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Rivera, Kendy Denisse

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From Anchor Babies to *Otro Lado* Babies: Challenging Non-Native Representations of
Latina/o Children in U.S. Mainstream Media.

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Chicana and Chicano Studies

by

Kendy Denisse Rivera

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

From Anchor Babies to *Otro Lado* Babies: Challenging Non-Native Representations of
Latina/o Children in U.S. mainstream media.

by

Kendy Denisse Rivera

Master of Arts in Chicana and Chicano Studies

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Chair

Since the rise of the border trope in the late 1980's, postmodern, feminist, postcolonial, Chicana/o and Latina/o academic circles have invested in the hybrid subject as an alternative way of theorizing border identity and experience. Yet, the kinds of border subjectivities that have become the norm in Chicana/o and non-Chicana/o border epistemology mainly focus on U.S.-centered experiences. The lack of consideration of non-U.S. based border subjects drives this research project and asks; how does mainstream mediated news sources construct a non-native transborder experience (what I call the “*otro lado*” baby experience)? By looking at published news articles, network television news reports, and online debates that inform a wide audience on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, I critically analyze and challenge the various news reports that propel a sometimes problematic and/or controversial construction of the *otro lado* babies’ experience.

This thesis of Kendy Denisse Rivera is approved.

Leisy Abrego

Raymond Rocco

Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

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I. Introduction

Since the rise of the border trope in the late 1980's, postmodern, feminist, postcolonial, Chicana/o and Latina/o academic circles have invested in the hybrid subject as an alternative way of theorizing border identity and experience. As a border native living south of the Tijuana-San Diego binational metropolis for most of my life, I became concerned with border studies' s lack of discussion on borderlands subjectivities as experienced on the "*otro lado de la frontera*," or, the other side of the border. The kinds of border subjectivities that have become the norm in Chicana/o and non-Chicana/o border studies are for the most part U.S.-centric and to a certain extent perpetuate U.S. ethnocentrism, instead of offering a fuller view of U.S. and Mexican border/*frontera* experiences. Thus, this research project sheds-light to an *otro lado* border experience rooted in Mexico as well as in the U.S. borderlands. In this thesis, I specifically focus on a "new" border subjectivity that has not yet been articulated, what I call the *otro lado* baby experience.

I characterize *otro lado* babies as transborder¹ children born prior to 1997² in the United States to parents of Mexican-descent and whose life experiences and subject positions took shape south of the border. In addition to the transborder child, I look at the *otro lado* baby's mother, who I call the "transborder reproductive outlaw," a transborder U.S.-visa holding Mexican-citizen woman rooted on the Mexican borderlands.

¹ Ráquel Márquez and Harriet Romo describe "transborder" families and individuals as those who possess a strong link and daily contact with both sides of the border indistinctively, whether to attend school, work, to meet family expectations, or conduct business transactions. Generally speaking, transborder families thrive in sister cities, such as, Tijuana-San Diego, or Ciudad Juárez-El Paso. Transborder families are also known as cross-border or border-dwellers (22).

² On March 20, 1997, article 32 of the Mexican Constitution was modified to allow Mexican nationals to hold more than one citizenship status. Prior to that date it was impossible for Mexican parents to derive their citizenship rights to their children born abroad, until they renounced their birthright citizenship (in any case applicable).

Yet, before fully embarking into the theorization of a “new” form of border subjectivity, it is imperative to understand how *otro lado* babies and their mothers’ (“transborder reproductive outlaws”) experiences are constructed and represented in U.S. mainstream media. For this reason, my data analysis and first part of this Master’s thesis deconstructs and makes a critique of U.S. mainstream (mis) representations of *otro lado* babies and transborder reproductive outlaws in news media. By looking into a wealth of published and broadcast news reports dealing with immigration and reproduction (from the “anchor baby,” “birth tourism,” “terror babies,” to immigrant mothers) I question, how and why are *otro lado* babies misrepresented in U.S. mainstream media? My critique is not only that U.S. nativism is prevalent in mainstream discourse, but also that U.S. racial politics allow and almost concede the misrepresentation of Latina/o children, in this case, the *otro lado* baby. To put simply, the first-half of this thesis counters the mainstream narratives of the “Anchor baby,” “Birth tourism,” and “Terror baby.”

In the second section, I then articulate what it is to experience an *otro lado* baby’s subjectivity. Where and what is “*el otro lado*”? What does it mean to be “transborder” and from an “*otro lado*” of the U.S.-Mexico border? And, most importantly, is there such thing as an *otro lado* baby experience? As an *otro lado* baby myself, I employ my childhood and personal experiences both as an empirical and theoretical pivot to articulate a form of transborder subjectivity that has not yet been explored in any serious, formal, or systematic manner in academic circles thus far.

The key question of this research project is, how do *others*³ discuss, construct, and represent the *otro lado* baby in mainstream U.S. news media? Since there is no discussion as

³ In this case, the “Other” is not the “foreign other” or the “token other,” but the mainstream American audience that is foreign to border experiences.

such taking place in U.S. mainstream media, how am I to engage in an examination of the non-represented in mainstream media? I pose this question to elucidate my critique of mainstream media's implicit nativism in the construction (or lack of thereof) and (mis)representation of Latina/o transborder experiences. The fact is that lack of accurate representation does not mean non-representability. Due to U.S. nativism and racial politics embedded and showcased in U.S. mainstream media, news reports about Latina/o children born in the United States are framed within the undocumented (so-called, "illegal") immigration discourse and the threat of non-native reproduction discourse, or, what Leo Chavez calls the "Latino threat" narrative. In the "Latino threat" discourse there is no critical engagement of Latino/a experiences, no conception of Latina/os as non-immigrants and non-natives outside of the frames of illegality, immigration, reproduction, and threat.

To answer the aforementioned question then, I analyze the non-represented by carefully selecting mainstream news articles, special reports, and news features where the transborder U.S.-born Mexican child appears as a mirage of the highly discussed, popularized, and controversial media "truths"—the "Anchor baby," "Terror baby," "Birth tourism," and the over-reproductive Latina mother narratives. In other words, because U.S. mainstream media has not yet developed a sophisticated enough language to discuss U.S.-Mexico transborder experiences, I analyze news coverage where mainstream constructions of Latinidad disguise or camouflage *otro lado* babies.

I found the *otro lado* baby experience camouflaged in a wealth of published and broadcast news reports, ranging from televised audiovisual reports from American broadcast corporations such as CBS, ABC, and Fox, to national newspaper stories in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, to local newspaper coverage in dailies like the *Antelope Valley Times*, the *Arizona Daily Times*, and the *San Diego Union Tribune*. By looking at

published news articles, network television news reports, and online debates that inform a wide audience on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, I critically analyze and evaluate the various news reports that propel a sometimes problematic and/or controversial discourse regarding *otro lado* babies. By using the constructionist approach developed by cultural studies scholar, Stuart Hall, which focuses not only on the semiotic meanings of representations, but also on the discursive efforts behind their mass mediated productions, I analyze the power and knowledge relationship between the “Anchor baby,” “Birth tourism,” “Terror babies,” and non-native mothers in mass media reports. I employ the constructionist approach to understand how the power-embedded anti-immigrant and nativist discourses that represent the transborder Mexican mothers and U.S.-born Mexican children influence a wide U.S. audience’s perception of *otro lado* babies.

For Stuart Hall, a cultural representation is an exchange of “shared meanings” communicated through “the circuit of culture” (1). Because language is the privileged medium through which meaning is shared, constructed, and produced, “it operates as a *representational system*” (1). *Meaning* is what gives sense to our subjectivity and identity, that is who we are and where we belong in a cultural context. Together, language, meaning, and representation, make up the “circuit of culture,” which Hall attempts to de-construct, not in an effort to reach an absolute “truth” or accuracy of meanings, but to think about the exchange (or a process of translation) “which facilitates cultural communication while recognizing the persistence of difference and power between different ‘speakers’ within the same cultural circuit” (11). Because difference can never be understood in binary ways, as Jacques Derrida would put it (42), Hall proposes semiotic and discursive analyses as two complementary ways for understanding language and de-constructing meanings in cultural representations. Semiotic analyses focus on the “poetics,” or the affect of representation:

how language affects subjectivities and experiences, how language connects with power, and how representations construct and shape an identity. The discursive approach understands the “politics,” or the effects and consequences of historically specific languages and meanings (representation). For example, thinking about current news reports on immigration reform, semiotic analysis allows us to understand *how* immigrants are represented through the use of cultural signs, whereas, the discursive approach allows us to analyze the effects and consequences of a certain symbolic representation of immigrants in relation to historically specific power dynamics.

For Hall, it only makes sense that we look not only into the material world by which representations are effected, but also at “the social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture ... and other representational systems to construct meaning” (25). Ultimately, Hall’s method aims at studying the production of knowledge and power. Developing from Michel Foucault’s historically grounded theory, Hall uses the model of the production of knowledge that greatly considers the contexts and histories of power structures in which discourses are constructed (51).

For this reason, I will use both semiotic and discursive approaches to understand the representations and discourses constructing U.S.-born transborder children of Mexican descent, *otro lado* babies, and transborder reproductive outlaws. Using both approaches will allow me to make a more holistic analysis— a representation continuum, to assess not only the effects, but also the affect produced by the differences in power relations amongst members of a cultural community.

Besides problematizing Latina/o representation in the media, the second part of this Master’s thesis foregrounds a new *frontera* (border) subjectivity and consciousness through a combination of Chicana feminist analysis, and subaltern, and postcolonial theories. Using

Chicana Feminist theoretical frameworks and methods, such as Emma Pérez's notions of the decolonial imaginary and diasporic subjectivities, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Nepantla* and *nos/otras*, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba's concepts of "cultural schizophrenia" and "alter-Nativity," will allow me to theorize a new (trans) border subjectivity that straddles the U.S. and Mexico borders, and embraces the contradictions of being a "*Nepantlera/o*," a border-dweller who navigates the U.S. and Mexican cultural and political communities and belong "neither here nor there/ *ni de aqui ni de allá*."

In *The Decolonial Imaginary*, Emma Pérez states that "[d]iasporas intervene, construct newness, and 'live inside with a difference'" (78). With the decolonial imaginary, Pérez calls upon the multiply-complex and varied diasporic subjectivities that live within the mainland of the U.S. with an ethnic, cultural, racial, sexual, gendered, or classed difference. I will use Pérez's understanding of Chicana/os as diasporic subjects, instead of the commonly conceived "immigrant" (for those who crossed the border) or postcolonial subject (for those who were crossed by the border) to re-articulate the *otro lado* subjectivity. Similarly, Anzaldúa's enunciation of a subjectivity emerging from a socio-cultural, economic, historic, and politically specific context while longing for the unattainable *home* (place), cedes a construction of a non-unitary subjectivity and borderlands consciousness (living in *Nepantla*).

In *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House*, Gaspar de Alba defines cultural schizophrenia as "the presence of mutually contradictory beliefs, social forms and material traits of any group whose racial and ethnic components are a hybrid of two or more cultures" (113). *Otro lado* babies not only experience their own cultural *mestizaje* within the border region in Mexico, but also binational cultural mixing between California and Baja California. Gaspar de Alba's theory of the alter-Native, or alter-nativity (16) will explain how the *otro*

lado baby's experience of alterity, and perhaps even sub-alternity, is constructed by their experience growing up Mexican-American south of the border.

The Anzaldúan theories I make use of to elaborate and theorize another transborder subjectivity are the notions of a community of *Nepantleras* and “*nos/otras*.” Anzaldúa characterized those who navigate and exist within borders as, *Nepantleras* (“now let us shift...,” 570). Anzaldúa argued that a community of *Nepantleras* advocates a community of “us” (*nos/nuestra*) and “them” (*ustedes/otras*), that is, a community of *nos/otras*, where the slash serves as a temporary bridge of humanity that strives for an eventful and wholesome “*nosotras*” (us) (570). I argue that *otro lado* babies epitomize Anzaldúa’s “*nos/otras*,” because we represent the “us” in one space (either Mexico or the U.S.), while simultaneously being the “other” (again, in Mexico or the U.S.).

I also employ postcolonial and subaltern theories that challenge Western cultural hegemonic notions of “nation,” “the Other,” and knowledge production. Expanding from Anzaldúa’s *nueva conciencia de la mestizaje* articulated in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Walter D. Mignolo proposes a “border gnosis,” that is, knowledge enunciated from the periphery (ies) into the center. In *Local Histories/Global Designs*, Mignolo explains that “border gnosis” is a fragment or disruption of the universal Western epistemological project that promotes the (re) production of abstract forms of non-traditional knowledge (84). Like Anzaldúa’s “living in *Nepantla*,” Mignolo’s “border gnosis” also disrupts Western hegemonic dichotomies, such as, developed/underdeveloped, first world/third world, heteronormative/queer, etc. In addition, I use Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined communities” published in *Imagined Communities* to re-conceptualize the borderlands by exploring the extent to which nation-state projects disjoin a borderlands community. Albert Memmi’s theorizations of “colonization/colonized” in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* help me elucidate how the

placeness of Tijuana, and more specifically the borderlands, is not only a doubly colonized space, but also doubly decolonized, and doubly neo-colonized. Additionally, Gayatri Chakrovotry Spivak's notions of subaltern representation, placeness, and historical consciousness in *The Post-Colonial Critic* will allow me to understand how the two new *transfronteriza/o*/transborder subjectivities I theorize—*otro lado* babies and transborder reproductive outlaws employ their “strategic essentialism” to challenge Western-imposed social structures of inequality.

Through the combination of Chicana Feminist thought, which theorizes Chicana/os, Mexican-Americans, and Latina/os political implications of being “Brown” in a White hegemony; and postcolonial and subaltern thought, which challenges colonial and post-colonial structures, i.e. hegemony, “the nation,” “monolingualism,” I theorize a new border consciousness embodied by the *otro lado* baby.

II. “Anchor Babies,” “Terror Babies,” “Birth Tourists,” Oh My!: Mainstreaming Nativist Constructions, and (Mis) Representations of *Otro Lado* Babies and Transborder Reproductive Outlaws in U.S. News Reports.

Are *otro lado* babies and transborder reproductive outlaws becoming a national security menace in mediated discourses? Why is it that U.S. citizens of Latin American descent are continuously perceived and constructed in mainstream Amerikkkan⁴ media as a

⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary describes the etymology of the word “Amerika” as an alteration of the word “America,” which derive from the phrasing of “German *Amerika*” and “Russian *Amerika*,” to express associations of fascism and authoritarianism. The variant, “Amerikkka” makes an allusion to the Ku Klux Klan. Thus the definition of “Amerika/Amerikkka,” is: “American society viewed as racist, fascist, or oppressive, esp. by African-Americans.”

threat to the United States? For anthropologist Leo Chávez, these simple, but highly loaded questions can be better answered if mediated discourses are analyzed through the lens of the “Latino Threat Narrative.” Chávez argues that citizenship claims can be challenged through discourse and media spectacles by calling into question a community’s membership in and loyalty to a national body, and “expose” the danger that foreign groups pose to the nation (15). Chávez uses spectacles⁵ as proposed by Guy Debord, who, by looking into modern technological societies and the circulation of representations, argued, “all that was once directly lived has become mere representation” (Debord qtd. in Chavez, 5). For Chávez, when immigration issues receive extensive mediated coverage, these become media spectacles that convey much more than *just* news. It is through media spectacles (like televised network news reports, news features, published news articles, and online debates) that the “Latino Threat Narrative” is employed to position Latina/os, Mexicans, Chicana/os, Central Americans, South Americans, or any “Brown” people for that matter, as “differently threatening” and “dangerous” compared to past immigrants and other ethnic minority groups in the United States today. The “Latino Threat Narrative” discourse implicates and makes claims that the Latina/o community threatens: border surveillance, reproduction, fertility levels, fears of immigrant invasion and reconquest (a.k.a. *Reconquista*), amnesty programs, economic impacts, organ transplants, and Latino/a children’s inability to assimilate (5).

Yet, because it is fairly impossible for every single member of a modern nation state to meet each other, as Benedict Anderson has proposed with his idea of a nation as an

⁵ The Oxford English Dictionary defines a spectacle as, “A specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (esp. one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it.”

“imagined community” (15), in an era of increased access to sources of information, media spectacles have become a ripe site to represent, contest, or question who is or is not part of the United States’ nation. Through media spectacles we can best visualize who is an American and who is not; who is considered a citizen and who is the denizen; and who is desirable and undesirable (Chávez, 4-5). If we look closely into media spectacles, we will observe, as Chavez says, “who we let into the nation as immigrants and allow to become citizens defines who we are as people... looking at who we ban from entry, or for whom we create obstacles to integration into society and to membership in the community of citizens, also reveals how we imagine ourselves as a nation” (9).

The media spectacles that I am looking at in my analysis incessantly construct and attempt to illegalize or delegitimize two highly debated characters in immigration-talk: the so-called “Anchor baby” and the Anchor baby’s mother. In *Entry Denied*, Eithné Luibhéid explains that the fear of immigrants’ sexuality and reproductive capabilities are not a new anti-immigrant nativist discourse in white America. These immigrant characterizations date back to the late 19th century white Anglo-American xenophobic and nativist discourses against Chinese immigration. Luibhéid explains that United States’ first immigration control regulations—the 1875-1890 Chinese Exclusion Acts, focused on controlling Chinese women’s sexuality and placing their reproductive potential under scrutiny when entering the U.S. boundaries (xi, 2). Eithné Luibhéid poignantly argues, “the policing of immigrant women on the basis of sexuality also enabled the discursive production of exclusionary forms of nationalism that took concrete shape in immigration laws and procedures, but extended well beyond the border to produce particular visions of the U.S. nation and citizenry” (xi). Immigration regulations, then, not only also dictate and manipulate our imagination of the U.S. nation through media spectacles, but they also tell us that immigrant

women's sexuality is the underlying threat to the nation. Thus, the fear of the "Anchor" or its most updated version, the "Terrorist" baby, is not necessarily an anxiety directed at the U.S.-born immigrant child, but towards the "Brown" mother's sexually threatening reproductive capabilities. Moreover, in a post-9/11 United States of America, heightened paranoia of dangers posed by "foreign others" added a new and urgent argument to confront all perceived threats to national security, both old and new (Luibhéid, 21).

Similarly for Leo Chávez, race, immigration and fertility have become an established trinity for much of U.S. history (71). Latina fertility is constructed as part of the "Latino Threat Narrative," and at the core of the politics of reproduction are the constructions (or stereotypes) of the "hot" Latina and the abnegated Latina/o mother (77). The "Latina threat" is a composite of the hypersexualized, "hot" Latina/Mexican spitfire, and the virginal obedient Latina woman and mother, which create the hybrid image of the "Latina threat" (75). Latina/o media studies scholar, Angharad Valdivia argues in *Latina/os in the Media*, that the "Latina Threat" is a composite stereotype of or can be represented as—the hot-blooded Latina, hypersexual woman, and/or dark lady (102). Along with Latina/o stereotypes such as, the bandit/criminal and the maid/domestic worker, the "Latina Threat" has been extended to a theme of its own in mainstream media (100).

Latina fertility and reproduction combined with the social constructions of Latina/o demographic expansion have become one of the biggest threats to the nation of the "American people," according to Leo Chávez's analysis. Because Latina/os are perceived to have superior demographic numbers, media spectacles portray them as destabilizers of the "all-American," read, white racial/ethnic, order. What is even more menacing, as we will see further in this analysis, is that the Latina's reproductive threat materializes not only with the demographic increase, but because Latina/o babies transgress the borders between

immigrant and citizen (72). Or as Chávez puts it, “the metaphor of leaky national borders converges with that of porous bodies [and borders] (producing babies) and the permeable category of citizenship” (72).

For Latina/o media studies scholar Anghard Valdivia, the lack of representation and limiting content on mediated representations of Latinidad, other than the criminal and illegal alien, have real-life repercussions for the experience of Latina/os and their ability to survive.

How is it that, although Latina/os actually predate the existence of the United States as a nation, they/we are still treated as the eternal foreigners and have to continually assert their/our belonging and citizenship? What is the difference between noticing how Latino/as appear in media and the way audiences interpret these images and the effects that patterns of representation might have in the short and long term in our culture? (1-2).

Valdivia asserts that the misrepresentations of Latina/os apply to and affect all racialized brown bodies, and the entire nation, for they set the stage for a climate of intolerance to a certain type of human being in America (71). For *otro lado* babies and their mothers (transborder reproductive outlaws) this means that there is little to no room to renew or challenge mass-mediated representations that fit and articulate their transborder experiences. Instead, *otro lado* babies are transformed into a problematic “Anchor baby” or a threatening “Terror baby,” while transborder mothers are at-best represented as “birth tourists.”⁶

In Arlene Dávila’s *Latino Spin*, the author looks at how *spin* is embedded in the image of Latinos in the U.S. Taking from Stewart Ewen’s (1996) conceptualization of *spin* as the “customized manufacture of public discourse”(6), Dávila looks at how the discourses of

⁶ According to mainstream media journalists, “Birth Tourism” is the practice of giving birth while a tourist in the U.S., such as, a tourist-visa-holding international traveling pregnant mothers giving birth in the U.S., and thus, having a U.S. citizen in the family.

Latinidad are being shaped and spun in the current neoliberal political economic context. The Latino spin analyzes and critiques mass mediated Latino representations which have been carefully constructed and reproduced to perpetuate an image of Latinos as becoming mainstream upwardly mobile middle-classed Americans. In this way, Dávila's main claim is that Latino *spin* creates an assimilated and sanitized image of Latinos in the U.S., who are still subordinated within the U.S. racial hierarchy even as they reach the ranks of mainstream culture (13).

Throughout Dávila's book, whether she is talking about media, politics and political parties, urban planning, or the university, the Latino *spin* is taking place. The *spin* occurs at the cost of the vast heterogeneous U.S. Latino population, while benefitting from consumer capitalistic culture. In this way, as Dávila argues, discourse continues to paint a whitewashed and sanitized image of Latinos to benefit the pockets of those producing the images, but also to create a more tamed image of Latinos so that they are more accepted and incorporated into mainstream (white) American society. Dávila concludes that it is important to look at the economies behind the *spin* in order to expose whose power is being cemented (170). Accordingly, this discourse of the upwardly mobile, whitewashed Latino is further reinforcing the U.S. social and racial hierarchies, where even as Latinos are becoming part of the mainstream they are still subordinated (13) because at the end of the day Latinos are still not authentically White.

Currently, it is not surprising to see young Latinas and Latinos as poster men and women for the U.S. Army's propaganda. A quick stroll through a Latina/o neighborhood reveals that apparently, to some governmental branches, we have become an essential population in the national fabric of this country. Our presence deems representability and

celebrates our material and moral contributions to this nation. Yet, it is ironic, nonetheless, to contrast military propaganda to the increasing media coverage and debate on immigration.

As Leo Chávez has proposed, Latinas' reproduction and sexuality (i.e. Latina bodies) have become one of the prime villains of the U.S. immigration story. Latina mothers are responsible for infiltrating their threatening bodies into this nation, and giving birth to an "innocent" Latina/o child with a U.S. birth certificate. Over and over we hear that Latina/o children should be excused of all guilt or migrational punishment because they are innocent; and it is their parents who should pay the consequences of their illegal acts. But, why is "*la madre inmigrante*" (the immigrant mother) recurrently and predominantly portrayed as the ringleader of the family's so-called criminal activities? Why is the Latino father not being held as accountable as the mother? Why is the mother *guiltier* than the father?

In *Dangerous Curves*, Latina/o communication studies scholar Isabel Molina-Guzmán, offers a rich analytical discussion regarding the representational meanings of Latina bodies and their representation in mainstream American media. The questions Molina-Guzmán critically engages are,

What [is] desirable and consumable about these women? Under what representational conditions are Latinas depicted as socially acceptable, culturally dangerous, or politically transformative to specific audiences? What are the limits, possibilities, and consequences of Latinas' contemporary global marketability? (3).

To answer these questions, Molina-Guzmán unpacks the archetypes and tropes that continue to navigate mass mediated representational spaces since the 1930's and 1940's Good Neighbor Hollywood productions (159). Molina-Guzmán is mainly concerned with three aspects of Latina female presence in mass media: 1) the consequences of an increased and commodified representation of Latinas; 2) the understanding of how mainstream media

establishes a *discourse* (in Foucauldian terms) regarding social identities (race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality), and 3) the “modern power” of mainstream media normativizes and normalizes dominant/subordinate relations (11). The author is interested in fleshing-out the discursive regime that colonizes and disrupts fixed ways of understanding the multiple intersections that construct Latinas’ identity politics (8). Thus, her main goal is to problematize the embedded power relations evidenced in media which privilege a non-threatening, sanitized Latina performance, while rescuing the moments of disruption that can contribute to transformative representations of Latinas. To do so, Molina-Guzmán analyzes case studies of Latina actresses, performers, chanteuses, and celebrities represented in various media outlets within the methodological framework of *symbolic colonization* and *symbolic rupture*.

According to Molina Guzman, “symbolic colonization” is the ideological system of gendering, racializing, ethnicizing, or understanding the Other, imposed by mass media industry. Molina-Guzmán employs the methodology of “symbolic colonization” to seek the forces that define gender and ethnicity of female brown bodies. All case studies inspected under the author’s lens express to some extent that symbolic colonization of female Latinidad “within mainstream media... therefore caught between two forces. On the one hand, Latinas are associated with desirable femininity, domesticity, and the heteronormative family. On the other hand, their ambiguity and sexuality are simultaneously constructed as racial and sexual threats to the national body (14).

The other side of Molina-Guzmán’s framework, “symbolic rupture,” offers a space of negotiation where the multiracial brown body and the audience actively participate in either refuting or contesting the characterizations of female Latinidad. Another key aspect of the rupture of symbolic Latinidad is the racial ambiguity of the many not quite white, not

quite black, but brown bodies in the media. As consumable, desirable, exotic ethnic subjects, Latinas sell and perform Otherness as a commodity to the national and transnational markets. Yet, as ethnic Others, with fluid, non-fixed race and culture, they threaten the very core of the mainstream norm, a racial binary space, with fixed ethnicities and cultures. Thus, the racialized ambiguity of female Latinidad can never be contained, and therefore, can never be incorporated into a nation of racial fixity. As Molina-Guzmán explains, “[b]ecause media culture is never entirely homogeneous and at times may contradict the demands of global capitalism, media discourses about Latinas may actually result in symbolic ruptures that destabilize dominant definitions of nation, citizenship, and ethnic, racial and gender identity” (16).

The case studies that I write about are framed by the symbolic colonization/rupture of Latina representations of motherhood. These case studies exemplify the complexities of representing Latinidad and Latina identity in an era of growing public anxiety over domestic immigration policy, border protection, definitions of citizenship and the war-against-terror. Thus, for Molina-Guzman, the female Latina/o body is a space where white, middle-class, protestant normativity clashes with the fluid hybridity, unfixed race, lower-class represented, “Catholic” ethic alter-norm. It is also a ground where contestations about nationhood, citizenship belonging, delimitations of nation-state, imagining the community, and established cultural values and norms are battled.

In the next section, I will discuss how Latina motherhood is constructed and portrayed in mainstream mediated news reports, that is, as transborder reproductive outlaws. By looking at a variety of articles that appeared in U.S. border-town newspapers, newscast websites, and an online border-update resource, I analyze how Latina sexuality and reproduction continue to be constructed as the main menace to the U.S. immigration

problem. I delimit my analysis to articles that deal with border mothers, that is, I only look at Latina/o births that took place *at* the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

Transborder Reproductive Outlaws, or, The Border Baby Predicament

On April 17th 1983 the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, a south Florida periodical, published the article, “Mexican Mothers Cross Border to Give Birth” by Pamela Lyon. The report describes the “borderline legal” phenomenon occurring at the Brownsville-Matamoros bi-national metropolitan area, where Mexican resident expectant-mothers cross *legally* into the U.S. to give birth to a future U.S. citizen. With a tone of irony, Lyon alleges reports that poor Mexican women south-of-the-border have been crossing the Rio Grande to have their children born in the U.S. for generations. Much of the article’s emphasis is placed upon Mexican border mothers’ preference to have their children delivered with “Hispanic” border town midwives. The reporter suggests that because midwives along the U.S. border speak Spanish, cost five-times less than a hospital, and their birth rooms are decorated with “typical” Catholic religious symbols (like pictured frames of the Virgin Mary), Mexican mothers “naturally” prefer their care. Lyon and other journalists criticize Mexican and Mexican-American women’s “culturally traditional” preference for midwifery over obstetrics.

Like many news reports that cover these cases, Lyon stresses the social welfare benefits (the right to live in the U.S., free schooling, social security, Medicare) attracting Mexican mothers’ to give birth in the U.S. Yet, unlike other news reports that are very uncritical and ignorant of immigration laws, this article makes the case that U.S.-born Mexican children are not Anchor-Babies (because the child cannot derive any preferential treatment or confer citizenship privileges to the parents). It is also critical in recognizing border-specific forms of legal entrance into the U.S. (i.e., the U.S. border-crossing card), and

avoids the “wetback discourse” that essentializes and stereotypes all foreign migration from the global south as “illegal”. The article also stresses that Mexican mothers’ interest in birthing a child in the U.S. is not to benefit the family living abroad (as the “Anchor baby” discourse would argue), but to provide first-world opportunities to the otherwise, Third World child.

In “Solving the Border’s Baby Predicament” published on May 17, 2006, on a military affairs news website *The Strategy Page*, columnist Austin Bay cautions against the “border baby predicament.” For Bay, border hospitals, such as those located in Texas’ Rio Grande Valley are in a critical economic state due to the abundance of unpaid hospital bills from (“illegal”) border-crossing Mexican pregnant women giving birth to a child in U.S. hospitals. Although the columnist attempts to presents a bipartisan critique on a pre and post-9/11 “failed” border security and immigration crisis that has not been able to put a stop to “illegal” immigration from Mexico and “points further south,” Bay insists that Mexico’s failed economy and political infrastructure (or “broken systems”) are at fault for the “border baby predicament” that drains U.S.’ public health funds.

This column informs how discourses of *otro lado* babies are generated within a context of American warfare against Mexico’s failed state. The constant use of uncritically derogatory labels such as “illegal immigrants,” to describe Mexican women who enter the U.S. *legally* (either with a Border Crossing Visa or Tourist Visa) to give legal birth to a U.S. citizen, under the stipulations of the 14th amendment⁷, supports my argument that nativists

⁷ The U.S. Constitution stipulates section 1 of the 14th amendment as follows:

“AMENDMENT XIV

Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868.

Note: Article I, section 2, of the Constitution was modified by section 2 of the 14th amendment. Section 1.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are

and jingoist discourse in media frame *otro lado* babies as a foreign threat to the American nation.

On September 24, 2006, “Border Baby’ Boom Straining South Texas” by James Pinkerton appeared in *The Houston Chronicle*. Opening with an overwhelming immigration description: “[f]irst it was a trickle, now it’s a flood,” the reporter attempts to make the case that the U.S. is economically and politically threatened by the “border baby boom.” With subtitles such as, “More illegal immigrants are pouring into the state to give birth,” “Anchor babies,” “Uncollected medical bills,” and “Total cost unknown;” the writer uses sensationalist language to evoke a sense of urgency of the “undocumented reproductive immigrant” problem.

In an interesting approach, the writer includes the voices of multiple Latina/o public health care workers of south Texas that can attest to the financial burden and political irregularity caused by “border baby boomers.” According to Pinkerton, Dr. Mario Rodriguez, an obstetrician from south Texas, said, “[i]mmigrants ‘want a U.S. born baby’ and know that emergency staffers don’t collect money upfront... The word is out: “...[w]hy pay 1,000 in Mexico, if you can get it for free?” (Rodriguez qtd. in Pinkerton). Thalia Muñoz, Starr County Hospital administrator said that the “border baby boom” is at its height because “the economy in Mexico is not good... and we provide all these benefits” (Muñoz qtd. in Pinkerton). U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commissioner, Tony Falcon, explained that the bleak picture of south Texas is being replicated throughout U.S. border towns like San Diego, El Paso, Brownsville, and McAllen.

citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

The article discusses the financial strain that undocumented immigrants' (including Haitian, Canadian, British, Vietnamese, Iranian, Iraqi, and Indian) unpaid medical bills cost to the public healthcare system at the border, but the main source of anxiety is Mexico (accounting for 83 percent of undocumented in-patient care). Several Republican lawmakers (like Ron Paul, Lake Johnson and Nathan Deal) are sponsoring the abolishment of birthright citizenship as established by the 14th amendment. In September of 2006, the Michigan House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly against birthright citizenship (Pinkerton). Jack Martin, a spokesperson for the Federation for American Immigration Reform said that birthright citizenship “[is] a big factor in complicating the removal of illegal aliens. Illegal aliens know that, and... we think they’re being influenced into having children as soon as they get into the U.S. to complicate their removal” (Martin qtd. in Pinkerton). But, Socorro Gonzalez, an undocumented immigrant mother of four U.S.-born children begs to differ. For Gonzalez, an economic migrant from Mexico, “the benefits of immigrants’ labor in the U.S. more than compensate for the cost of their [unpaid] medical bills” (Pinkerton.)

In *USA Today's* “Immigration Report: No Rush Across Border to Give Birth,” published on February 2nd 2011, reporter Alan Gomez poses the following and often controversial question to readers—“are ‘illegal aliens... crossing U.S. borders to give birth and exploit their child’ to obtain citizenship?” (Gomez). For Pennsylvania state Rep. Daryl Metcalfe and State Legislators for Legal Immigration, it is an absolute fact that merits amending birthright citizenship rights. But for the Pew Hispanic Center and Frank Sherry, Executive Director of America’s Voice, the former representative’s comments are nothing more than statistically unfounded myths. Yet the myth exists and persists, that is, so-called undocumented Mexican migrant parents rush to cross the border to birth and exploit their U.S.-born child in return for citizenship rights.

The 2011 article, although attempting to offer a two-sided view on the “anchor baby” problem, fails to be more critical about the issue at hand. As Austin Bay’s “Solving the Border Baby Predicament,” Alan Gomez continues to use language that connotes “illegality” (i.e. “illegal aliens,” “illegal immigrants,” and “illegal immigrant parents”) instead of more neutral wording such as, “undocumented” or “unauthorized.” Likewise, Gomez conflates “undocumented immigrant” with “documented” provisional migrant and/or visa holding visitor. This article informs my counter-argument as it straightforwardly expresses the misunderstanding of the transborder *otro lado* babies’ experience by misrepresenting them as undocumented immigrants, and moreover, by conflating the documented Latina mother as “unauthorized.”

Finally, “Child Birth Calls Ring in from Border” by Trent Seibert appeared in *The San Diego Union Tribune*, on May 9, 2013. Similar to the previous article’s concern with the financial strain of U.S.-born “illegal” immigrants’ births, this more recent news report highlights the \$2 billion per year budget set aside by Medicare to cover undocumented patient care, half of which is solely allocated to the state of California. But unlike the former article, Seibert provides a somewhat skeptical view on the “border baby boom.” The main purpose of the article is to report on a recent (?) emergency call hike for child delivery care ringing in from the San Ysidro gateway, the main port of entry to the U.S. In 2012, 160 childbirth delivery calls were made from the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection offices in San Ysidro.

The reporter’s efforts, however, are not to convince the reader that there is a clear and present danger creeping from the southern border, but to question the “Border Baby Boom” (Pinkerton) or “border baby predicament” (Bay) discourse. At the most visited international port of entry in the world, welcoming 300,000 border-commuters (including

U.S. citizens, U.S. permanent residents, and U.S. visa-holders) and foreign visitors daily, one emergency call every other day seems minimal. And since San Diegan emergency crews cannot ask for citizenship status documentation, there is no certainty as to how many of the mothers rushed to the hospital are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Seibert's article is important because it is the only piece in this section that offers a counter-hegemonic immigration reform voice attempting to paint a more critical border picture. For Pedro Rios, director of the American Friends Service Committee's U.S.-Mexico Border Program, the numbers of emergency childbirth calls from the busiest border in the world "are an extremely low percentage compared to the people that cross on a daily basis" (Rios as qtd. in Seibert). Seibert adds that, even if Mexican nationals cross the border *illegally* (my emphasis), it is not for nefarious reasons. Rios states that whether Mexicans cross "illegally" for improved economic opportunities, family reunification, or better healthcare--the reason behind migration is the need to survive.

Anchoring Babies at the U.S.-México Border

In this section, I analyze recently published news reports found in mainstream news outlets regarding so-called, "Anchor babies." I include a discussion on "Anchor babies" as a counterpoint to the *otro lado* babies' experience and subjectivity, which should not be conflated or blurred with that of the "Anchor baby." An "Anchor baby," is a U.S.-born child of immigrant/foreign parents who promises to "anchor" the non-native family to the U.S. via immigration sponsorship. As we will see, the "Anchor baby" phenomenon continues to be included and discussed in mainstream media news reports, and persists to be a synonym of "alien threat" to the United States.

The televised news report, “Illegal Immigrant Births at Your Expense” appeared April 7, 2008 on *CBS Evening News*. Reporter Byron Pitts opens with Joe Riley’s statement, CEO of the McAllen Texas Medical Center—“Mothers about to give birth . . . walk up to the hospital still wet from swimming across the river in actual labor . . . dirty, wet, cold.” According to both Riley and Pitts, Mexican mothers will risk it all in order to cross their pregnant bodies across the fluvial border and give their children the greatest American dream: birthright citizenship. Pitts focuses on the individual case of Fabiola, a fearless undocumented mother of three who came across the Rio Grande while pregnant to give an American life to her newborn, Eliot.

Eliot is one among the 300,000 children born in the U.S. to undocumented parents, according to the Pew Hispanic Center. But who is covering the costs of undocumented childbirths? U.S. taxpayers, reports Pitts. According to the Rand Corporation, undocumented public medical care costs the federal healthcare system 1.1 billion dollars annually. At the McAllen Texas Medical Center, nearly forty-percent of the total 2008 births were to “illegal” parents, and it is straining the hospital by \$200 million a year (Riley qtd. in Pitts).

That is why Texas Republican Rep. Lamar Smith is pushing to modify the clause on the 14th amendment that grants citizenship by virtue of being born on U.S. soil. For Smith, “[i]t seems fundamentally wrong that we ought to give the greatest honor of their citizenship [when] his or her mother came across the border illegally.” And although Fabiola does not understand nativist xenophobia, she hopes God will help nativist Anglo-American citizens understand Latina/o immigrant’s situation. For Pitts, Fabiola, like thousands of other “illegal” immigrants, relies on her faith, her family, and the U.S. government.

In “The Great ‘Anchor Baby’ Debate,” article which appeared on *The Week*’s August 3, 2010 edition focuses on the 2010 repeal of the 14th amendment lead by Republican Senators, Jon Kyl of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. The repeal sponsors believe that “illegal” immigrants are taking advantage of the constitutional loophole⁸, with the purpose of anchoring their families into the country with a U.S. citizen. Yet the article does a good job of presenting three clear-cut arguments complicating the GOP’s position. The first counterargument is that the conservative party has reached a new low. “This isn’t the first time conservatives have tried to win votes by attacking immigrants in a time of ‘economic anxiety,’ but it takes their demagoguery to a disgusting new level,” says Steve Bennen, reporter for the Washington Monthly. A second-counter argument is that there is nothing “radical” about restoring the 14th amendment. The 14th amendment never anticipated for the “Anchor Baby” phenomenon to occur, so a simple re-wording of the amendment would suffice. However, there is no need for excessive demagoguery and immigrant slandering. The third counterclaim suggests that children of immigrants should not be targeted, and instead, Congress should focus their efforts at tackling the root of the problem—illegal immigration.

Lastly, Brendan Greeley reports on November 5, 2013 for the *Bloomberg Business Week*, “The Case for Anchor Babies and Immigrant Integration,” the debate on immigration as a question of *integration* (read, assimilation). Whether Congress debates if immigrants are corrupting the constitution or depreciating wages, the underlying question for reporters,

⁸ In the purview of conservative politicians, lobbyists, and republican pundits, immigrants “exploit” the 14th amendment by carving a “loophole” in the constitution. The so-called loophole consists of the literal usage and application of *jus soli*, that is, constitutional guarantee of citizenship by birthright, which conservative politicians deem immigrants undeserving because in a nativist scope, immigrants are not “Native” to the U.S. of A. soil.

political pundits, and “the American nation” is, according to Greely, “Will the arrivals change those of us who are already here?” (Greely).

In 2010, after a Pew Hispanic Center’s study released the number of children, 340,000, born to “illegal” immigrants in that year, the statistic sparked a dispute amongst lawmakers who see no other solution than to modify the 14th amendment’s current birthright citizenship granted by *jus soli* (right of the soil, that is, a person is a citizen of a nation by virtue of their birth in the confines of the nation-state). Lead by the proponent of the “drop and leave”⁹ myth, South Carolina Republican Rep. Lindsey Graham urges to change the constitutional birth right to *jus sanguinis* (citizenship granted by bloodline and blood connection to the nation-state; i.e. parents and grandparents conferring their bloodline citizenship unto the child), as it is commonly practiced in the European Union and other developed nations (Greely). For Republican politicians who sponsor the repeal of the 14th amendment, children of immigrants are inherently un-American because it is assumed that their parents and the children will “leave” (back to their “home” countries) as soon as they are “dropped” (from the mother’s womb) in the U.S. My reading is that conservative lawmakers fear that the Latina/o newborn will not become “American.” The fear is that an already “unworthy” U.S. citizen, a progeny of an “illegal” immigrant will not Americanize, i.e., will not assimilate as a subjugated/subaltern members of a White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, Middle-classed, heteropatriarchal and neoliberal hegemony.

Greely suggests that academia argues the opposite. In an effort to bring an “objective” frame to the “drop and leave” demagoguery, Greely includes the findings of an academic

⁹ Similar to the “Anchor baby” myth, “drop and leave” according to Rep. Lindsey Graham, consists of the “current practice” engaged by Latina/o parents who birth a baby in the United States, and leave to their home countries. According to Graham, Latina/o parents “drop and leave” the U.S. citizen baby to reap the bounties of the social security system via “remittances.”

article published in the *Journal of Law and Economics* (qtd. in Greely) which studied the “integration” process of German-born Turkish-descendants over a ten-year span. Unfortunately, the journalist does not differentiate between immigrant assimilation and immigrant integration, as theorized by Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou (1993) and Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut (2006). The study looks at issues of “integration” in a country that has strict and limited naturalization avenues for Turks and Southern Europeans. The study, according to Greely, found that there is a positive correlation between naturalization of Turkish-Germans and “integration.” Greely uses the study not to contest Republican fears and anxieties, but to sustain and further advance them through “hard facts” and numbers. Basing his arguments on a loose comparative analysis, Greely states that although *jus soli* may lead to “drop-and-leave” incidents, the chances of having “Anchor babies” who may potentially assimilate, or “integrate” is better for the American hegemony and more realistic than changing the 14th amendment.

While bipartisan Congress members debate whether or not the 14th amendment should repeal birthright citizenship, the controversial “anchor baby” stereotype continues to not only prevail mass mediated news reports, but renews itself taking on new forms charged with nativist xenophobic and jingoist anti-immigrant discourses. One of the renewed “anchor baby” stereotype is “Birth Tourism.”

“Birth Tourism”: Trafficking U.S. birthright Citizenship?

According to U.S. mainstream news, “Birth Tourism” is the practice of giving birth while a tourist in the U.S., such as tourist visa-holding mothers giving birth in the U.S., and thus, having a U.S. citizen in the family. But, does this form of tourism infringe upon the 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution that grants citizenship rights and privileges to

children born in U.S. soil? Is this touristic practice legal, illegal, or “a loophole” to the Constitution? In this section, I analyze the manner in which U.S. mainstream news outlets construct birthright citizenship of Latina/o children and “Birth Tourism”.

Coinciding with Leo Chávez, I argue that U.S.-born Latina/os are not only represented as threats to the nation, but as unworthy, unmerited, corrupt, and documented but nonetheless, “illegal” Americans. My analysis is based off news articles gathered from mainstream outlets such as *Fox News*, *CBS Evening News*, *ABC News*, *CNN*, and, *MSNBC*; and local and national periodicals, like the *Arizona Daily Star* and *USA Today*. And, because birth tourism has been so recently reported, discussed, and constructed in the media, the news articles that I will analyze in the following paragraphs range between 2009 and 2013.

In “NBC News Has No Business Using Offensive ‘Anchor Baby’ Slur,” which appeared on *Mediamatters.com* on June 20, 2011, journalist Solange Uwimana takes a stand against network news that continues to use the A.B.-word—Anchor Baby. Like the “N-word,” Uwimana explains that “Anchor baby” is a pejorative and de-humanizing racial slur that mainstream network news should desist in using. To say “Anchor Baby” evokes a world of extreme poverty, where a brown South American eight month pregnant woman is thrown at the southwest border, and risks her life across the river to give her child the greatest benefit in the developed world: a U.S. citizenship.

But recently, things have been changing, and the “A.B.” (Anchor baby) word is no longer thrown at just the Latina mother; once again, Chinese women, especially wealthy ones visiting the U.S. to have a child, are also said to be having anchor babies. In the NBC News’ article, “The Trials and Tribulations of China's 'Anchor Babies'” (Flanagan qtd. in Uwimana), Uwimana notes that “Anchor baby” was used interchangeably with “Birth Tourism,” but that scenarios are diametrically different:

While Hispanic anchor babies might be stereotypically viewed as coming from poverty and consequently destined to be heavily reliant on government social services, the parents of Chinese anchor babies were wealthy Chinese who legally paid their own way to the United States, freely spent money at American stores, and generally intended to return back to China soon after giving birth (Uwimana).

In the excerpt we learn, according to Uwimana, that while most Latina/os reside in the U.S. as economic immigrants and have “Anchor babies,” affluent Chinese families engage in “Birth Tourism” as a desire to provide for better education, traveling and job opportunities in an international competitive market. Put simply, both Latina/os and Chinese migrate or travel to the U.S. searching for avenues for upward mobility, yet, their actions and motivations are constructed and represented in media very differently. Unfortunately, Uwimana participates in a form of misrepresentation by perpetuating the stereotype of Latina/os as an immobile working-class demographic, and Asian Americans as middle-classed upwardly mobile people. But, Uwimana does motivate the reader to join the National Association of Hispanic Journalists’ efforts to stop using racial slurs like, “Anchor-baby,” “Illegal,” and “Alien,” when referring to Latina/os, Mexicans, and/or Chicana/os, Uwimana concludes by stating that the term “Anchor baby” serves no purpose in the “Birth Tourism” debate, other than bringing nativist jingoism and immigration baggage (which should stay put with the Latina/o immigration debate).

To conclude, Uwimana posits, why do mainstream network news, like Fox News, continue to use racial slurs? If we follow Leo Chávez’s arguments of how media spectacles construct the “imagined community” of the United States of America from a hegemonic standpoint, “we can best visualize who is an American and who is not; who is considered a citizen and who is a denizen; and who is desirable and undesirable” (4-5). When thinking of

immigrant groups' access to the "American Dream," as Uwimana did when discussing Asian-American vis-à-vis Latina/o integration, Chávez says, "who we let into the nation as immigrants and allow to become citizens defines who we are as [a] people. [By] looking at who we ban from entry, or whom we create obstacles to integration into society and to membership in the community of citizens, also reveals how we imagine ourselves as a nation" (9). Put simply and agreeing with Chávez, the Latina/o body (whether be it Mexican immigrant, Mexican-American, Latin American, Central American, etc.) is perceived and represented as a threat to the White American nation.

In "Citizenship for Sale?" published in the *Arizona Daily Star*, June 2, 2009, correspondent Mariana Alvarado reports that neoliberalism strikes again—this time at the Sonora-Arizona border, and conservative immigration lawmakers are not happy about it. Alvarado writes on a "growing birth trade industry" stimulated by binational business chambers, such as the Metropolitan Tucson Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Medical Tourism Cluster in Sonora. Some lawmakers and anti-immigration advocates are questioning if the "birth packages"¹⁰ offered by the state-of-the art Tucson Medical Center targeting accommodated Mexican mothers is borderline illegal.

Alvarado asserts that whether it is illegal or not, the birth trade industry does showcase the porous and dubious misinterpretation of the 14th amendment, and, according to some legislators, it is constitutionally offensive. Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, says the threatening aspect of this type of free-trade

¹⁰ Alvarado reports, "TMC's maternity package costs \$2,300 for a vaginal birth with a two-day stay and \$4,600 for a Caesarean section and a four-day stay, assuming no complications. That includes exams for the newborn and a massage for the new mother. There is a \$500 surcharge per additional child" (Alvarado). However, the Tucson Medical Center's website does not explicitly address Mexican families as their main market, and nowhere does it include the involvement of the business bureaus across the border.

business “is buying U.S. citizenship.” Krikorian continues, “[t]his is different from any other kind of medical treatment... If you come for cancer treatment... there’s no consequences for the United States. You pay your money, you go home.” What is at stake here is that U.S.-born Mexican children have the opportunity and *legal right* to live and work in the U.S. as adults. And although the Mexican Consul General in Tucson explained that this upper middle-class practice has been around for decades, only a small percentage of Mexican families can actually afford it. Regardless, the debate continues and the Mexican threat persists.

“A New Baby Boom? Foreign ‘Birth Tourists’ Seek U.S. Citizenship for Children,” by Devin Dwyer, appeared on the *ABC News* website on April 14, 2010. The report presents “birth tourists” as “legal immigrants who do not permanently reside in the U.S.,” an interesting description compared to other news articles. In an alarmist tone, the reporter explains that births to undocumented mothers rose by fifty-three percent from 2000-2006, that includes travelers passing through, international students, and birth tourists. From the 4,273, 227 children born in the U.S. an “impactful” 7,670 were born to birth tourists, international students, travelers, and illegal immigrant mothers. I suppose the American people should feel alarmed by the .18% “birth tourists” newborn population.

Yet, the birth tourism industry is perfectly legal, as long as the mothers and their families can afford the costs. Women from Mexico instituted the flourishing birth tourism industry, which involves hospitals, doctors, travel agencies and luxury hotels. But the trend is expanding and it now includes birth tourists from South Korea, China, Taiwan, and Turkey. For conservative lawmakers and immigration advocates, birth tourists’ babies are nothing more than “anchor babies.” For Jerome Corsi, a conservative author and columnist who has studied the issue of birth tourism, “[i]t’s really an incorrect interpretation of the 14th

Amendment...Birthright citizenship is a loophole ... [and] as it expands into a business for entrepreneurs in foreign countries who offer birth tourism packages, it markets the loophole to attract additional mothers to the U.S" (Corsi qtd. in Dwyer). Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies resolves the birth tourism problem by turning people down for being pregnant and posits, "[d]o you really think that's right that somebody here visiting Disneyland should have their children be U.S. citizens, which they'll then inevitably use to get access to the U.S.?" (Krikorian qtd. in Dwyer).

But the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department have no regulations against pregnant women visiting the country. Ali Noorani, executive director of the National Immigration Forum, sees the conservative pundit's proposals as outrageously inhumane, as women should not experience gender and sexual profiling for their reproductive potential. "What is the State Department going to do? To fill out a visa application have a woman pee on a stick?" (Noorani qtd. in Dwyer). In the meantime, the conservative right is advocating that pregnant women should be denied entry to the U.S.

"For Many Chinese Women, a U.S. Passport for Baby Continues to be a Powerful Lure," by Keith Richburg was published in *The Washington Post* on July 18, 2010. The reporter cynically prompts, "what can \$14,700 U.S. dollars buy you in Mainland China? Ask Robert Zhou and Daisy Chao, owners of one of the most prestigious Chinese 'birth tourism' agencies. The answer: a coveted American passport for a Chinese baby" (Richburg). At a time when the Chinese economy is flourishing and the American Empire is in decline, Chinese mothers still see a U.S. passport as a powerful lure. Why? Because for upper-middle class Chinese families, the opportunity for their children to pay resident tuition at college and having the American promise of meritocracy is worth the \$14,700 dollars.

Zhou and Chao's clients are part of the Chinese elite—from prominent doctors, lawyers, high government officials, to A-list celebrities. Zhou said all his clients are affluent, “Chinese parents fly in on first-class seats... [u]nlike the poor illegal immigrants from Central America who try to cross the border to have their babies in the United States. [These wealthy Chinese families] also do some shopping... so they are contributing to the economy,” said Zhou. And unlike the “illegal” parents from North, Central and South America, Chinese parents have no desire to establish in the U.S. But they would rather give birth to their child in the U.S. to skirt China's one-child policy, provide the child with better educational opportunities, and be surrounded by beautiful natural scenery during their 90-day stay before and after pregnancy.

For Mark Krikorian, director of the Center for Immigration Studies, and a strong opponent of “birth tourism” and “anchor babies,” the real problem is the State Department because State Department officials cannot deny a tourist-visa based on pregnancy. A spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy in Beijing said, “You don't deny someone because you know they're going to the U.S. to have children.” And while Congress may call it a loophole in the 14th amendment, for the anonymous spokesperson there is nothing they can do abroad to change that and deny visas based on pregnancy-status. After all, tourist visas do allow for foreign visitors to enter the country for medical care. Zhou, the Chinese expert in “birth tourism” agrees with U.S. federal agencies. “We don't encourage moms to break the law—just to take advantage of it,” Zhou said.

In “How Common is Birth Tourism?,” *CNN News* web reporter Gary Tuchman attempts to offer an objective account on “birth tourism” and participate in the controversial August 2010 debate on “Terror babies” (which I will discuss in the following section). Tuchman, a correspondent on the “Anderson Cooper's 360⁰” show posted a reporter's note

on August 11, 2010 on the show's blog. The note describes how Mexican mothers have paved the way to "Birth Tourism." Tuchman reports on his anecdotal encounter with Lupita, a Mexican mother who crossed the border to birth her now 3-year-old American citizen. Tuchman acknowledges that, like Lupita, thousands of Mexican women may be crossing the border "illegally" to birth their children in the United States, but "having a U.S citizen" is a not their motivation to immigrate. Tuchman explains that in the Forth Worth, Texas public hospital where Lupita's son was born, 70 percent of the births were by undocumented mothers. State of Texas officials report that approximately 60,000 births in the state were by undocumented mothers. In a tone of ironic "objectivity," Tuchman concludes that although not all Mexican women enter the country illegally to have babies, "all children have something in common. They are all U.S. citizens."

On a more critical note, Andrea Nill Sanchez reports in "Associated Press Debunks the 'Birth Tourism' Myth," on September 3, 2010, for the web-based news outlet, *Think Progress*. The article focuses on how the fourth estate, that is, news media debunks GOP's "drop and leave" myth and the rampant "birth tourism" problem—arguments constructed to reverse birth right laws. The Associated Press argues that "the drop and leave" myth is nothing more than scare-tactics and assures that from the total undocumented mother's births in the country, "birth tourism" should be the least of their concern. Nill Sanchez reports that for the Associated Press the "drop and leave" myth is nothing more than a conservative and nativist republican fabrication motivated by immigrant fear.

Drawing from the Pew Hispanic Center senior demographer, Jeffrey Passel, Nill Sanchez reports that out of the 340,000 U.S. children born to undocumented parents, more than fifty-percent had been in the country for at least five-years, and eighty-five percent for

more than a year. Mexican immigration expert, Douglas Massey argues that “drop and leave” and “birth tourism” are unfounded arguments, as most Mexican immigrants rarely come to the U.S. for birthright citizens, and mostly come for labor demand and lack of economic opportunities in their home county. The Associated Press does not deny the existence of “birth tourism,” mostly practiced at border cities like Nogales or Brownsville; yet, even in these cases, expectant mothers are not seeking U.S. citizenship, but better medical care. Massey suggests that what is really behind increased births of undocumented women in the U.S. is the tightening of the border (as undocumented immigrant parents cannot travel as freely). And if birthright citizenship were driving immigrants to the U.S., there would be a larger number of women at child-rearing age.

In a similar tone, Daniel Gonzalez’s “‘Birth Tourism’ Not a Widespread Practice in U.S. Data Show,” published in *USA Today* on August 17, 2011. Gonzalez reports that Angela Marie Kelley, the vice-president for immigration policy and advocacy at the Center for American Progress feels that Republican lawmakers sponsoring the change of the 14th amendment are “chasing the Loch Ness monster.” Like “Nessie,” the “birth tourism baby” is a monstrous creature whose existence has been proposed, but never proven. But they do have one thing in common: these “monsters” provoke panic amongst those who believe in their possible existence.

Gonzalez’s article provides a more through discussion on the “birth tourism” polemic by painting a comprehensive picture of the actual phenomenon. He begins by discussing the different types of “birth tourists,” from the Mexican border-commuter who carries a Border-Crossing Card (B-1/B-2 visa¹¹), to the international tourists (usually a B-2

¹¹ As established by the U.S. Department of State, there are two types of Visitor’s Visa. B-1, a business visa that can be used for attending business-related engagements. And B-2, 90-days less stay

Visa holder) who enters the country by plane, and includes foreign student mothers (F-1 or F2 Visa) attending a U.S. university. And, although the reporter includes undocumented mothers in the discussion, he makes an effort not to mesh two very different birthing situations. But, for some Republican lawmakers, Latina foreign mothers, whether they entered the country legally or illegally, to birth a child, are nefariously exploiting the U.S. Constitution.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics' earliest report of foreign parents living abroad, in 2008 approximately 7,400 children were born to so-called "birth tourists." By comparison, children of undocumented parents amounted to 350,000, or 8.22% of the total births in 2009. Yet, both former and latter numbers of childbirths are insignificant compared to the total of 4, 255, 156 U.S. born children in 2009. But the investigation gets murky when the reporter shifts focus to the state of Arizona, the immigration debate hotspot in the U.S.A. In 2010, Arizona reported that less than 2 percent of children were born to women who reside out-of-state, including women who reside in neighboring states and the southern border. What is interesting though, is the incongruence that Gonzalez reports regarding Tucson Medical Center (TMC), one of the main private hospitals where most of the non-resident births occurred. In an article previously discussed, "Citizenship for Sale?", reporter Mariana Alvarado describes how the TMC's binational business promotion was raising questions on the legality of catering to an "undocumented" market. The article details the different medical tourism packages, including the controversial "birth package," which included a 2-4 day resort stay and shopping spree. But in an

tourist visa that can be used for a plethora of touristic activities (including medical attention) that do not include permanent residence and/or work. Most Mexican nationals who reside on the border states obtain the Border Crossing Card, which is a combination of the B-1 and B-2. Source: travel.state.gov/visas.

interview with TMC's spokesperson, Michael Letson, said that the medical group is not trying to promote any form of birth tourism, as "it's not a part of our business plan at all" (Letson qtd. in Alvarado).

In January of 2011, Republican Representative, Steve King, introduced a bill that would limit birthright citizenship to children with at least one parent who is a permanent resident or citizen of this country. Sponsored by 78 lawmakers, the bill's efforts are to send a greater message to the Supreme Court: "birthright citizenship shouldn't apply to children born to undocumented parents, foreign visitors or 'birth tourists'" (King qtd. in Gonzalez).

On March 30, 2011, Fox News broadcasted, "Busted! Authorities Close Makeshift 'Maternity House': Uncovering Underground Birthing Industry". Draped in Jackie-O-fashion, the Anglo-American Fox & Friends news anchor, Gretchen Carlson, alarmingly reports, "On the outside, this southern California home looks like any other one, but, inside, an illegal business apparently flourishing; one that exposes 'gaping loopholes' in the American immigration system. Pregnant women, from foreign countries paying thousands of dollars to give birth in the U.S." The news anchor invites Dan Stein, president of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), to speak on the "underground birthing industry." With no official evidence or reports to support his claims other than demagoguery, Stein asserts that this is a very common practice: illegal women using visitor's visas to birth a child in the United States. Like many U.S. nativists, Stein sees the problem as a wrongful interpretation of the 14th amendment and the State Department's negligent visa granting process.

To both Stein and the news anchor, the root of the problem is that the Supreme Court has not changed the clause of the 14th amendment that grants birthright citizenship—including "illegal alien" children born on U.S. soil. Stein and the news anchor agree that

illegal aliens abuse the current interpretation of the 14th amendment, and propose that the U.S. should be *a la par* to “worldwide practices where the child takes the citizenship of the mother.” Yet, what Stein is proposing is far from a simple solution. The constitutional change requires a shift from granting U.S. citizenship based on *jus soli* (right of soil) and *jus sanguinis* (right of blood), and limiting citizenship rights to individuals with blood connections to the U.S. nation only.

Stein exhibits his nativist political position even further by conflating “illegal aliens” (undocumented migrants) and visitor’s visa-holders, who according to the president of FAIR are stealing American taxpayers’ money. But the biggest threat that “illegal aliens” and visitor visa-holding parents of a U.S. born child pose to the “American public” is, according to Stein, “that when the child is twenty-one, he or she can petition the parents for immigration benefits. It’s a totally corrupt practice!”

In a similar vein, “‘Birth Tourism’ Alive and Well,” was posted by an anonymous author in the *U.S. Open Borders* website on December 3, 2012. Published in an anti-immigration border-alarmist network of border affairs blogs, under the pseudonym of “U.S. Open Borders,” the article does everything but promote “open borders.” The article begins by slightly discussing the thriving business of “birth tourism” at the Chino Hills, CA mansion being used as a luxury hotel for expectant or recent mothers and their “anchor babies.” But the article does much more than discuss “birth tourism.” It attempts to reach the root of the issue and offer a Eurocentric and U.S. nativist solution to the “anchor baby” problem. Like many other anti-immigration reporters and writers, the (unnamed) author of this article viewed the lax and liberally benevolent constitutional amendments granting birthright citizenship to children born to illegal aliens and international tourists as *the*

problem. For the writer, the U.S. should act according to an “industrialized” (read, developed) nation, and emulate contemporary European citizenship laws.¹²

The author faults Republican Arizona senators, John McCain and “lame duck” John Kyl’s idleness on the issue of the 14th amendment’s atemporality. Because the 14th amendment was drafted during the Reconstruction era to grant citizenship rights to freed slaves’ children, the current interpretation is no longer relevant and allows for “illegal aliens” and undeserving tourists to bamboozle the U.S. Constitution.

In “‘Maternity Tourism’: How Chinese Couples Buy U.S. Citizenship for Their Babies,” by John Blackstone, broadcast on *CBS Evening News* on January 28, 2013, we “learn” about how Mexican mothers have paved the way for Chinese “maternity tourism.” But unlike foreign families from across the border, Chinese families are paying approximately \$30,000 to give their children the “American Dream.” Mothers stay at luxurious “maternity mansions,” around the Los Angeles area. The so-called mansions are illegally converted single-family households in quaint suburban neighborhoods. But local residents and neighbors of the “Maternity mansions” are not happy about sharing their suburb with foreign visitors. A hilltop home at Chino Hills was converted into a “maternity mansion,” and residents have been protesting against the establishment of a “birth tourism” facility in their neighborhood. Local residents have been marching around the Chino Hills’ “maternity mansion” and carrying poster-boards with messages like, “No Anchor Babies,” “Not here, or anywhere” and “No illegal business.” They claim that the constant ins-and-outs create a disturbance to their peaceful “American” lifestyle. A resident of Chino Hills, Rosanna

¹² According to the European Union Observatory on Democracy’s “Birthright citizenships” 2010 report, not one European nation grants unconditional birthright citizenship as of 2004, Ireland being the last nation to restrict its citizenship laws.

Mitchell¹³ said, “When people think of the American dream, they're not thinking about birth tourism. They're thinking about people who come here, immigrate here, work hard, pay their taxes, become citizens and become Americans” (Mitchell qtd. in Blackstone).

Yet, Chinese birth tourists are traveling to the U.S. to circumvent China’s one-child rule, and provide their child the opportunity to attend a U.S. university, according to reporter John Blackstone. Unfortunately for U.S. nativists, “birth tourism” does not break any U.S. federal regulations, other than zoning and building codes.

In “Resident Warns Against Birth Tourism in Lancaster,” published by *Antelope Valley Times* on September 17, 2013, a report that reads like an Op-Ed of a concerned citizen and nurse of the Antelope Valley, Marion Murphy raises her voice publicly to oust the chair of the Antelope Valley Hospital Board Member, Dr. Abdallah Farrukh’s controversial approach to balance the hospital budget—turn it into a “tourist birthing center.” Dr. Farrukh is targeting wealthy Chinese families who wish to expand their family beyond the Chinese one-child rule, in the U.S.

Like many Republican pundits, Murphy fears that if the Antelope Valley Hospital becomes a “birth tourism center” it will impact the Antelope Valley community negatively because, once these children are U.S. citizens, they can obtain state and federally funded aid. Murphy complains that “birth tourism” only benefits the foreign mother and child, and Dr. Farrukh’s greed. She exhorts the readership and Antelope Valley community to take action by contacting their elected official and prescribes: “Tell them in no uncertain terms that U.S.

¹³ After searching for Mitchell’s information on the internet, I found that she is not only an immigrant who came to the U.S. at eight-years old from Lima, Peru; but that she is a public attorney and is currently running for Chino Hills City Council. It is highly concerning that a public servant, who is an immigrant herself, not only uses this space for political campaigning, but that the political rhetoric she promotes demonizes and antagonizes immigrants, thus, fueling the growing anti-immigrant nativism.

citizenship should not be for sale, and that AV Hospital belongs to us, the residents and taxpayers of the Antelope Valley” (Murphy).

In this section we have learned yet another term to negatively characterize and represent *otro lado* babies in mainstream U.S. media. Via the so-called “birth tourism” underground market created by foreigners, immigrants, and people of color, mainstream media reiterates the “Anchor baby” myth, creates a spectacle of U.S.-born alter-Native babies, all while faulting the Mexican immigrant mother for paving the way to this “illegal” practice. But, if “birth tourism” sounds somewhat like science fiction, “Terror babies” really takes *otro lado* babies’ to the next (threatening) level.

“Terror Babies” at the U.S.-México Border

In this section we will read not only about how non-European immigrants are perceived as a threat to the Whiteness of Anglo-America; but also how in a post-9/11 milieu *any* “Brown” (or non-White) person in Amerikkka is placed under an umbrella-like WASP-ethnocentric, xenophobic, anti-Mexican, anti-Latina/o, Islamophobic discourse. As I will explain further, in a post-9/11 America, “Anchor babies,” the children of undocumented immigrants who will supposedly “anchor” the immigrant family to the U.S. with a birthright citizen, discursively morph into “Terror babies.” Why? According to Leo Chávez, the September 11th attacks increased the public discourse and fears of the dangers that the United States faces from foreign nations and their people (21). As a result, former President, George W. Bush, created a strategy to defend the U.S. territory and its neighboring *borders* from future alien attacks. And, as Chávez affirms,

if there has been one constant on both pre-and post 9/11 public discourse on national security it has been the alleged threat to the nation posed by Mexican and other than Latin American immigration and the growing numbers of Americans of Mexican descent in the United States (21).

Thus, the “Latino Threat” narrative, in the form of the “Latina’s hyper-fertility” was renewed into the “Terror baby.” Like the “Anchor baby,” the “Terror baby” is 1) a child born in the U.S. to “foreign” parents; 2) is alter-Native (meaning that she/he is both native and a foreigner, an “alternative” to the white construction of U.S. “native”); and, 3) threatens and interrupts the mainstream imaginary of the “American” nation. Yet, unlike the “Anchor baby,” the “Terror baby” is specifically a product of the 9/11 U.S. sociopolitical discourses created by fearful and anxious nativist, conservative, ethnocentric, xenophobic and racist politicians, community leaders, which reflect the paranoia of a post-9/11 America. In this regard, the “Terror baby” is characterized as such due to the shifting and overwhelming discourse of any “foreign threat” as a potential “terrorist attack” in a post-9/11 era.

In order to conduct the discursive analysis on “Terror babies,” I have chosen two news feature video clips from the “Anderson Cooper 360⁰” CNN’s evening newscast aired on the 11th and 13th of August 2010, and a senior reporter’s Op-Ed piece published on the “Anderson Cooper 360⁰” blog. I chose the two clips from the “Anderson Cooper 360⁰” evening news because it was the *only* network news that featured an investigation on the “Terror baby” case. I will discuss these reports in a chronological order.

The first news clip aired on August 11th, 2010, titled, “‘Little Terrorists’ Born in the U.S.?” (11:19) joins Republican member of the Texas House of Representatives, Debbie Riddle, and Democratic member of the Texas House of Representatives, Rafael Anchia, in a

debate over “Terror babies.” The news feature opens with a wide-shot of the news studio where the anchorman is situated in the middle of the screen; Cooper’s positioning evokes a sense of objectivity and impartiality. One of the backdrops of the studio is a large frozen picture in sepia of what appears to be a Latina or “brown” mother, carrying a toddler who rests his head on the woman’s shoulder. Cooper directs the opening question to Texas Representative, Debbie Riddle,

Rep. Riddle, you told my producer that pregnant women are coming here as tourists, having babies, and then going back home ‘with the nefarious purpose of turning them into little terrorists, who will then come back to the United States and do us harm,’ You say, ‘it’s part of an organized terrorist element and can cost us lives’
Where did you hear that?

Rep. Riddle attempts to divert the loaded question with an ambiguous answer, “That information was given to my office by former FBI-folks.” Cooper attempts to obtain the “hard facts” on the “Terror baby” claim, which Rep. Riddle avoids answering with demagoguery. That is, Rep. Riddle attempts to support the “Terror baby” argument by making six references to the “porous southern border” in a two-minute span, and asserts that, “...there is *no* myth to it. The fact, it is documented. It is common knowledge...” For Riddle, the fact that “it is common knowledge” that the southern U.S.-border with Mexico is porous, is enough evidence to support her “Terror baby” argument. Although, it is interesting that even though Cooper and the “Anderson Cooper 360” team are critically questioning Rep. Riddle, the news studio team continuously provides Rep. Riddle with power and authority on this matter by giving Rep. Riddle a full-screenshot, while providing her name and title in caption throughout Anderson’s voice-over interrogations. Rep. Riddle filibusters and attempts to support the “Terror baby” argument by making six references to

the “porous southern border” in a two-minute span. The first scene concludes with Cooper making a clear distinction between “border security” and “Terror babies.”

In the second-scene Cooper introduces Rep. Rafael Anchia, a second-generation Hispanic (a son of Mexican and Spanish immigrants) lawmaker from Dallas, Texas. Anchia’s business casual attire contrasts with Rep. Riddle and Cooper’s business-formal sartorial. Perhaps in an effort to convey Anchia’s empathy and connection to the working-class Latina/o community (again, not necessarily the “Terror babies” parents, who could also be of Middle Eastern descent), he sports an unbuttoned blue-collar shirt. Cooper asks Anchia,

There are certainly wealthy women coming here from other countries to have babies... whether they are coming here in some cases for better healthcare, may be true, but there are also [those] who are clearly coming here to have babies, who are [then] U.S. citizens. Are you concerned about this as a national security issue? Do you believe that [they] are having future “Terror babies”?

Anchia opens his statement by “breaking the Anchor baby myth,” that is, the belief that people migrate to the United States with the sole purpose to “anchor” their family to this country and have access to social security benefits. Anchia states, stating that this is a faulty argument and that immigrant families with U.S.-born children cannot receive preferential treatment and *can* be deported at any given time.

It is important to note that neither Cooper nor Anchia seemed to be concerned with the conflation of “Terrorist” with “Anchor baby,” and that, “Anchor baby” was depicted as a Latina/o problem (originating primarily from the southern border) that only a Hispanic lawmaker could best speak to, clarify, and defend. Why choose a Latino representative to make a counterargument on the “Terror baby?” I wondered. Why not invite an Arab-American representative (like Republican U.S. Representative for California, Rep. Darrell

Issa), since “Terrorism” is mainly associated with the Middle East? Or is it? Why invite a Texan Hispanic lawmaker to make an argument against the falsity of a “Terror Baby,” but to reiterate the existence of “illegal” immigrant’s children born in the United States and debunk the “Anchor baby” myth?

In the third scene, Riddle rebuts Anchia’s counter-argument of “debunking the Anchor baby myth” by firmly stating that there is no myth behind “anchor babies,” they are well-known fact. She asserts:

Over 81% of the babies born in LBJ hospital right here in Houston are born to women who are here illegally! It is well know that women come over here, cross the border in order to have their babies. Because, once that ‘little American citizen’ is born and becomes an ‘Anchor Baby’.... And yes! They are coming across for the Entitlement programs (education, healthcare, etc.) If they are here illegally, whether for working or not, then that would fall into the term of Anchor Baby!

Like Cooper and Rep. Anchia, Rep. Riddle repeatedly conflates “Terror baby” and “Anchor Babies” in her last statement. Neither the “impartial” news anchor, nor the lawmaker representing the Latino community make an effort to challenge Riddle for using a racial slur on televised news. The lack of a critical engagement with the topic of “Terror baby” and continually making references to “Anchor baby” from the southern border sends the message loud and clear--the *real* Terror baby is the Anchor Baby from the southern border.

The second video news report titled, “Debating “Terror Babies”” (9:07), which aired on August 13, 2010, follows-up the investigation by having the main proponent of the “Terror baby,” Republican U.S. Representative from Texas, congressman Louie Gohmert to debate this controversial narrative. As part of the summary, Cooper shows Rep. Gohmert and his audience a short clip of what the former FBI assistant supervisor who was based in

the Middle-East, Thomas Fuentes, stated in regards to the non-existence of the so-called “Terror babies.” As in the previous news report, Cooper places a Latino public servant at odds with an Anglo-American politician. Cooper confronts Rep. Gohmert with a summary of Fuentes’ declaration on the myth of the “Terror baby,” as “ludicrous... there is absolutely no evidence about it or even concerns about it in the FBI.”

Cooper utilizes Fuentes’ statements to question Rep. Gohmert’s decision-making process of speaking on the House of Representatives’ floor before corroborating with the FBI. Like Rep. Riddle, Gohmert acts defensively but begins to yell as soon as he provides his statement. And like the previous news clip, Cooper incessantly inquires for evidence on the existence of “Terror babies,” which leads Gohmert to a defensive and disturbed attitude. Unable to provide any evidence or logical arguments, Gohmert attacks Cooper by accusing him of “attacking the messenger.”

The “thorough investigation on ‘Terror babies,’” which Gohmert refers to support his argument, is nothing more than a conversation the Republican representative had with an anonymous former FBI-officer on an airplane (apparently, the same officer referred to by Rep. Riddle in the previous video news report), and a Washington Post article regarding Chinese “birth tourism.”^[1] But for Gohmert the mere existence of a Chinese birth-tourism “crime ring” that swindles American laws by trafficking U.S. passports to undeserving foreign aliens, is evidence enough that *everyone* (who is foreign) is participating in the “birth tourism” business. In the case of Middle Eastern terrorists, Gohmert implies they must practice their own form of “birth tourism” and seek their particular interests’ in the U.S., that is, having open access to the nation to attack it. It all starts with the birthing of a “Terror baby.”

Gohmert affirms in between simultaneous yelling and debating, “if you don’t believe that this,” holding the Washington Post article in his hands, “is evidence, you ought to believe that the terrorists are more stupid than these enterprising people.” Gohmert rhetorically asks Cooper, “Anderson, do you really believe that the people who want to destroy the United States are more *stupid* than these entrepreneurs in China, and *these* people in Mexico?” For Gohmert the evidence for the *de facto* existence of “Terror babies” abounds in the news reports covering “Birth Tourism” and the common knowledge around Mexican “Anchor babies.”¹⁴

Once again, like the previous news report, “Terrorist” is conflated with south-of-the-border “Anchor babies,” but also with the added “Birth Tourism” component. The “Latino Threat” makes itself evident with the insertion of Mexican “Anchor Babies” into the “Terror baby” discourse, but with added undertones of an “underground birthing market.”

Finally, Gohmert asks Cooper to convince the American audience that Middle-Eastern terrorists are far more *stupid* than the money-thirsty Chinese and the swindling Mexicans “who are sending people in here to have babies, to get an American passport, leave, then come back years later.” Cooper repeats in a tone of exhaustion and defeat, “this is a theory that you are propagating, and that you have no evidence for. There is a thing called “Birth Tourism,” but there is no evidence in any of those articles that you saw and cited, that terrorists are actually partaking in it.” In his final remarks, Cooper seems to understand that there is a difference between “Terror babies” and “Birth Tourism.” Yet the unanswered question remains, are south of the border “Anchor babies” any different from

¹⁴ While I understand that “Terror baby” and “Birth Tourism” are two different discursive constructions, for Gohmert, unfortunately, the mediatized attention around “Birth tourism” and “Anchor babies,” supports his own “Terror baby” myth.

“Terror babies”? Cooper’s normalization of the “Anchor baby” as a terrorist threat from the southern border does not allow for what could have been a critical discussion problematizing the notion of “Terror babies” as different from “Anchor Babies.” If the former is the case, why have a news feature discussing the new topic of “Terror babies” in the first place? Sadly, Cooper lost an opportunity to engage critically with the subject, but gained another chance to misinform and keep the mainstream “All-American” audience ignorant—but Patriotic!¹⁵

Finally, senior NPR columnist Ruben Navarrete, Jr. posts an Op-Ed on the CNN Opinion blog page two-days after the airing of the “Terror baby” controversy on the Anderson Cooper show. In “‘Terror Babies:’ New Immigration Scare Tactics,” Navarrete says, the “Terror baby” discourse is groundless. After having spent a couple of days at the immigration debate hot-spot, Phoenix, Arizona, and talking to community leaders and a prominent pro-immigration reform Mexican-American attorney, Navarrete makes the strong statement that the mythical “Terror baby” is nothing more than the Great Old Party’s scare-tactics.

But who is behind this renewed “Latino Baby Threat” discourse, and for what purposes? During the first-half of the year 2010, the state of Arizona passed the Support Our Law and Safe Neighborhoods Acts, better known as SB1070. With the signage of SB 1070, the state of Arizona has come to be currently known as the “toughest immigration law in the country” (Campbell, 1). As community activists and scholars have voiced, SB 1070

¹⁵ Published on June 18th 2010, titled, “For many pregnant Chinese, a U.S. passport for baby remains a powerful lure.” A discursive analysis of this news article can be found on the previous subsection “Trafficking Birthright Citizenship.”

serves as “a proxy for race, color, and national origin” (2). In “The Road to SB 1070” Kristina M. Campbell argues that

Arizona’s attempt to regulate immigration at the state level is a form of legitimized vigilantism designed to purge the State of Arizona not only of undocumented persons, but of all persons who are or appear to be of Latino heritage, through racial profiling by state and local law enforcement (2).

SB 1070 was not a culmination in anti-immigration policies, but follows a trail of nativist, xenophobic, and racist anti-immigration agenda around the nation. For example, during the heyday of SB 1070’s controversy, HR 140 Birthright Citizenship Bill was introduced to the House of Representatives, which sought to prohibit birthright citizenship for children born in the United States to undocumented parents. Campbell affirms that the pairing of and almost simultaneous introduction of SB 1070 and HR 140, “represents a renewed call to repeal or reexamine the Fourteenth Amendment’s guarantee of *jus soli* presenting a significant threat to birthright citizenship and the civil liberties of all children born on U.S. soil” (14-15).

The political context of 2010’s immigration debate allows me to argue that both the U.S. Representative from Texas’ first congressional district, Louie Gohmert, and Texas State Representative, Debbie Riddle, were both trying to push HR 140 into effect. That is, by appearing at the “Anderson Cooper 360⁰” news show, and talking about so-called, “Terror babies,” they were in fact, promoting an anti-immigrant agenda in-line with SB 1070.

Navarrete explains that the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security agencies have tried their best efforts to de-mystifying “Terror babies,” the story that immigrant children born in the U.S. are abusing the 14th Amendment to terrorize the United States of America in the future. Ultimately, Navarrete critiques SB1070 proponents who are unable to make a claim based on their own merit, and must rely on ungrounded scare tactics or “spun”

immigrant stories. The NPR senior correspondent concludes that if nativist GOP anti-immigrant advocates do not believe the merit of their cause, “if they have to portray babies as terrorists and immigrants as drug mules in order to win support for their side, then this should tell them loud and clear that they’re on the wrong side of this issue” (Navarrete).

Expanding the “Latino Threat” narrative, as Leo Chávez develops it, I have demonstrated how mainstream news media has constructed the “Anchor baby,” “Birth tourism,” and “Terror baby” discourses to reiterate and renew (according to the socio-economic and political context) the threatening foreignness of U.S.-born Latina/os. Yet, because my contribution seeks to provide an alternative frame from which to think of *otro lado* babies, I position this transborder Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicana/o, and Latina/o experience as an alter-Native experience, as Gaspar de Alba would put it, of both the United States and Mexico.

III. Framing an Otro Lado Experience: Coloniality and an ‘Other’ Identity in

Tijuana’s Global Border.”

“Life has treated us differently... I [am] sort of a half-breed of colonization, understanding everyone because I belonged completely to no one” (Memmi, xvi).

“This is my home/this thin edge of/barbwire” (Anzaldúa, 25).

“...nací entre épocas y culturas y viceversa/nací en una herida infectada... for I am part of a new [hu]mankind/the 4th World/the migrant kind/los transterrados.../los que partimos y nunca llegamos.../en proceso, en ascenso, en transición” (Gomez-Peña, 51).

A border is a dividing line that signals where something or somewhere begins and another ends. A border distinguishes between “this” and “that,” “us” from “them;” “*lo nuestro*” (what is ours) from “*lo otro*” (what is theirs/the other), “*nosotras/os*” (us) and “*las/os*

otras/os” (them). As Gloria Anzaldúa so poignantly theorizes, the U.S.-México border is an open wound, “*una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (25). And from this bleeding a “border culture” emerges. For Anzaldúa, “border culture” is a “third country” (25). For Guillermo Gómez-Peña, it is a world between the third and the first—a “4th World” (51).

Raquel Márquez and Harriet Romo’s “Introduction” to *Transformations of La Familia on the U.S.-Mexico border*, defines the border as a *space* where family ties, U.S. and Mexican policies, Spanish and English, dollars and pesos, are the central components of quotidian lives. The borderlands,¹⁶ however, is a *place* where families negotiate identities, while interacting and navigating an ever changing social, economic, political, and cultural landscape (1). Márquez and Romo affirm that three types of families exist at the borderlands:

“transborder,” “transnational,” and “binational.” Also known as cross-border, or border-dwellers, transborder families are those who possess a strong link and daily contact with both sides of the border indistinctively, whether to attend school, work, to meet family expectations, or conduct business transactions. Generally speaking, transborder families thrive in sister cities, such as, Tijuana-San Diego, or Ciudad Juárez-El Paso (22).

Transnational families reside in the United States and have less frequent contact with the community of origin, but they have relatives who reside in both countries, they may own property, run businesses binationally, and have economic, social, cultural and emotional ties on both sides of the border. Binational families are those whose members possess dual nationality and are legal citizens of both Mexico and the U.S. Thus, “transborder,”

¹⁶ Drawing from Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of “borderlands” as explained in “Interview with AnaLouise Keating,” Márquez and Romo use “borderlands” as “the actual southwest borderlands, or any borderlands between two cultures... [Borderlands] with the capital “B,” it’s a metaphor for processes of many things: psychological, physical, mental...” (176).

“transnational,” or “binational,” families’ relationships with the border are shaped by the legal status that allows for multiple forms of incorporation, which non-citizenship or a lack of formal migratory privileges would deny (Márquez and Romo, 2).

The type of family formations at the border that I discuss in this research project fit within the “transborder” framework, while focusing the experience from the Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicana/o, and Latina/o perspective of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, using Chicana Feminist and post colonial frameworks. My intention is to fill-in gaps to the scholarly invisibility of Mexican-residing borderlands families. Because the “[k]ey to prosperity in Mexico’s northern states and in the borderlands is investment of human capital, particularly in border families” (9), Márquez and Romo urge scholars to engage in research that deals with the micro-structure level social arrangements at the borderlands.

Placeness at the Global Border

In “There’s No Place like Aztlán: Embodied Aesthetics in Chicana Art,” Alicia Gaspar de Alba questions how notions of place are tied to identity, and how Chicana artists evoke their sense of belonging tied to a place. Gaspar de Alba explains that for dispossessed Chicanas and Chicanos, place can manifest itself in representations of territorial dispossession (lost land) and cultural reclamation (promised land) (114-115). Following Hommi Bhabha’s call to think beyond place of origin (or nationality) to understand identity (106), Gaspar de Alba proposes that in order to problematize the “paradoxes of identity,” we must look beyond the place of birth, and place should not be limited to a geophysical location or space. In this effort, Gaspar de Alba theorizes a new paradigm to understand the relationship between place, identity, and gender in the aesthetic production of an art piece, one she calls “theory of place-based aesthetics” (108). Gaspar de Alba defines place-based

aesthetics as, “rooted in specific constructs of place, [that]... also [problematize] the subject beyond ‘place of origin’ to include race, religion, community, and the body as sites of identity” (109).

I borrow Gaspar de Alba’s theory of place-based aesthetics, to understand how an *otro lado* identity, is a “place-based” identity. Because *otro lado* babies are situated in both a bordered and borderless geopolitical location, their life experiences as U.S.-born Mexican border dwellers already makes a statement and challenges traditional forms of identity tied to a place of origin (read, birth). How can a U.S. citizen by birthright call herself a *Mexican* border dweller? Wouldn’t she be a U.S. immigrant (or, *expatriated gringa*) living in northern Mexico? By calling herself *Mexican*, is she appropriating an experience? To answer all questions, it suffices to say that like Third World people, *otro lado* babies’ experiences take shape south of the First/Third world divide: in my case, in the city of Tijuana, a Third World binational metropolis that surrogates First World capitalistic and technologic developments. Overpowered by the United States’ economic-political dictates, and characterized as having a “*historia de rebote*.”¹⁷ *Otro lado* babies, as Third World people with birthright membership to the First World, may be placed in a higher social standing in the Third World, i.e., Mexico, because of its associations to the United States. Yet, at the same time, and due to the bloody and bellicose histories between Mexico and the United States, *otro lado* babies (like Chicana and Chicanos) are often perceived as “traitors,” “sell-outs,” “*pochas*,” “*agringadas*” and “watered-down Mexicans” by mainstream Mexican culture. In U.S. culture, *otro lado* babies are often racialized as Third World marginalized subjects in the United States who are

¹⁷ Rebounded history, or history of rebound. The Spanish word, “*rebote*” translates to “rebound,” and is used to describe the bouncing-back of an object. Symbolically used, “*rebote*” connotes a “collateral” relationship with a main part. Tijuana historian, David Piñera, uses it to describe Tijuana’s economic and social collateral development from the wealthy state of California (Piñera qtd. in Zenteno Qintero, 108)

perceived as “Terror babies,” “Anchor Babies,” or unworthy illegal citizens of the almighty United States of America.

Where is “*El Otro Lado*”? And, What is an *Otro Lado* Baby Experience?

“*El norte, la frontera, la línea, el otro lado*, the north, the frontier, the line, the other side,” Amelia Malagamba-Anóstegui explains, are some of the names that Chicanas/os, Latinas/os, *mexicanas/os*, and Anglo-Saxons use when referring to “the border” (234). For Malagamba-Anóstegui, *fronterizas/os* use “*el otro lado* (the other side)” to convey “the idea of a whole, which has at least two sides” (243). Malagamba-Anóstegui explains that the people residing along the borderlands—*las/os fronterizas/os* (border-dwellers, cross-border, or transborder), imply the border itself or either side of the border to situate their geospatial positionality. In other words, and using Gaspar de Alba’s theorizing, *las/os fronterizas/os* utilize “*el otro lado*” to articulate and claim a U.S.-Mexico borderlands’ place-based identity, while acknowledging that the whole “borderlands” is partitioned in two.

I too, use “*otro lado*” to evoke (an) *Other* borderlands experience that breaks with the U.S.-centric vision of U.S.-Mexico border studies’ scholarship. My *otro lado* positionality and subjectivity recognizes that both México and the United States compound a totality at the borderlands, but that totality is divided in two parts: “this side” and “the other,” and the connotation of each will vary depending on where one is situated geographically. I also use *otro lado* instead of any other term to make a direct connection with the otherness experience both in México and the United States. This dual otherness has to do with the fact that *otro lado* subjects are born in the United States, yet raised, educated, and socialized on the Mexican side of the border. One may wonder, doesn’t that equate with “binationality”? Yes and no, as, previous to 1997, it was impossible to obtain dual nationality in Mexico without

having to resign any other national allegiance. For Mexican-situated transborder families, resigning their child's U.S. birthright citizenship for a Mexican nationality would limit their community participation and navigation across borders. And, as Márquez and Romo so truthfully describe, "as new generations in the borderlands form families, they will have experience[d] transnational and cross-border living as patterns of socialization. Options for dual nationality may increase the complexity of their lives" (20). Yet, one factor that could have complicated *otro lado* baby's U.S.-Mexico border experience prior to 1997 was the lack of legal pathways to obtain "Mexican" as a dual citizenship.

Immigration policies and constitutional laws of both México and the United States affect children and families' lives at the borderlands equally. Thus, Márquez and Romo suggest that women's roles as heads or co-heads of households at the borderlands must take advantage of the economic and social opportunities the other side of the border may offer—be it inexpensive merchandise, a higher paying job, better education, or birthright U.S. citizenship for their child (4). Yet, as I have already explored in the preceding section, human reproduction can generate polemics, especially when the reproducing bodies are perceived to be *foreign* Others. In their "Introduction" to *Reproduction, Globalization, and the State*, Carole Browner and Carolyn Sargent suggest that reproduction can create conflict at different social strata, such as, the intrafamilial sphere, state regulations, and public policies (2). Or, as Gail Kligman, foundational scholar of reproductive politics established in *The Politics of Duplicity*,

[R]eproduction provides the means by which individuals and collectivities ensure their community... [and it] is fundamentally associated with identity: that of "the nation" and the "imagined community" that the state serves and protects, and over which it exercises authority... In view of the multiple interests and values attached to reproduction it is understandable that ... individual, familial, and political interests in

reproduction differ so dramatically... [Reproductive] issues constitute a focus for contestation within societies as well as between them (Kligman, 5).

The discursive conflict and controversy generated by transborder Mexican mothers who seek medical attention for childbirth in the United States, navigate across borders. That is, *otro lado* babies' transborder subjectivity and placeness represents a threat to the "imagined community" of both Mexico and the U.S., and menaces the ideals of "a nation" on both sides of the border. Ultimately, *otro lado* babies' citizenship-status (whether forged in México, or granted by birthright in the U.S.) makes evident the paradox and constructedness of "the nation."

Catalina Palmer's 2008 publication, "An Overview of Children and Youth on the Mexican border," provides us with interesting data offering an overview of the growing trend of birthing *otro lado* babies at Mexican northern border municipalities and states, such as, Baja California, Sonora, Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, and Chihuahua. In a demographic report about northern border Mexican children and youth, and drawing 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 "large mobility of the population [is] evidenced by the proportion of foreign-born in th[e] zone (55)." Palmer reports that while only .4% of Mexico's adult-aged population was foreign born, in border municipalities the percentile rises to 1.2%. But the trend of foreign-born Mexicans grows if we look at a younger cohort. The statistic for children aged 18 and under who are foreign-born stands at a .7% at a national level, 2.0% at a northern border state level, and almost 5% for border municipalities. It is not surprising that 4.7% out of the 4.8% foreign-born in border municipalities hold U.S. citizenship. 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 United States 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). Palmer’s quantitative analysis pushes me to further question how the growing number of *otro lado* babies along the northern Mexican border impact the “Mexican” nation, disrupt the Mexican nation-state, and is part of a larger Chicana/o and Latina/o community beyond borders.

For the time being, I can offer a qualitative analysis of an *otro lado* baby experience and subjectivity by looking at my own life as a foreign-born transborder Mexican child. To articulate my experience and positionality as an *otro lado* baby, I use the Anzaldúan method, “*autobistoria-teoría*” (which translates to “self-history/theory”), which is an oral/written practice of telling one’s story to seek social justice or as a form of activism, as explained by Chela Sandoval in her “Foreword” to *Entre Mundos/Amongst Worlds* (xiv). AnaLouise Keating defined the method as “reflective self-awareness employed in the service of social-justice work. Personal experiences—revised and in other ways redrawn—become a lens with which to reread and rewrite the cultural stories into which we are born” (6). In the following subsection I employ this Anzaldúan technique to elaborate on the cultural story of Mexican and U.S. nationality, and to expose the way in which I experienced the incongruence and myth of the Mexican and United States’ “nations” and “imagined communities” as an *otro lado* baby at the Tijuana-San Diego border.

Autobistoria-Teoría of an Otro Lado Baby.

During a sociology seminar at UCLA in 2014, I had an epiphany, or what Gloria Anzaldúa calls a moment of *re-conocimiento*.¹⁸ I was synthesizing the article “*Tradiciones migratorias internacionales y socialización familiar*,” by acclaimed Mexican sociologist, Víctor Zúñiga, which argued that migration capital was a form of familial inheritance, when it hit me—the recognition of two more layers of my own U.S. born *mexicana* experience: international hyper-visibility and national invisibility.

Zúñiga draws three categories to distinguish his research participants from each other based on their “lineage” (understood as place of birth). The first Mexican youth category is of “regional lineage,” native to the land where the study is being conducted; the second, “non-regional lineage,” born outside of the region of the case study; and the third is “Mexican-North American”, that is youth born in the United States to parents of U.S. “lineage” (or birthright citizenship). According to Zúñiga, having a U.S.-born Mexican child in a family occurs only as a rare incident when families have repeatedly failed in their migrational ventures. He continues by saying that these families have opted for a U.S. citizenship for their progeny as a way to secure a future dollar income (or remittance) for the family in Mexico (58-59). The author also notes that U.S.-born Mexicans of non-migrating parents are even more rare cases, and infers that through family ties in the Southwest (mainly the state of Texas), the family will cover a costly U.S. birth because it is perceived as a long-term family investment promising *dollars* and upward mobility (59).

I utterly disagree with Zúñiga’s posturing that U.S.-born Mexicans are nothing more than mainstream constructions of “Anchor babies.” As Zúñiga’s research shows, U.S.-born

¹⁸ In “now let us shift... the path to *conocimiento*... inner work... public arts,” Anzaldúa calls this the moment in life that creates an “*aja*... one that guides our feet along the path, gives you *el animo* to dedicate yourself to transforming perceptions of reality, and thus the conditions of life” (540).

Mexicans, especially at the border, exist as a result of the contradictions of modernity. Tijuana, for example, is a space that has been critically acclaimed to be the “laboratory of postmodernity,” (Canclini, 40) due to its unique condition of serving as the global border for the underdeveloped and developed worlds. In a place where the advents of modernity are both heightened and interrupted, contradiction reigns. Unlike Zúñiga’s claims that “Mexican-North Americans” are the manifestation of failed immigration attempts that lead to “anchoring a baby as a last resource;” U.S.-born Mexicans, or *otro lado* babies, at the border respond not to a migrational imperative. *Otro lado* babies are the result of a grassroots interruption of modern conceptions of a nation-state. If we think of Benedict Anderson’s propositions that a nation-state is nothing more than a constructed community, “an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (5), then, how do *otro lado* babies’ parents imagine the U.S.-Mexico border community? How does their imagination allow them to see beyond the confines of the nation-states’ territoriality and envision a community beyond borders?

Zuñiga’s study offered many interesting findings, but I was puzzled by his assumptions and generalizations about my childhood experience. One of his most confusing and incongruent points was the characterization of U.S.-born Mexican children and youth as “U.S. migrants,” while simultaneously including “us” into a survey that looked at “Mexican” youth’s migrational expectations (62). I could not cease to question: “are ‘we’ migrants from the U.S. in Mexico? Or, are ‘we’ Mexicans?” But the conundrum does not cease, and Zúñiga observes with much confidence that his study showed that U.S.-born youth demonstrated a higher expectancy for international migration. The paradox becomes obvious, how can a national group of people (in this case U.S. born) be at the same time a foreigner or migrant (to the U.S. and Mexico), and a native (again, to U.S. and Mexico)? To answer these

questions using a decolonial framework, I find Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of *Nepantla* appropriate to elaborate on these paradoxical experiences. By following Carl Jung's argument that holding two opposite identities long enough without taking sides leads to the emergence of a new identity, Anzaldúa develops the theory of *Nepantla*. For Anzaldúa, *Nepantla* is a "site of transformation, the place where different perspective come into conflict and where you question the basic ideas, and identities inherited from your family, your education and your different cultures ("now let us shift...", 548). Anzaldúa urges *nepantleras* (community of border-dwellers) to embrace the contradictions of identity and culture, and forge a community of "nos/otras" (574).

But, in my attempt to make some sense out of the multiple layers of paradoxical social scientific mis-observations, I asked the professor leading the seminar to elucidate on the matter. *This* population, he said, has always represented a great challenge in the sociology of Mexican migration, because researchers do not know how to classify them: as North American, or Mexican?! He shared his classification system: *these* individuals are Mexicans, since they satisfy the Mexican demographic profile, but at the same time, *these* individuals are "something else." The professor then said something I will never forget: "...éstos niños se posicionan en un área invisible" ("...these children position themselves in an invisible area). In a practical sense, *these* children, or what I call, *otro lado* babies are demographically invisible, as we do not appear in either the U.S. or Mexican demographic census. We do not appear in the U.S. census as citizen residents or as "immigrants." In the same manner, our mothers' children are numerically invisibilized, as their children are not reflected in Mexican demographic surveys. Because of our self-contradicting placeness, and place of birth versus place of origin, we have come to inhabit an intrinsically complex and over-layered positionality that clashes against the developed and developing worlds, and which can only

be matched to *invisibility*. The professor concluded his comment by saying that “*los niños invisibles*,” or “invisible children” experience an informal dual citizenship, where their parents secured them birth certificates from both the U.S. and their place of origin. Finally, when “these children” reach young adulthood, they migrate north to attend college.

The professor’s last comments made me think of the also paradoxical and contradictory hyper-visibility that *otro lado* babies experience. Even though we are “invisible” to the U.S. and Mexican mainstream cultural vernaculars (and especially in national demographics), we are also hyper-visible as we are constantly put under tough foreign policy and domestic legislative scrutiny, both in Mexico and the U.S. But our practical sense of hyper-visibility becomes intensified when we participate as members of both Mexico and the United States. That is, our hyper-visibility allows us to be temporary, seasonal, spontaneous, and in some cases, permanent citizens of either of the two clashing nation-states, all while inhabiting *one* body (which is at sometimes invisibilized). In other words, our transborder bodies, which can be invisibilized by Mexican and U.S.’ mainstream discourses of identity, citizenship, and belonging; are at the same time hyper-visible because we can have participation, membership, and communal engagement in the U.S., Mexico, and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

Anzaldúa characterized those who navigate and exist within borders as, *Nepantleras*. As habitual border-dwellers, “*Nepantleras* acknowledge an un-mapped common ground: the humanity of the other. We are the other, the other is us” (“now let us shift...,” 570). Anzaldúa argued that *Nepantleras* advocate for a community of “us” (*nos/nuestra*) and “them” (*ustedes/otras*), a *nos/otras*, where the slash serves as a temporary bridge of humanity that strives to an eventful “*nosotras*” (us) (570). In this frame of mind, *Otro lado* babies epitomize Anzaldúa’s “*nos/otras*,” because we represent the “us” in one space (either Mexico or the

U.S.), while simultaneously being the “other” (again, in Mexico or the U.S.). Due to our hyper-visible/invisible condition, *otro lado* babies embody the Anzaldúan “*nos/otras*.” And like the promise of the *Nepantlera* community, our bordered subjectivity advocates for the humanity of the other by allowing our bodies to be the bridges that connect the modern with the postmodern, the developed with the developing, the center with the peripheral. Through our fragmented subjectivities, we carve a space for the humanity of the eventual “*nosotras*.”

I am a *mestiza*, *transfronteriza*, transborder, *mexicana*, Chicana, *latinoamericana*, highly educated, middle-classed polyglot and lesbian living in west Los Angeles. But, being a transborder Mexican, is this how the outside world perceives me? The question itself is much more complicated, because throughout my life I have had to straddle between two worlds that perceive me as an “Other;” and each world is a colonizing hegemony itself.

During the past summer I had the opportunity to read, ponder, and play with Albert Memmi’s propositions in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. As I did the excavation on how my profile fits with Memmi’s “colonized mind” (which I will discuss in the following paragraphs) it became a triple task, as I not only found myself echoing the colonized in both Mexico and the U.S., but the colonizer in “my native land.” It is frightening and grotesque to think of myself embodying the colonizer mindset in many different ways. Specifically, many times I found myself circumstantially and unwittingly embodying what Albert Memmi defines as “the Nero Complex,” or the usurper’s role. In Memmi’s words, the usurper is

[a] foreigner, having come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also taking away from the inhabitant, granting himself astonishing privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to

them... He thus appears double unjust. He is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is an usurper... (9)

Memmi argues that a colonized mind consists of ten aspects: assimilation, desire for colonizer's privileges, historical amnesia, change of collective habits, adoption of the colonizer's culture, desire for the colonizer, at the service for the colonizer, feelings of superiority towards those who cannot assimilate, petty tyranny, and legitimizing colonization. Comparing and contrasting my particular borderlands experience to Memmi's ten precepts of a colonized minds became a double task, as it was impossible to think of myself as colonized only within the boundaries of the United States, and forget twenty-five years of my life in Northwest Mexico.

When I talk about being a colonized subject of *el noroeste mexicano*, I make reference to the center-periphery relationship that the federal Mexican government has with its peripheral "*provincias*" (provinces). The *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* (DRAE) defines the word "*Provincia*" as: "*1. f. Cada una de las demarcaciones territoriales administrativas en que se organizan algunos Estados. 2. f. En la antigua Roma, territorio conquistado fuera de Italia, sujeto a las leyes romanas y administrado por un gobernador*¹⁹." In Mexico, "*la provincia mexicana*" (the Mexican province) connotes the second meaning of the word that relates to the Roman Empire, as a conquered land outside of the metropolitan areas surrounding Mexico City. In addition, "*la provincia mexicana*" is not strictly limited to the DRAE's understanding, but it also refers to, since the Spanish viceroyalty, as the rural, suburban, low-populated areas, usually found outside the location of Mexico City, or the former Aztec Empire and New Spain, and current Mexican capital. Finally, when a Mexican person is referred to as "*de*

¹⁹ My own translation "1. Each of the territorial demarcated administrations in which some states are organized. 2. In ancient Rome, the territory conquered by Italy, subject to Italian laws, and administered by a governor."

provincia” (of the provinces) the expression also connotes pejorative adjectives like, uneducated, lowly, poor, poor in speech, violent, almost like a noble savage. Thus, the centralized government has continuously launched projects to “mexicanize” the provincial inhabitants. In Tijuana, after former President Jose Lopez Portillo’s concern that Tijuana was “too American,” a federal state project was launched in 1980 to civilize *tijuanenses* to Mexican ways through the creation of a cultural center that would bring “Mexican” culture and identity to the Northwest frontier.

Because I was born in San Diego to Mexican parents, and raised in the border town of Tijuana, I perceive both the nation-state of Mexico and the United States imperialistic super-power as colonizing forces imposing their culture, language, economy, and social stratifications at the borderlands. To elaborate more on my identity, I would have to say that I inhabit a liminal space, in Emma Pérez’s words. That is, while I am a *de jure* American citizen, but not *de facto* (or at least not until recently); I am also *de facto* (*transfronteriza*/transborder) Mexican, but not *de jure*. My life is a whirlwind of conflicting citizenships, betrayal of patriotic loyalties, misunderstood identities. In other words, a cultural schizophrenia, as Alicia Gaspar de Alba would put it.

As a U.S. citizen border-dweller straddling the U.S.-Mexico divide on a daily-basis and living in the Mexican territory, I knew that because of my birthright citizenship, I had access to more privileges than any other Mexican national (of the highest class) could ever aspire to. This above-mentioned fact is what made me feel/fit the usurper’s role. However, I came to understand that I suffer from a Chicana/o-specific cultural challenge: cultural schizophrenia, according to Gaspar de Alba.

For twenty-five years of my life, I have simultaneously embodied two different personas: the colonizer and the colonized. When I was able to “pass” as Mexican and people

had yet to uncover my secret American identity, I was *una mexicana de provincia*. But as an American citizen, I was perceived as the colonizer, or *la gringa* (yes! no need to be of Anglo Saxon background, American citizenship is enough) living in and further colonizing the Mexican Northwest. For the past four-years, however, living in metropolitan Los Angeles as a transborder graduate student in Chicana/o Studies and Latin American Studies, I have experienced being the colonized literally, on the other side. While living in the U.S., I have confronted both the most terribly racist comments and attitudes ever imagined, and yet the most welcoming feelings of solidarity towards me. What is quite ironic is that after developing a chart with the ten-characteristics of the colonized, I checked eight boxes for my colonized mind in Mexico, and five boxes for the United States. Yet, paradoxical citizenship identities make plenty of sense when framing it around mestiza consciousness. Because I was born in the U.S., I have never had to prove myself “American” enough (nor do I have the interest), as patriotic identity was determined by default at my birth. On the other hand, having been perceived as a deficient Mexican posing, *gringa* from the provinces, I constantly tried to prove myself (and others) that I was Mexican enough to be their compatriot. Yet, regardless of my efforts, the most I could aspire to was a derogatory *chicana*, *pocha*, *méxico-americana*, *gringuita*, or at best, *norteña*. But, quite frankly, I refuse to internalize either central Mexican or U.S. nativist constructions of my identity, by claiming those aspects of my identity as my own. I am *méxicoestadounidense*, Chicana, *pocha*, *norteña*, *tijuanera del “otro lado.”*

In this *autobistoria-teoría* I have bridged Chicana Feminist, Decolonial and Postcolonial theories to demonstrate how my experience as an *otro lado* baby differs from mainstream American media representations of the “Anchor baby,” “Birth Tourism,” and “Terror baby.” Like Latina/os, Chicana/os, and Latin American immigrants, which the media mis-

represents through nativist discourses like, “Anchor Baby,” “Birth Tourism,” or “Terror Baby,” the *otro lado* baby also straddles the *Nepantla* space of “ni de aqui ni de allá” (neither here, nor there). That is, like Chicana/os and Latina/os, *otro lado* babies, straddle the cultural, political, economic, linguistic, ethnic, and racial borders of being alter-Natives. Through the employment of my “strategic use of essentialisms,” that is, choosing to strategically employ an “essentialist” discourse of identity, versus a universal one (Spivak, 11), I challenge Western-imposed colonial and post-colonial social structures of inequality, i.e. “the (U.S. and Mexican) nation,” and theorize a new border consciousness embodied by the *otro lado* baby. I insert my *autohistoria-teoría* of an *otro lado* baby within a continuum of transborder, borderlands/*la frontera*, and U.S.-México border communities.

IV. Final Considerations/*A Manera de Conclusión*

I cannot cease to question, why is it that “Brown” bodies regardless of historical and socio-political scenario, continue to be represented as “foreign threats” in mainstream media? Or, in a “Black and White” racial paradigm, where White has been continuously and discursively constructed as superior, and Black as *the* “ethnic minority; where do Latina/o Brown bodies fit? I argue, deriving from Anghard Valdivia’s assertions regarding “Brown” subjectivities and representation in mainstream media, that because “Latina/os” were never imagined to be part of the “all-American” White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant community, the only space Latina/os can occupy is the menacing foreigner who threatens to destabilize the originally imagined American community. As I have shown in the previous sections, the “Anchor baby,” “Birth tourism,” and “Terror baby” media discourses are nothing more than a successive effort to reinvigorate the broken-down record of Latin American, Mexican,

Central American, South American immigrants, Latina/os, and Chicana/os as Brown “illegal” subjects who threaten the White hegemony of the American nation.

The news reports, Op-Eds, and articles I have analyze illustrate the ways in which Latina reproduction and birthing of alter-Native U.S. citizens is constructed in mainstream American media as: “Anchor babies,” a U.S.-born child of immigrant/foreign parents who promises to “anchor” the non-native family to the U.S. via immigration sponsorship; “Birth tourism,” the practice of giving birth while a tourist in the U.S., such as, a tourist-visa-holding international traveling pregnant mothers giving birth in the U.S., and thus, having a U.S. citizen in the family; and/or “Terror baby,” similar to the “Anchor baby” but is specifically a product of the 9/11 U.S. sociopolitical discourses created by fearful and anxious nativist, conservative, ethnocentric, xenophobic and racist politicians, community leaders, which reflect the paranoia of a post-9/11 America. In the analyses, it is clear to see how citizenship claims are easily challenged through media spectacles and discourses that question Latina/o loyalty, legitimacy, and safety to the nation.

This thesis has also explored border/*frontera* paradoxes, like, how do *otro lado* babies represent the colonized, decolonized, and neo-colonized of both Mexico and the United States? As I have previously argued, the *otro lado* baby’s experience lets us see how transborder subjects inhabit multiple social, cultural, and political positionalities at once. Just like *otro lado* babies can perform *mexicanidad* (mexicanness), they also share the immigrant experience of a U.S.-Latina/o to some extent, and like Chicana/os, they have one foot in the United States, and another in Mexico. To reiterate, the *otro lado* baby community epitomizes what Gloria Anzaldúa calls a community of *Nepantleras*, Nepantla-dwellers who inhabit and navigate the in-between spaces of Mexico and the United States and who forge a third space within the grating of the Third World against the First World (*Borderlands*, 3).

Yet, as expansive as this thesis project has attempted to be, there are still many questions that call for further exploration, such as, how do *otro lado* babies assimilate to the dominant cultures of Mexico and the U.S.? Ontologically, do *otro lado* babies assimilate, acculturate, integrate, or, do they perhaps exhibit another form of social integration that we are yet to unveil? Thinking about the transborder Mexican mothers' actions, to what extent does the mother's agency disrupt a predominantly male border with their reproductive non-native female bodies? And, what factors determine and allow for these Mexican women to have the ability to cross-the-border and give birth? My effort to answer the aforementioned questions drives not only this, but the continuation of this research project, in the form of my dissertation thesis.

This research project can serve as a foundation for future research projects where question of belonging and membership rise within the context of the U.S.-born, yet Mexican-anchored transborder citizens in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. This Master's thesis also broadens the U.S.-centrism evoked in some border studies scholarship because it offers not just the Mexican-American, Chicana/o, and Latina/o perspectives, but a Mexicanist perspective as well. The Mexican-anchored transborder point-of-view I have offered in this research project broadens the lens of U.S.-based border studies by fleshing-out how hybrid subjectivities are constructed in *el otro lado*, that is, on the "other" side of the geopolitical divide. In the end, *otro lado* baby's experiences, subjectivity, and consciousness are shaped within the *Nepantla* space, "the zone between changes where you struggle to find equilibrium between the outer expression of change and your inner relationship to it" (Anzaldúa, "now let us shift...", 549) It is only by navigating and dwelling through and across *Nepantla*, that is, by challenging the dominant paradigms of the Mexican and U.S. cultural and political

hegemonies, that *otro lado* babies will be able to arrive to a new transborder subjectivity and consciousness, an *otro lado* consciousness.

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