of birth to the point of irreconcilable differences. At the moment of the interview, Soraya was separated and undergoing the legal divorce process. Soraya and her husband were raised under different national contexts and gendered expectations, which flourished throughout their marriage and ended in their expected (as shared to me by Soraya) divorce. She narrates the differences between her and her husband as they expected their first-born child,

> The father of my children and I got into a very serious fight on where the children should be born. He'd ask, "Why do you want our child to be born over there anyway? Isn't enough that he has a father? I just don't understand why you want for the child to be born over there" And I'd reply, "My child will not be born in Mexico. My child will not be both at *el Seguro*[62]" (I'd based my notions upon the stories I'd heard from here and there, horror stories of women giving birth at *el Seguro)* I would tell my husband, "You are crazy if you think my child is going to be born in Mexico" It was perhaps an unconscious decision making process, because... I was sixteen after all, so I wasn't conscious of many things. That is the best decision I've ever made… [long pause] Yes! It has to be the best decision I've made in my life, thus far. Making the decision for my child to be born at "*el otro lado*" was the best and toughest decision that I had to make... and at age sixteen! It was difficult not only because the father disapproved, but the entire in-law family and relatives... His family comes from a small town with very conservative ideas, like *machismo,* where woman must do what the man says. Whereas a woman I was expected to be home, waiting for the man to arrive and with warm tortillas, ready to feed the man... Whereas my family, whose from Tijuana, we are a bit… they crazy, we love *el relajo* (joke around and have a good time).. So when it came that time to make that decision, I felt like everyone was against me. But my mom told me "That child has to be born there. That child cannot be born here in Tijuana!" I do not know why, but there was a voice inside of me and it kept saying, "That child does not have to be born here." [63]

Even though she was married to a middle-class Mexican citizen with a tourist-visa, when he refused to support Soraya in her decision to birth north of the border, she sought help from the closest person who'd gone through a similar process: her mother. Soraya's mother and maternal aunt living in San Diego, advised her on how to fill-out

[62] Colloquial and short for Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social, the largest Mexican public-run and union member supported public health system
[63] Translated from Spanish by the author

paperwork as a single-mother, given that her husband and the child's father was firmly unsupportive of U.S. prenatal care and childbirth.

Declaring herself as a single teenaged mother would increase Soraya's chances of accessing public social services, like, Medi-Cal. Soraya recalls the process of planning a birth alone in the U.S. as a teenaged *fronteriza*,

> Because I was sixteen years old, I did not know what to do. Back then, my mom lived here [in Tijuana], but she would cross the border to work in San Diego. My mom would tell me where to go and what to do. Also Aunt Maria, who'd been living in National City, California, for many years also helped us with everything. They told me exactly what to do. They were the ones who told me to say that "I was a single mother" so I could be covered by public insurance. To be covered by the famous Medical. They gave me Medical, my son was born, and everything went well. That blessed Medi-Cal! I also asked for WIC because they [my mother and aunt] told me so... However, and because I was living here [in Tijuana] with my son's father, WIC was not a necessity. I've always seen that it's for people who really, really need it. In addition, it wasn't worth it, as I would leave half of the groceries back at my aunt's in Nation City, and would only bring half back to Tijuana. Plus, it was very uncomfortable to arrive home [in Tijuana] with these things because my in-laws and husband did not understand about those things. They were judgmental. They did not know what it was like to have a child "over there," about Medi-Cal, WIC, and those things. Soon after I gave up seeking help for my son because of laziness. It was not worth the hurdles for so little support and lots of criticisms back home. [64]

Not only did Soraya go through a full pregnancy without her husband's support, or presence during labor, but matters worsened during her second pregnancy. During her second pregnancy Soraya didn't avail herself of public healthcare and support due to the harsh criticism Soraya faced at home in Mexico from receiving Medi-Cal and WIC to support the costs and access resources for her first pregnancy. During her second pregnancy she accrued a considerable debt with a private hospital, as she was unable to access public or private insurance, or find enough funds to pay for costs of childbirth out-of-pocket. More than ten years had passed since Soraya's first-born, and

[64] Translated from Spanish by the author

yet, she could not see how maybe her children deserved and were in great need of U.S. public healthcare and social support.

Nonetheless, she did not see how WIC and Medi-Cal was also a need for her and her children due in part to her place of residence, and because she also understood that in the Mexican context, her and her children are highly privileged. Their U.S. legal and classed privileges in the Mexican context, would not place them in the category of "... people who really, really need..." public help; but undeserving and taking advantage of a social services in the U.S. Soraya had internalized notions of an undeserving citizen by narrating her challenging experience while pregnant and seeking support for her first-born as lack of merit and "laziness," despite the practical and obvious challenges and obstacles it entails to cross the border back and forth, as a young *fronteriza* mother of a transborder mixed-status family.

Figure 5.3 City scape view from Soraya's home in the middle-class residential neighborhood of *Fraccionamiento el Rubí*, overlooking the Tijuana River Valley, including downtown Tijuana in the front of the image and San Diego, CA as a backdrop.

Daphne and Helena are both the first U.S.-born citizen in a transborder mixed-status family. Even though they have never met each other, Daphne and Helena share

many experiences in common. Both grew-up in a household with at least one undocumented family member. Both continue to live at their childhood home with their parents and siblings. Both are currently college instructors at Tijuana's public teaching university. And, they are also both self-identified lesbian feminist activists. As the first U.S.-born in a mixed-status family, Helena and Daphne had added responsibilities as children, like helping the parent without legal status to stock-up and go grocery and clothes shopping on behalf of the family in the U.S; facilitating translations between adults and parent in the U.S.; and guiding their younger siblings navigate U.S. systems, such as, credit scores, taxation, road and traffic regulations, and vehicle purchases.

As adults, both Daphne and Helena have come to understand their citizenship status, rights and responsibilities somewhere between a transactional document and political voucher. Daphne shares that her mother, a Mexican citizen with a Border Crossing Card, has been the main support helping her navigate U.S. systems. Her mother's friends and *comadres* with U.S.-born *fronteriza/o* children, were also a support system while Daphne was learning what it meant to be an adult U.S. citizen. It is Daphne's role and responsibility to pass-on that information and institutional knowledge to her younger and U.S.-born sisters, aged, twenty-seven and twenty-five. When I asked Daphne to describe the types of mentorship responsibilities towards her younger U.S.-born sister she described,

> Mainly, it's nagging Marie to get a California driver's license because she has a *gringo* car. It's telling her that she has to pay a car insurance and that she also needs to pay the toll-road that goes to Los Angeles (which she never pays). Practical issues that I have experienced before. I have to be telling my sisters to be smart and savvy, and telling them how to hustle. Things like, "You need to have a good credit in the United States," or, "You need to pay what you owe in

> the United States, because if you don't, you will not be better off in the future. They will charge you more in taxes and late fees." [65]

Daphne was able to pass on that information to her younger sisters, partly due to the knowledge shared by her mother and friends, but mainly, her lived experience figuring out these structures on her own.

As a queer woman, on the other hand, a U.S. citizenship status provides Daphne the entitlement to articulate a radical and queer of color identity politics. When I asked Daphne what a citizenship status represents in her life, she shared "It makes it easier for me to have *my* identity. I identify as fat [body-positive] and queer… My legal status helps me to feel more comfortable with how I represent myself politically, my political ideology, my political identity." But Daphne's legal status also meant that she has greater opportunities to access affordable graduate education or better job opportunities as a research scientist for U.S. college laboratories.

Unlike Daphne, Helena is honest yet reserved about her identity politics and queer sexuality. Because Helena is also the mother of a U.S.-born transborder boy, she feels that is it best for her child to keep her sexuality private and compartmentalized. Despite growing up feeling ashamed of being a U.S. citizen with an undocumented mother and two-siblings, Helena has been able to re-negotiate shame into a process of critical consciousness. That shift happened when Helena became accidentally pregnant in her early twenties and as a college freshman in Tijuana. Helena shares that when she found-out about her pregnancy, she resorted to U.S. citizenship rights and privileges to access prenatal care and child delivery in the U.S.

> I was in college and the only thing I had here in Tijuana was my insurance provided by school. I had heard so many stories of women who delivered in Mexican hospitals and I was not going to let something happen. So, I went to *"el otro lado,"* and while I wanted to get a private insurance…. This is something

[65] Translated from Spanish by the author

> that I do not feel very proud of… But I asked for Medi-Cal insurance as a U.S. citizen. I believe that there are certain benefits with being a citizen, and I think that is one of the benefits. I applied for Medi-Cal and my son was born over there [in San Diego]. But I thought to myself, "If Medi-Cal fails, I'll have my child in a Tijuana clinic, and because I am a citizen I can fix my son's papers with no problem. "[66]

As a U.S. citizen in Mexico, Helena had healthcare options. Her choices were to give birth in the U.S. and access better healthcare, or, give birth in Tijuana and extend citizenship rights to her son. Although Helena confesses that she did not receive the best healthcare in the U.S. due to a crowded medical system, negligence, and what she suspects racial discrimination as a Latina, she also declares with confidence, "that was one of my options as a citizen."

FRONTERIZA/O MEXICAN DUAL NATIONALITY

According to the American Foreign Service Association, as many as 600,000 U.S.-born youth of Mexican descent currently reside in Mexico (Shaw 2016). The main issue facing U.S.-born Mexican residents is under-documentation. In 2014, the U.S. Consulate General in Monterrey launched, "¡*Documéntate Ya*!" (Document Now!) a binational conference and campaign along with Mexican leaders, immigration experts, and community organizers, interested in giving visibility and access to documentation, education, and healthcare to this "invisible" U.S. demographic living in Mexico. While this matter has gone largely unnoticed until recently, "¡*Documéntate Ya*!" efforts had made it possible for Mexican education officials to ease bureaucratic hurdles, as well as issuing 2,000 U.S. passports monthly. Due to the urgency to attend the needs and protection of U.S.-Citizens of Mexican descent living in Mexico, it became one of the

[66] Translated from Spanish by the author

talking-points between former U.S. President, Barack Obama and former Mexican President, Enrique Peña Nieto during the 2015 binational meetings. (Shaw 2016)

Under-documented U.S.-born children and youth is becoming a high priority to U.S. Foreign Service in Mexico, as well as local Mexican administrative offices and organizations. Without proper U.S. documentation, U.S. children and youth have no form of identification. This in turn impacts their ability to travel freely across international customs and borders and within national boundaries, as well access to education, health care, and social welfare services in the U.S. and Mexico.

Before the passage of the 1998 dual nationality laws in Mexico, Green Card holders of Mexican descent were deterred from pursuing U.S. naturalization due to fear of relinquishing their Mexican citizenship and nationality. Some of this historical legacy lingers amongst *fronteriza/os* in the form of fear of approaching the Mexican state to request dual nationality privileges. Mainly the culprit for *fronteriza/os* differential access to Mexican dual nationality is the time and context of *their* birth and taking place before Mexican dual nationality was legalized.

The pre-1997 inability to access Mexican dual nationality privileges also manifested in seeking formal birth registration in Mexico. Thus, when I spoke to respondents they may have referred to parts of their identity as “dual citizens” or “Mexican dual nationals,” legally and materially speaking, that was only partly true. Respondents had heterogeneous Mexican legal statuses, or different set of legal documents, papers, *papeles*, and falling within the four following discrete categories, which I term *fronteriza/o* Mexican dual nationality typologies: 1) dual registered at birth; 2) eligible Mexican dual national; 3) classic Mexican dual national; or, 4) ineligible Mexican dual national.

Table 5.1. 4 Categories of *Fronteriza/o* Differential Mexican Dual Nationality

Category	Legal Status	Respondents
Dual registered	U.S. citizens with birth records in Mexico	Daphne, Antonio, Erick, Mariana, Rafael
Mexican dual nationals	U.S. citizens and Mexican dual nationals	Helena, Marco, Julia, Vanessa
Eligible dual national	U.S. citizens of Mexican descent with no previous status in Mexico	Soraya
Ineligible Mexican nationals	U.S. citizens of Mexican descent with no Mexican-born relatives	Pablo

"Dual registered" *fronteriza/o* respondents possessed two birth certificates: one Mexican and another from the U.S., as was the locally practiced custom throughout transborder families living in Tijuana. However, once Mexican dual nationality legislation passed, *fronteriza/os'* dual-birth registration became irrelevant and confusing. Respondents in this category mostly identify as "Mexican-American."

"Eligible dual nationals" are *fronteriza/o* respondents who did not possess two birth certificates, nor had a Mexican dual nationality. *Fronteriza/os* in this category were youngest in the cohort, born in the latter-half of the 1980s. "Eligible dual nationals" ignore the existence or necessity in obtaining Mexican dual nationality and identify as "*ciudadanos*," or [U.S.] "citizens" only.

"Mexican dual nationals," included *fronteriza/os* who had either been dually registered at birth and obtained their dual nationality through a special legal procedure (called, "Declaration of Non-existence," a lengthy court procedure where a Mexican judge nullifies the dual registration and existence of a birth certificate). Or, had obtained Mexican dual nationality without precedent of dual registration.

Respondents in this category identify mainly as "dual nationals," distinct from those identifying as "Mexican Americans," "Americans," or, "*ciudadanos"* [U.S.] "citizens".

The final legal Mexican status is "ineligible dual national," describing *fronteriza/os* with no immediate Mexican-born relatives that may request and cede nationality privileges. This category represented just one respondent, but they had the longest, deepest, and centuries-long transborder family ties and practices of the respondents.

DUAL REGISTERED *FRONTERIZA/O*

> I am a U.S. citizen… Apparently I am a Mexican *citizen* too. My Mom took me to the *Registro Civil* (Tijuana County Clerk) a day after I was born [in the United States] and said, "She was born *here* yesterday" And just like that, they gave me a Mexican citizenship [laughter]. I think I am a "legal" Mexican citizen? I mean, I have everything…
>
> Turn of events! Plot-twist! I am a legal Mexican! Plot-twist! I have everything: an IFE, a CURP, I have EVERYTHING. Everything! I've travelled in Mexico with my IFE. Cause it's so much easier than traveling with your American Passport (Mariana, 1st generation U.S.-born *fronteriza*, 30).

When I asked Mariana, a dually registered at birth what Mexican citizenship meant to her, she responded in a circular way and back to making reference to her U.S. citizenship status. Mariana understands that legally she cannot be a "Mexican citizen" through formal state procedures, but only a dual national.

Yet, "the plot twist" that Mariana refers to in her statement is the unexpected "turn of events," as she puts it, for lacking a "legal" Mexican status despite her ethno-racial background, yet being able to outsmart the County Clerk's system because of her identity. In Mariana's experience, Mexican "dual citizenship" looks like having two birth certificates from two distinct countries, in this case, Mexico and the Unites States of America, stating that she was born both in California, and Baja California, on the

same date, at the same time, delivered and presented by the same parents of Mexican citizenship status. Mariana relates what Mexican citizenship means to her, by inevitably intertwining it with her perception of her U.S. legal status. In Mariana's words,

> I almost feel bad talking shit about the U.S. because I've made my life here and I've used financial aid and I've used all these resources. So, it doesn't matter because everyone talks shit about their country. But it's funny because I don't have a sense of pride to the U.S. I don't feel any sense of pride to be an American citizen. I see it as this really convenient thing that I have. It's just so convenient. I don't know, it's like a credit card, almost with great credit limit. It has a great credit limit. And I am using it. I am using it as much as I can. And yet, I would wanna feel something. I want to be connected, but I can't. I feel grateful that I don't. Even though I don't have to feel connected as I didn't grew-up here. I don't believe in any leadership here. But, yes, it's like, "Ok. This is my home now" But I still don't know the Star-Spangled Banner. I still don't know it. I still don't know what the president did what, and I don't care. I don't want to learn cause I really don't care. I don't care for anything except whatever I can reap from this country. It sounds horrible! I guess. It's just that it is very weird. Because I still feel a big allegiance to Mexico. And I don't think that's never going to leave me. I think that's ultimately who I am. And now that I've lived far away from Mexico, I feel very happy that I am Mexican! That is something that I say very proudly. And I think I learned, not so much learned so much more about Mexico. But, perhaps I stopped suppressing things that maybe I wanted to suppress to be "more American" when I was in San Diego. Now I feel ok speaking with an accent. Now I feel ok cooking Mexican food and doing all these things that I've done in Mexico.

Mariana uncritically narrates how her Mexican legal status is dependent upon her U.S. legal status and the circumstances that frame her current Mexican documentation. Mariana was uniquely vocal about how and why her U.S. legal status is justified by her middle-class family's consumption practices at the U.S. borderlands, and her Mexican documentation is warranted by her Mexican privileged ethnoracial and socioeconomic class background.

As articulated by Mariana, I found that dual registered *fronteriza/os* have both a U.S. and Mexican birth certificates and registration certifying that the individual is born in both countries. Those who are dual registered had parents or family members who

facilitated and processed Mexican birth certificate soon after *fronteriza/os* birth via access to local Tijuana county clerk's registration networks between Tijuana residents and state bureaucrats. In general, dual registered respondents were born before the mid-1980s and have vivid recollections of border industrialization and militarization efforts at the Tijuana-San Diego border and throughout the 1990s, such as "Operation Gatekeeper," California Proposition 187 "Save our State," and the advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Dual registered *fronteriza/os* had future plans and expectations "to move" to the United States, if better job offers or lifestyle opportunities arose. Throughout the research process, Erick and Mariana permanently resettled to San Diego and the San Francisco Bay Areas, to pursue better and more inclusive spaces of employment in the design and non-profit and industries, respectively. Dual registered respondents were well aware of the fabrication of their Mexican birth certificates and identity documents. They felt lost and did not know what the legal procedure to regularize a formal Mexican dual nationality. Dual registered *fronteriza/os* viewed their informal status as shameful, ephemeral, and confusing. Their most overwhelming concern was that their extraordinary status would become evident at work and school. Their worst fear was that once fabricated documents were revealed publicly, their binational identity credentials, professional licenses, and academic degrees would be put under scrutiny and lose validity, losing their Mexican financial stability, employment opportunities, and academic standing.

MEXICAN DUAL NATIONAL *FRONTERIZA/O*

Julia, a college lecturer in Mexico and national girls advocacy non-profit staff in the U.S., is a legally a Mexican dual national. She "earned" her Mexican status through a

lengthy and exhaustive legal process to rectify her previous informal status as dually registered Mexican-born citizen and regularize as a dual national. Unlike Mariana, Julia seems to believe that she was able to regularize her legal status as a dual citizen, instead of a dual national. In Julia's words,

> I have dual citizenship. My mom gifted it to me two months after I finished my Master of Arts in English. It was my graduation gift! It was my prize! I am legal! Actually, I could've done the process earlier and pay only $5 US dollars like my parents did back in the 1990s... I am here as a Mexican citizen now!

Julia is appreciative to her parents who facilitated and paid for her dual nationality process, and getting her out of informal documented status once she had awarded a Master of Arts degree in English from the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California public teaching institution in Tijuana. Getting a Mexican dual nationality became a necessary step and document if Julia wanted to keep her job as a public college lecturer in Mexico.

Dual nationals are those who had either been dually documented and once dual nationality laws passed, they were able to regularize as dual nationals, or, those who were born outside of Mexico to Mexican-born parents and had not been previously registered in Mexico. In general, none of them applied for Mexican dual nationality during their childhood and teenage years, and even though there was legislation set in place since 1998. They had acquired dual status fairly recently, as none had more than ten years as Mexican dual nationals. They all acquired dual nationality as adults and motivated by a job or schooling opportunity that required Mexican nationality documents to be considered as a potential candidate. *Fronteriza/o* dual nationals were very rooted to Mexico, and their life expectations included plans for internal Mexican migration to places like, Mexico City.

By contrast to those who are dual registered, dual nationals had no plans "to

move" to the U.S., and would only consider it under extreme circumstances, such as a devastating natural disaster and extreme family crisis, or, a radically high paying and promising job opportunity north of the border. Dual nationals had long-term plans to stay and raise their families in Mexico, as they had looser social ties and family networks in the U.S. Dual nationals perceived their Mexican status as merit-based, due to the lengthy, exhaustive, and fairly recent and confusing legislation. Dual nationals felt extremely proud and earnest due to the perceived obstacles and legal hurdles to benefit from their rightful status.

ELIGIBLE DUAL NATIONAL

Soraya, a young single-mother of two-U.S. citizen children and with no Mexican legal status laments how her identity and sense of belonging does not mirror her identification documents. In Soraya's words,

> I identify as Mexican! But, I've never thought about those two words together: Mexican and citizen. I consider myself Mexican. But I even think "Mexican citizen?" sounds weird because it must be a person with legal Mexican nationality, which in this case I do not fit. Because legally I am not Mexican. I do not have any Mexican documents. Not a single one. I am not registered here... I feel bad because I am Mexican, but I do not have any document that says that I am Mexican. I think it's the only thing I need to be completely Mexican. I do not know, very much about dual nationality either. Well, I think that to feel completely Mexican. Because I feel that I need something. I do not feel complete. I am Mexican, but how do I show you that. Lately, I've felt at the crossroads and it feels terrible not having all your documents and saying "I am Mexican" and not having a way to prove it.

Soraya "does not feel complete" because she is missing her Mexican documents. She proudly carried the Mexican national flag every Monday morning as her school's color guard flag bearer. Her family is in the Mexican cast figure and curiosities making industry for traditional Mexican U.S. markets, such as, La Placita Olvera in Los Angeles and Old Town in San Diego. Although Soraya is as rooted to Mexico as other

respondents, and shares the ethnoracial background of Mexicans of the Western state of Jalisco, her incomplete sense of belonging is due to under-documentation and lack of legal status in her home country.

Eligible dual nationals were those *fronteriza/os* who qualified for dual nationality and had neither been dually and previously registered as Mexican-born (making the legal process much smoother). Eligible dual-nationals were the youngest respondents and given the age and legalization trends of dual nationals, it may only be a matter of time when these eligible dual nationals claim their rights and obtain a Mexican passport.

INELIGIBLE DUAL NATIONAL

Pablo, on the other hand, is an ineligible dual national because he is part of an all U.S. born transborder family. His maternal line is of Mexican ethnoracial background (his father is a U.S.-born and Mexico-raised, Anglo-American child of expats who relocated to Baja California in the 1980s). They have lived at the borderlands for at least six-generations. Pablo proudly describes how his maternal family line is characterized by legal U.S. birthright citizenship status, while of Mexican background. In Pablo's own words, "I am fourth generation U.S.-born from my mother's side. And second generation U.S. born on my Dad's side[67]"

Because Pablo's ethnically and culturally Mexican family is U.S.-born, and has no Mexican-born relatives, neither his mother nor father are able to extend a Mexican nationality to Pablo or even benefit from Mexican dual nationality legislation. In Pablo's case, it would be required for his mother to access a Mexican dual nationality and/or

[67] Translated from Spanish by the author.

for his deceased father to have naturalized Mexican before his passing. Pablo would hypothetically need to find his maternal great-great grandparents' Mexican birth and death certificates, to process his deceased great-grandmother's Mexican dual nationality. Doing so would have allowed his grandmother and mother to benefit from Mexican dual nationality, and as well as Pablo. However, Mexican dual nationality and birth certificates can only be derived and issued to living individuals, and cannot be posthumously granted[68]. Pablo's U.S. birth practices and family's classed background bar Pablo and his family members from being able to claim Mexican dual nationality.

Pablo's case was unique as he was the only ineligible dual national without a dual registration in this study. On the one hand, Pablo had no Mexican legal documentation, even if falsified, and on the other hand, he is ineligible to benefit from Mexican dual nationality as he has no Mexican-born relatives. His Mexican-born family networks date back to six earlier generations and he had no living Mexican-born family members. For Pablo's ineligible Mexican dual national family, they may have not crossed the border, but rather, traditional, upper-class, and Mexican cross-border practices crossed them, more than five generations ago while living at the Mexican border.

As these four stories clearly capture, not all *fronteriza/os*, who are U.S.-born citizens of Mexican background are dual nationals. Mariana, Soraya, Julia, and Pablo's stories capture the spectrum of generalized *fronteriza/o* experiences in relationship to Mexican dual nationality, and what it looks like to be a *de facto*, but not necessarily a *de jure* multi-national at the Tijuana-San Diego borderlands. In this context, where

[68] Mexican Consulate in San Diego, Dual Nationality requirements page: https://consulmex.sre.gob.mx/sandiego/index.php/doble-nacionalidad/nacidos-en-el-extranjero

fronteriza/os U.S. birth registration and transborder family practices clash with Mexican legislation allowing nationals to keep the status of the sending country when naturalizing in a receiving country, also known as, *"ley de la pérdida de la no nacionalidad."* To reiterate, the four types of *fronteriza/o* differential Mexican dual nationality are: dual registered, dual national, eligible dual national, and ineligible dual national.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented throughout Chapter 5 allow me to assert that transborder legal consciousness is shaped both by Mexican dual nationality and U.S. citizenship. The clash between extra-legal and localized Tijuana practices and Mexican dual nationality legislation shapes *fronteriza/os'* differential access to dual nationality benefits. This differential access is further theorized through the four types of Mexican dual nationality, as experienced by *fronteriza/os* in this study: a) dual registered; b) dual national; c) eligible dual national; and d) ineligible dual national.

U.S. citizenship status is shaped in relationship to transborder mixed-legal family status, and varies by the member's undocumented to U.S. legal permanent residence. Experiences of citizenship inclusion and exclusion also shape *fronteriza/o* mixed-status family experiences, and as articulated throughout the sections laying-out their transborder legal consciousness. *Fronteriza/os* in transborder mixed-legal status families sensed undeserving and diminished U.S. citizenship status placed under endless scrutiny at the U.S. Ports of Entry. Despite their noticeable sense of exclusion, respondents negotiated the negative implications of U.S. discrimination and second-class citizenship as a necessary hurdle, or perhaps, normalized form of structural

violence in the pursuit of socioeconomic class mobility for their transborder mixed-status family unit.

I have argued in this chapter that transborder mixed-legal status families are formed when transborder families living in Mexico and with diverse U.S. legal backgrounds, decide to also give birth to children in the U.S. as a strategy for social mobility. To understand the complexities of transborder mixed-legal status families, I have considered family members' legal statuses both in Mexico and the United States and their implications upon *fronteriza/os'* legal consciousness, as laid-out throughout this chapter.

To understand how and why transborder mixed-legal status families are formed, this chapter also provides context on how intergenerationally U.S. documented Mexico-residing parents developed aspirational practices and expectations abroad, which I have theorized as "transborder parentocracy" as discussed in the previous Chapter 4. This chapter has further shown what happens when the pursuit of a U.S. birthright citizenship and benefits for children, spiking in the 1980s, increased the formation of transborder mixed-legal status families.

There is not one type of mixed-legal status family, but rather, a multitude of complex legal arrangements. There are no uniform of even single-type of mixed-legal status families at the border, making the study of their intricate lives, rather complex to grasp. Even in this controlled and small sample where respondents share a U.S. legal status, and ethnic and residential Mexican background in Tijuana, there are multiple configurations of transborder mixed-legal status in the Tijuana border context. These multiple configurations inform and shape *fronteriza/os* legal consciousness.

CHAPTER 6

CODA: BURSTING THE "TIJUANA DREAM" BUBBLE

> When you wish upon a star
> Makes no difference who you are
> Anything your heart desires
> Will come to you (Washington and Harline 1992)

> *¿A qué le tiras cuando sueñas, mexicano?*
> *Con sueños verdes no conviene ni soñar*
> *Sueñas un hada y ya no debes nada*
> *Tu casa esta pagada, ya no hay que trabajar*
> *Ya esta ganada la Copa en la Olimpiada*
> *¡Soñar no cuesta nada que ganas de soñar!*[69] (Flores 1954*)*

> This is my home
> this thin edge of
> barbwire
> (Anzaldúa 2007, 25).

THE BORDER INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

In *Why Walls Won't Work*, border cultural geographer Michael Dear argues that since the early 1990s, through "fortifying the border: increased physical layers of security, new access roads, and stadium-like lightning" the United States has further criminalized and militarized the built-environment along the border (2013, 107). Throughout the first decade of the 21st Century, George W. Bush's "Secure Border Initiative" budget went from $6 billion to $12 billion (107); the majority of those additional funds going towards border enforcement and working with private subcontractors. Dear theorizes that the congealing of private and public interests working together for the construction of fences, walls, border enforcement, operation

[69] Mexican, what are you aiming for when dreaming?
With green dreams it is not convenient to dream
You dream of a fairy and you no longer owe anything
Your house is paid, you no longer have to work
As you have already won the Olympiad [Medal]
Dreaming does not cost anything all you have to do is wanting to dream!

of detention facilities, transportation an deportation can be referred as the "Border Industrial Complex" (BIC) (124). In Dear's words, BIC can be understood as,

> the multidimensional, interrelated set of public and private interests now managing border security—encompassing flows of money, contracts, influence, and resources among a vast network of individuals, lobbyists, corporations, banks, public institutions, and elected officials of all levels of government.

Dear warns, "[w]e must guard against the unwarranted influence of this Border Industrial Complex" (124) in order for transborder communities to thrive.

In the years from 2012 to the present as I wrote this ethnographic and historical study, the Border Industrial Complex dramatically reshaped the borderlands region, land crossings, and upended long-held transborder dynamics and interactions. The following list is a sample of the tactics, strategies, and arbitrary protocols costing multi-millions to deter border crossers from legally entering the U.S. and Mexico at the San Diego and Tijuana land border crossing.

These are the changes in border safety and security that unfolded while writing this dissertation. The San Ysidro closing of the Old 1970s Tia Juana-San Ysidro Port of Entry. The 2012 expansion of the Ready Lanes (or Radio Frequency Identification) and SENTRI lane (Secure Entry Network for Travelers' Rapid Inspection program) border crossing systems. The 2015 opening of the exclusively cosmopolitan and semi-privatized Cross-Border Express Port of Entry and bridge between Tijuana's International Airport and an upscale San Diegan parking lot. The 2016 redevelopment of the *El Chaparral* Mexican immigration check-point for motored vehicles and implementation of a strict check-point for pedestrian entry. The 2017 opening of U.S.' Pedestrian West and Mexican *El Chaparral* Port of entry (less than a mile west to the "Old" San Ysidro-Tia Juana Entry). The 2018 hyper-militarization and border closures due to the U.S. fabricated "border crisis." The 2019 re-opening of the "Old" San Ysidro

Port of Entry and rebranding as “PedEast;” and the most recent and indefinite bottlenecking and metering of U.S. asylum seekers and refugees denied Sanctuary and forced to Remain in Mexico. These aforementioned efforts have not been unilateral, but rather, relational and facilitated by Mexican and U.S. interests groups and facilitated by local and federal governments, civil society, and the private sector.

Through this research process, I also came to understand how the materiality, physical manifestation, and the built-environment of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands clearly articulates the relationship not only between nation-states, but, between state and individuals, in this case, transborder citizens and their families. The borderlands built-environment of the 21st Century aims to demarcate and criminalize along the lines of U.S. and Mexican legal status “haves” and “have-nots.” The implications of structural borderlands inequality and the BIC manifests in a hierarchy of legality/illegality vivid at the transborder communities between Tijuana and San Diego.

During my research I also documented, and became an active organizer, in the rise of radical *transfronteriza/o* politics by working collectively in spaces of U.S. and Mexican higher education, community spaces in Southern California and northern Baja California, and the U.S.-Mexico border wall in Tijuana. The rise of *transfronteriza/o* radical politics gained momentum after the nomination and 2016 election of Donald J. Trump with a collective and transnational solidarity efforts aimed at mitigating the racist, anti-immigrant, and border-criminalizing rhetoric of the U.S. and Mexican states.

Figure 6.1 Panoramic view of the border wall in Playas de Tijuana (Tijuana Estuary and Beaches)

BURSTING THE BUBBLE, OR, WHY THE "TIJUANA DREAM" NARRATIVE IS PROBLEMATIC

While there has been increased policing, surveillance, and criminalization of asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants, as represented in mainstream U.S. media, the "Tijuana Dream" narrative has also appeared as a commodifiable and desirable experience, in contrasts to people awaiting to enter the country. During the heightened media coverage of the most recent border shutdowns at the SYPoE, and the state's response to the arrival of the Central American Caravan, asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants fleeing state violence in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras; news reports on U.S. citizens' detention of Latina/o, Mexican, and Middle-Eastern descent on behalf of CBP and on their way to their home country in North America have also appeared.

Such is Julia Isabel Amparo Medina's experience, a nine-year old U.S.-citizen child kidnapped by CBP agents for 36-hours on March 22, 2019 at the SYPoE (Stevens 2019). The young Julia Isabel and 14-year old brother, Oscar Amparo Medina, were on their way to school from their residence in Tijuana. Every day they made the journey to

school across one of the most militarized international borders to attend school. On March 22, 2019, CBP agents kidnapped, psychologically tortured, and criminalized the Amparo Medina siblings for crossing the border as U.S. citizen children of Mexican descent.

CBP agents at the SYPoE accused the Amparo Medina siblings of attempting to cross the border using a stolen identity using the excuse that Julia Isabel did not look like the little girl in her passport card portrait. CBP agents went even further to accuse the children of stealing their cousin's passport card and using their family ties against them. The innocent little girl was kidnapped and held in custody by anti-immigrant state officials for almost two days; away from her family, home, and proper care and safety, while CBP agents verified her identity. The U.S. homeland security state[70] (Gonzalez 2013, 2), went even further and coerced Oscar, Julia's young U.S. citizen brother, into signing official government documents falsely admitting to human trafficking and sex trafficking charges in exchange for Julia Isabel's freedom (McAdams and Ojeda 2019). Ultimately, CBP was able to verify Julia Isabel's identity, and yet, they still obtained Oscar's false confession.

Oscar remained kidnapped in CBP custody and was not freed until Julia Isabel and her mother involved the Mexican Consulate in San Diego (McAdams and Ojeda 2019). The Amparo Medina U.S.-citizen children were kidnapped for almost two horrifying days by CBP, faced accusations of serious federal crimes, and endured state sanctioned violence on against their young bodies because they were crossing the border while Brown. To date, the CBP agency in San Diego defends their position and

[70] I employ this term to refer to the currently ongoing political context at the border, and as theorized by political scientist, Alfonso Gonzalez, "The homeland security state was symbolically consolidated in the aftermath of 9/11 with the Patriot Act and the formation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2003."

justifies the 36-hour kidnapping verifying Julia Isabel's identity and Oscar's purpose of visit to the U.S.

These border-criminalizing incidents are not geographically specific or isolated from the national landscape caging and kidnapping of U.S. citizen immigrant children of Latina/o and Mexican descent. In early July 2019, eighteen year-old Francisco Erwin Galicia was detained by a CBP inland checkpoint north of Edinburgh, Texas despite carrying a state ID card. Francisco Erwin was detained for twenty-one days (more than the allowed 72 hours) by CBP in Texas before being transferred to an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Pearsall, South Texas (Merchant 2019). Francisco Erwin was released after a day in ICE detention due in part to coverage by the *Dallas Morning Star's* that received national attention (Marchant 2019). Francicso Erwin's attorney, Claudia Galan commented that he was "illegally" detained and "absolutely a victim of racial profiling. The others in the vehicle were all Latinos, including his 17-year-old brother Marlon, who was born in Mexico and in the U.S. illegally" (Merchant 2019).

Later in July 19th 2019, three Chicago girls ages 9, 10, and 13, were kidnapped for several hours by CBP officers at Chicago O'Hare International Airport (Malagón 2019). The three U.S.-citizen immigrant young girls were traveling back from Mexico with a family friend who had a valid U.S. visa. The adult travel companion and family friend was deemed inadmissible upon arrival to Chicago and returned to Mexico. Activist feared that CBP detained the immigrant girls in an effort to arrest the parents upon arriving to pick up their children at the airport. Activists protesting against the family separation at the airport argued that DHS kidnapped the girls to use them as "bait and then arrest their parents when they came to retrieve them, because their parents are in the U.S. illegally" (Malagon 2019). The three Chicago girls were released

from CBP's custody after protesters, the Mexican Consulate in Chicago, U.S. congresswoman and Chicago Mayor, Lori Lightfoot intervened and rescued them back into their family and community's arms (Malagon 2019).

While the homeland security state is kidnapping immigrant children and families at the border, the security state is surveilling border residents with ever increasing precision, border architecture is ever more aggressively hyper-militarized, and metering implemented by both the U.S. and Mexican governments is bottlenecking refugees in Mexico; global mainstream media outlets are also praising the "Tijuana Dream" narrative. That is, the aspirational and celebratory notion that the "American Dream" is readily available in Mexican land, especially to U.S. citizens.

In response to President Trump's February 15th, 2019 National Emergency declaration at the southern border and funding of the border Wall, Québecois youth media mogul *Vice* magazine released a full-length documentary entitled, *Tijuana: A Mexican Dream* (Ivin 2019). The documentary seeks to engage in a critical conversation pushing back on Trump's alleged national emergency and shutting the border against migrant caravans arriving to Tijuana mainly from Central America and throughout the Global South. *Vice*'s production team seeks to rhetorically push back to the U.S. executive cabinet's draconian policies and anti-immigrant rhetoric by eagerly representing another side of the "notorious cultural funnel between North and South America," as it is also "home to a generation of young people ready and willing to do whatever it takes to help in what has been dubbed 'a humanitarian crisis' by the city's mayor" (Ivin 2019).

One of the protagonists of *Tijuana: A Mexican Dream* feature-length documentary film, is Valeria, a binational Robin Hood-*esque*, grassroots, border community organizer, mother, and small business owner single-handedly fixing

unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and families' problems while stuck in Tijuana and by handing them border garbage and recycled home items. A trusted, voguish entourage of Millennials ready and willing to do whatever it takes to help the needy *caravaneros*, or caravan members, also join Valeria in her successfully trashy rescue mission to dump dozens of pounds of Tijuana households waste at the government-run migrant shelter of *El Barretal*, temporarily open during the months of November of 2018 and February 2019.

The film awkwardly climaxes when the protagonist Valeria shockingly confronts the "hordes" of insatiable Central American asylum-seeking children devouring the dumpster avalanche in a matter of seconds. The final scene of Valeria's montage shows an insensitive attempt to "connect" with the only other adult in the scene, Johana, a concerned mother fleeing violence in Honduras along with her toddler son. Johana is distracted as she is supervising and making sure that her toddler and fellow children do not accidentally hurt each other while fetching the "donations" handed down by Valeria and her team. Valeria inquired about Johana's son's age. "3" (14:52) the concerned mother replies. Instead of listening carefully to Johana's story, Valeria interrupts her only to compare and contrasts her upper-class and border motherhood mobility with that of a U.S. asylum-seeking and Mexican refugee mother fleeing Honduras. With a sarcastic giggle and grim on her face, Valeria exclaims, "*Wow! No me imagino hacer ésta travesía con mi niño, o con mi familia en este caso*[71]*!*" (14:58). Further insinuating that Johana should have also been traveling along with her entire family from Honduras to Tijuana. Johana's face goes blank. Johana takes a deep breath

[71] Trans. "Wow! I cannot even imagine making this voyage with my boy. Or with my family, in this case." Translation by the author.

and asserts, *"¡Pero por el bien de ellos, nos toca*[72]*!*" (15:04) In an effort to rescue the scene at the government-run shelter of *El Barretal* from the somber reality of the "Tijuana Dream," *Vice*'s production team gives 20 seconds of air-time to Johana's story in voice-off and in a 20 minute length film.

In the same vein, a weekend New York Times print features the "Tijuana Dream" narrative in a March 7th 2019 bilingual English and Spanish piece entitled, "Building a Binational Border One Craft Cocktail at a Time" (The NYT 2019). The NYT weekend article reports on a pro-corporate real estate and global entrepreneurially-driven vision of "*Estación Federal*[73]" a "prototype for rejuvenating the Mexican border city—part artistic, part commuter waypoint, and part gastro-utopia" is presented to American and elite readers featuring "[i]n Tijuana, one highly curated taste of Mexico" (The NYT 2019). This unsurprisingly liberal and insensitively elitist NYT reporting in the context of the humanitarian crisis and violence at the border, celebrates Estación Federal's "vision to bring Americans and Mexicans together for good food, drinks, and conversation." The article further appeals to readers' quest for authenticity by assuring that the early 20th C. old Mexican customs site and SYPoE adjacent mixed-use building, "*Estación Federal*," is autobiographical and inspired by the life of emerging real-estate venture capitalist, Miguel Marshall, someone who was "born in San Diego but grew up in Tijuana" (The NYT 2019). A self-identified "border baby" turned real estate developer, ready to offer the "best of both worlds" (The NYT 2019) to American clientele seeking Instagram-ready and frugal Millennial-catering international travel destinations and co-living housing markets around the globe.

[72] Trans. "But for their sake, we have to!" Translated from Spanish by the author.
[73] This is an important site to this study because it is where the author lodged while doing ethnographic fieldwork between January of 2016 until May of 2017.

It is extremely important to continue to highlight and engage in a critical examination of the potential dangers and violation of rights engendered not only in the United States, but other parts of Latin America, particularly at the Mexican border and as a consequente of bifurcated mainstream narratives and representations of U.S.-born border crossers passing through Mexico and of Latina/o descent as either, criminals or good citizens. Ultimately, the celebration of the "Tijuana Dream" narrative is yet another iteration of the bad border crossing migrant and good citizen dichotomy. As shown in the recent 2019 North American cultural productions, the "Tijuana Dream" narrative further sustains the anti-immigrant hegemony in mainstream American culture and political circles criminalizing border crossers and their families (Gonzalez 2013, 5).

As exemplified in the paragraphs above, and as published in the 2019 North American media outlets, the most deceitful aspect of this false binary in the "Tijuana Dream" narrative is that its simplistic characterization forces Latino migrant activists and their allies into a false binary opposition in which the rights of the "good immigrant'… stay at the expense of the 'bad immigrant" (Gonzalez 2013, 6-70). The "bad immigrant" narrative is a "one dimensional image… based solely on a few 'exaggerated, simplified, and naturalized characteristics,'" Gonzalez theorizes, and due to their inherent malice, "deserves to be detained and deported and in which traditional opposition attempts to counter with more simplified images of the [good] immigrant who deserves to stay" (2014, 6-7). What is more pernicious is that not just powerful political blocs or lobby groups fall into this discursive trap, but people and communities sharing a common history and processes of racialization can cross borders, while *reinforcing borders* too (Vila 2000, 2003).

SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of this dissertation project has been to critically contribute to discussions challenging anti-immigrant discourses amongst U.S. and Mexico *fronteriza/o* and cross-border communities histories and experiences, through the use of radical Chicana/o, Central American and Latina/o Studies' methodological approaches theorizing borders and immigration, and by taking into consideration multilingual and multinational area studies literature as much as Race Studies and Ethnic Studies scholarship.

In Chapter 2 I thoroughly reviewed literature on transborder families, individuals, and citizens available in academic canons. In reviewing the literature, I have pointed out how the existing scholarship can further be inclusive by advancing the understandings of U.S. citizens living at the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, and to a certain extent, citizens living beyond U.S. boundaries.

Then, in Chapter 3 I have shared the extensive and flexible research design employed during the data collection and data analysis phases of this project. This dissertation's findings are based upon two interdisciplinary data collections: the first is an oral history collection including eleven narratives; and the second, includes a insider ethnographic collection, 22 qualitative interviews utilizing (a condensed) phenomenological approach, participant observation, and researcher journal entries and memoranda. Upon collection of all data materials, interview audio recordings were transcribed using transcription software, and with the support of two undergraduate student researchers in the Spring quarter of 2017. Data was also analyzed with the support of the same undergraduate student researchers, utilizing open-coding methods to analyze interview transcriptions. From 2017 through 2018, I analyzed the data materials, that is, interview transcripts, images, video, and scholarly texts using

the qualitative data analysis computer software, NVivo versions 11 and 12, and produced by QSR International.

In Chapter 4 I laid out the ongoing themes and findings in the oral history narratives covering *fronteriza/o* respondents' family migration to Tijuana. Doing so allowed me to theorize that since the moment of arrival to Tijuana, fronteriza/os' forebearers forged transborder family units and began setting the early practices of transborder citizenship. I also complicated transborder citizenship theories, by looking at the social history of transborder families and individuals mobility throughout the 20th C. The historical analysis ceded theorizations on the meritocratic and aspirational "Tijuana Dream" narrative, as captured in respondents oral narratives and stories of migration to Tijuana during the gilded "Age of Tourism" and from 1889 to 1965.

In Chapter 5 I have argued that one of the most relevant themes in *fronteriza/os* transborder citizenship experiences is the construction and articulation of a transborder form of legal consciousness. By peeling the contemporary and 21st C. layered legal understandings and relationships that U.S.-born Mexican border crossers construct around ideals of Mexican nationality and U.S. citizenship, I further argue that *fronteriza/os* "transborder legal consciousness" can be theorized through the notions of "differential nationality" to characterize their relationships with the Mexican state and "transborder mixed-status family" to describe how they relate to the U.S. nation state. In my attempt to better explicate *fronteriza/os'* relationship with Mexican Dual Nationality and US Citizenship, I have theorized a "transborder legal consciousness", which takes into consideration both Mexican and U.S. legal structures and in tandem.

LIFE AFTER THE WALL

"The U.S. Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the Third and bleeds" social inequality at the borderlands (Anzaldúa 2007, 25). As fourth-generation U.S. born, 31 year-old mother, college instructor and *fronteriza* head of a transborder mixed-status family household, Julia reminds us, "If you are not fearful of the F*#@!$& border police…. If you are not scared of *la pinche migra*, even when you are a U.S. citizen. When you do not know *that* level of fear. You just don't know what it is like to live while crossing the border[74]."

The violent blood-rush that Anzaldúa so poetically laid-out, spills into transborder communities in the form of uncertain and unequal access to sometimes ephemeral U.S. and Mexican legal statuses. Laura Velasco and Oscar Contreras (2011) remind us that the border becomes an uncertain place for crossers who experience tight, long-held, intense affective relationships as well as high-levels of violence to both sides of the border (186). However negotiating and reckoning with this subjective uncertainty is not the pitfall of *fronteriza/os*, rather, it is a generative opportunity to deconstruct social and cultural borders erected by uncritical notions of fear "of the other."

Instead of continuing to forge aspirational dreams and fantasies further celebrating uncritical notions and practices of meritocracy and upward mobility, I am invested in continuing to collectively figure out and discuss, both in the university and beyond, how it is that we, as *fronteriza/os*, *"transfronteriza/os,"* or transborder citizens as those who are "often more critically self-aware of the everyday realities of border living" (Iglesias-Prieto 2011, 144) can create inner and collective space and begin to

[74] Translated from Spanish by the author.

grapple with centuries of colonialism, imperialism, and globalized inequality at the border. I evoke Gloria Anzaldua's famed futuristic poetic visions guiding past, current and upcoming U.S.-Mexico border communities to live in solidarity with each other,

> This land was Mexican once,
> was Indian always
> and is.
> And will be again (2007, 25).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ORAL HISTORY OUTLINE AND THEMES

OPENING QUESTIONS

What does "*la linea*" mean to you?

What does "*el otro lado*" mean to you?

What is your impression of the United States?

What is your impression of Mexico?

What is your impression of the border region*/franja fronteriza*? Where do you feel at home?

What does it mean to you to have a U.S. passport?

THEMES

Citizenship identity Belonging

Civic engagement Home

PLACENESS

Generational experience

Imagined communities

Dual-Citizenship

Documentation

El Programa Bracero / The 1942-1964 U.S. Guest Workers' Program

La era de los Rodinos / The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act

TLCAN / NAFTA

Operacion Guardián / Operation Gatekeeper

La Propuesta 187 / California Prop. 187

Después del 11 de septiembre/ 9/11 and its aftermath

Border Ethnic Identity Politics (vis-à-vis Chicana/os, Latina/os, Mexican-Americans, Mexican Immigrants, *mexicanas/os*)

APPENDIX B: GUIDELINE OF THE ABBREVIATED IN-DEPTH PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING.

BIRTH

- When and where were you born?

  Do you know why were you born in the United States? Where are your parents from?
- When did your family establish at the border?
- Did your parents have any relatives in the U.S. at the time of your birth?
- Where did your parents live at the time of your birth?
- What kind of U.S. (immigration) documentation did your parents have at the time of your birth?
- Do you have any siblings? Where were they born? Do you know why your parents made that decision?
- Where did your mother's pre-natal care take place?

CHILDHOOD

- Where did you grow-up? How would you describe the neighborhood? Who did you live with?
- Where did your parents work during your childhood? Describe a typical day as a child, or your lifestyle as a child?
- What kind of games did you play?
- What language did you spoke primarily? Any other languages?

SCHOOLING

- Where did you go to school? How would you describe the school?
- Was there a primary language used in school? Which language?
- Did you attend school as a foreigner (Visa, student permit, or apostille), or as a citizen of that country (birth certificate, social security, CURP, etc.)?
- Did you experience any binational schooling? If so, how was that experience?
- If binational schooling, did you have any schooling preference? - Where did your siblings attend their primary schooling?

BORDER CROSSING

- As a child, how would you cross the border the U.S.-Mexico border?
- How often would you visit the United States?
- What were the reasons to visit the U.S.?
- Who would you cross-the-border with? What was their immigration/documentation status?
- Have you ever had a U.S./Mexican Visitor or Resident visa? If so, why?
- Do you have relatives living in the U.S./Mexico?
- As a child, how did you feel when visiting the United States/Mexico?
- What identity documentation was used on a regular basis during your childhood?
- Did you use both the U.S. and Mexican documents? What was the frequency and contexts for using each?
- As a child, did you ever live in the U.S.? When, where, and why?
- Did you have any residential preference?
- Where did you and your family spend leisure time?

- When did you learn that you were born in the United States? (Had you always known? If not, were there any reasons for that?)
- How did you feel when you learned about your place of birth?
- After learning your place of birth, how did you feel about the Mexican national anthem, the flag, or *el juramento a la bandera*?
- How about U.S.' patriotic symbols, such as "The Pledge of Allegiance," the "Star-spangled banner"?
- Do you have a Mexican birth certificate? If so, how did you obtain that document?

YOUTH

- Where did you attend high school?
- What language(s) were spoken at your HS?
- Why did you attend that HS?
- Where and with whom did you live during your teenage years?
- Describe a typical day as a teenager
- What language did you spoke mainly?
- What kind of music did you listen to?
- Where did your friends live
- What would you do for fun?

  As a teen, how often would you visit the U.S.?
- What were the reasons for your visit?
- How much time would you spend per visit?
- How did you feel while in the U.S.?

YOUNG ADULTHOOD

- Did you attend college/*universidad*?
- Where did you attend college/*universidad*?
- Why did you choose that college/*universidad*?
- Where did you live while attending college/*universidad*?
- Did you work during college, if so, where?
- What was your "scene" during college/*universidad*?
- What language(s) was/were spoken at college/*universidad*?
- Where would you spend your free time during college/*universidad*, and why?

PRESENT EXPERIENCES

- Where and with who do you currently live?
- Are they U.S. citizens, Mexican, Visa holders, etc.?
- What language(s) do you speak most often at home?
- Where do you currently work?
- What language(s) do you mostly speak at work?
- Do you have any children?

    Where were your children born, and why?

    Do they attend school? If so, where and why?

    What is your child(ren)'s primary language?
- Do you cross the border?
- What are the reasons for your visit to Mexico/U.S.? How often do you cross-the U.S./Mexico border?

MEANING

- What does crossing the U.S.-Mexico border mean to you?
- What language(s) do you speak while in Mexico/U.S.?
- How does “crossing-the-border” make you feel?
- What does it mean to you to “cross-the-border”?
- How do you feel *in* the United States/Mexico?
- What does it mean to you to have a U.S. passport?
- What does “*la linea*” mean to you?
- What does “*el otro lado*” mean to you?
- What is your impression of the United States?
- What is your impression of Mexico?
- What is your impression of the border region*/franja fronteriza*?
- Where do you feel at home?
- Can you describe your community?
- What are your plans for your future?

APENDIX C: RESPODENT CONSENT FORM

University of California, Los Angeles
César E. Chávez Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies

ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

FLEXIBLE CITIZENS AND THE DEBORDERING/REBORDERING OF U.S. AND MEXICO

Under the advisement of Dr. Robert Chao-Romero, Kendy Denisse Rivera, a UCLA doctoral candidate from the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies at UCLA is conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you identify yourself as: 1) a Tijuana-San-Diego border-dweller; 2) born in the U.S.; 3) raised/socialized in Tijuana; 4) part of a middle-class; and, 5) non-immigrant Mexican-rooted family unit at the moment of birth. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
This study aims to capture the experiences of non-immigrant, middle-class, U.S.-Mexico border-dwellers born in the U.S., and socialized in the Mexican borderlands. This study understands this experience as the "flexible citizenship."

What is flexible citizenship? This study uses the term "flexible citizenship," by Aiwha Ong (1999), to conceptualize the experience of bearing a U.S. birthright citizenship while being a Mexican national.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

1) Participate in a one-time, one-to-one, and one to two hour interview, with a possibility of a follow-up interview.
2) Describe your experiences as a flexible citizen.

The researcher will ask a set of questions. You are free to answer only the questions you want to answer. If you choose not to answer a question, you can still participate in the study. Simply answer in your own words and discuss your experiences and thoughts on these topics.

No one outside of this project will know your name or what you said. The project will use a fictitious name in all materials.

The following are representative questions you will be asked during the interview. I understand you are a U.S.-born border-dweller of Mexican descent who grew-up in Mexico, how was that experience? What does the U.S.-Mexico border mean to you and what is the significance of "the border line" to your experience?

I would also like to ask your permission to audiotape the interview. This will make it easier for me to type out what you said so that I can analyze it for my study. If this

makes you uncomfortable, I can just take notes. But, if you allow me to record it, I will ask you not to mention your name or any other details that might help people identify you. After the interview, you may also choose to review, edit, or erase the recordings.

Lastly, in case you undergo a major life change or partake in any major event that relates to your citizenship experience, after the initial interview is conducted, you may be asked to partake in a follow-up interview. However, please note that you will have the right to decline to participate in any follow-up interviews.

How long will I be in the research study?
Participation will take a total of about one hour or up to two hours for a single interview

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?
There are no foreseeable risks related to your participation in this project. There is a potential for discomfort in answering some of the questions as you will be sharing your personal life experiences, but you can skip a question or stop the interview at any time.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?
You may benefit from the study by having the opportunity to share your experiences and challenges while a member of the otro lado generation. Also, by including the experiences of members of the otro lado generation, not only will it expand the academic knowledge of scholars in the field invested in looking at border studies and immigrant groups in the U.S., but it will also serve as a means for the larger society to become more aware of this issue. My hope is that results from this study will help shed light on understanding the complexities of U.S.-Mexico border populations.

If you choose not to participate, there will be no repercussions and we will not bother you again

Will I be paid for participating?
There are no monetary compensations for participation in this study.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. Information shared will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of fictitious names, encrypted data on the computer, only the researcher will have the code to access the information, and it will stored in my personal archive. For those participants who publicly have shared about their experiences as part of the otro lado generation, it may not be possible to guarantee confidentiality. Because of your leadership role in the movement, I cannot guarantee your data will be confidential and it may be possible that others will know what you have shared.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

The Research Team:
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the researcher. Please contact Kendy Denisse Rivera at (310) 254-7985 or via email at riverak@ucla.edu.

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):
If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of California, Los Angeles Institutional Review Board at (310) 825-5344.

Authorization:
- I am 18 years of age or older
  YES _____ NO _____
- I have read and understand the above consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in this study
  YES _____ NO _____
- I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded
  YES _____ NO _____
- I have been given a copy of this consent form for my own records
  YES _____ NO _____

Consent of Research Subject:
I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. YES _____ NO _____

APENDIX D: OFFICE OF THE HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM APPROVAL

University of California Los Angeles
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M-IRB: (310) 825-5344

APPROVAL NOTICE
New Study

DATE:	1/14/2016
TO:	KENDY RIVERA REC MGMT & INFO PRACT
FROM:	TODD FRANKE, PhD Chair, NGIRB
RE:	IRB#15-001062 The New Border Hybrid: Citizenship, Cultural Politics and Identity of Otro Lado Generation at the U.S./México Borderlands.

The UCLA Institutional Review Board (UCLA IRB) has approved the above-referenced study. UCLA's Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with Department of Health and Human Services is FWA00004642.

Submission and Review Information

Type of Review	Full Board Review
Approval Date	1/14/2016
??Expiration Date of the Study	7/15/2016

Regulatory Determinations

-- **Waiver of Signed Informed Consent** - The UCLA IRB waived the requirement for signed informed consent for the research under 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2).

Documents Reviewed included, but were not limited to:

Document Name	Document Version #
15-001062 - Email-Phone Script.docx.pdf	0.01
15-001062 - Consent_OtroLadoGeneration.docx.pdf	0.01
15-001062 - Referral Letter_OtroLadoGeneration.docx.pdf	0.01

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