

‘Embodying the transnational: How young Mexican-American
women negotiate the intersections of gender, race and class in the
U.S.-Mexico borderlands’

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Declaration

'I, Caitlin O'Neill Gutierrez, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

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Date: 28.01.2015

Abstract

This thesis investigates the processes of identity formation that young Mexican women living in the United States-Mexico *borderlands* engage in today. It examines how they perform multiple and transnational identities to negotiate discourses of gender, race and class across the everyday spaces they inhabit. It shows that young women leverage their parents' Mexican heritage and migration narratives as proxies for their own Mexican identity ascription, and it grants salience to parental strategies to instil within their daughters valuable cultural and social capital via *la familia*. It simultaneously contends that young women develop themselves as partially '-American', a process which can function to also engender new interpretations of their Mexicanness as it is informed by their friends and peers. These performances are strongly rooted in the spatial worlds young women inhabit, most especially, the home and school spaces. Young women both conform to and contest normative expectations of them that centre on the gendered division of labour within the home, their degrees of freedom, and their educational trajectories. The thesis demonstrates that young women engage in transnational practices as a conscious strategy to make sense of the multiply conflicting identity discourses that are present in their lives. By ascribing to and performing strategically what they perceive to be Mexican and/or more American identities, and by utilising carefully the funds of social and cultural capital available to them, young women manage to create valuable and positive lives for themselves in a socio-cultural and economic landscape that can tend otherwise to devalue and exclude them. Rooted in, and contributing to, critical feminist and race theories, this thesis draws upon fifty-five in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with young Mexican women aged 14-24 during eleven months of ethnographic research in Encinitas, North County San Diego, California in 2009-10.

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This thesis is dedicated to my beloved grandparents, Doreen Lilian Elvines and Gerard O'Neill, and our O'Neill family home at 67 Longley Avenue.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In early July 2014, three buses of undocumented child, youth and women migrants from Mexico and Central America arrived at a San Diego County immigration detention centre in Murrieta for ‘processing’ – transferred there by the federal authorities from ‘inundated’ Texas where the migrants had crossed the border with the help of *coyotes* (human smugglers). The arrival, featured on all local (and subsequently national) news outlets, sparked an anti-immigration protest – promptly organised by nativist groups via social-media – that effectively blockaded the road into the detention centre and forced the buses to re-route to alternative centres. Immigrant rights groups counter protested, and Mexican and American families themselves then ‘inundated’ local migrant assistant charities with donations of food and clothing, and to offer themselves as temporary foster families for the new arrivals.

This high-profile event struck me in a number of ways. Firstly, it demonstrated the depth of feelings and tensions around immigration in California, and in the United States more widely. It was starkly emblematic of the ‘harsh geographies’ of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands that young Mexicans and Mexican-Americans are growing up in (Núñez and Heyman 2007). The mostly White crowd of local residents chanted and held up slogans such as ‘STOP illegal immigration’, ‘go home!’, ‘agents: secure our borders – NOT change diapers’, ‘what about OUR KIDS – keep OUR KIDS SAFE’, ‘protect your kids from diseases’ and ‘send them back with birth control’. In response, immigrant rights protesters held up signs such as ‘*Ningún humano es ilegal*’ (no human is illegal), ‘we work the jobs nobody wants’, ‘hey Obama, where’s our immigration reform?’, ‘not 1+ deportation’, ‘keep families together’, and ‘we welcome ALL children’. These captions and protester media interviews very publically exposed the complicated narratives of race, gender, class and belonging that are present in the border region. Gendered discourses of embodiment were particularly rife amongst the anti-immigration protesters – Mexican migrant women’s bodies were viewed foremost as ‘hyper-fertile baby machines’ (Gutiérrez 2008) who risked further inundating California with unwelcome Mexican children or ‘anchor babies’ (Franz 2013). Children and young people’s bodies were framed as dangerous, violent, or carriers of disease who posed a direct threat to the conversely clean, healthy and innocent bodies of White American children. Immigrant

supporters tended instead to focus on notions of protection, safety, community and acceptance as parts of broader narratives of a common humanity and morality, as well as on the difficult realities of Mexican life in the U.S. in terms of their often second-class employment and social positionings, and the fear, for some, of deportation.

Secondly, in the days immediately after the protests, the response of potential Mexican ‘foster’ families illustrated the various ways in which discourses of belonging, community, and rootedness or connection to Mexico can remain important for families many years or generations after migrating themselves. News reports and social media suggested that much of the justification for their offering assistance to the new arrivals was rooted in recognition of, and empathy with, some kind of shared Mexican heritage or experience – personal or ancestral – of departure, migration, resettlement, exclusion and also acceptance.

Looking at the scenery and people in the photos and videos of the protests, I felt like they could have been happening in any one of the coastal or semi-rural towns I conducted this research in. In fact, Murrieta, just north of Temecula (see map on page 72), is only 50 miles away from the schools in which I spoke to young Mexican women about their living in this ‘harsh geography’, and how constructions of age, gender, race and class intersected in their identity performances. I was acutely aware that they would most likely hear about the tensions unfolding just up the highway. Discussions in the media may have spilled over into their schools, homes, streets and social worlds – those that they share with White American, Black American, South and East Asian American and various immigrant peers – and may have heightened the salience of difference and belonging amongst them all, including their teachers, parents and other community folk. As I explain momentarily and evidence in the literature review, research on young Mexican women’s lives in the borderland is warranted given their complicated social positionings, but it seems especially timely now given the growing clamour around immigration, and particularly since post-migrant children, young people and women are especially in the spotlight.

This doctoral project arose out of my Masters research, where in 2008 I spent three months listening to young women talk about how they and their Mexican communities in San Diego, California, understand *la quinceañera*, the traditional and yet evolving coming-of-age party for fifteen-year-old Mexican girls (O’Neill Gutierrez 2008). In the course of describing a typical

party, young women painted an intricate picture of its wider context – they explained to me what a ‘good Mexican girl’ was expected to be, how traditional Mexican gendered relations, ideals and practices were translated or contested by their families in post-migratory life in the U.S., and how being marked as Mexican in their American schools and neighbourhoods could operate in both positive and negative ways. I soon realised that the *quinceañera* operated as a window through which to explore a much more complicated set of questions around the normative roles to do with gender, family, class and ethnic identity that young women in the U.S.-Mexico ‘borderlands’ perform, counter and rework on a daily basis. I wanted to develop upon this work since much of the literature I came across in relation to young Mexican women seemed to frame them in two fairly limited and essentialising ways.

Firstly, studies of their social lives tended to portray them either as oppositional, promiscuous and gang-related *callejeras* [‘street girls’ or runabouts] (Hyams 2000), or as naïve innocents held captive by their restrictive patriarchal families (Williams 1990) – neither of these images seem to reflect fairly enough many of the young women I had already met. With a few important exceptions (Bettie 2003, García 2004, Hyams 2000, Sánchez 2007a), scholars had failed to account for the diversity of gendered, ethnic, class, sexuality and age identities performed in the U.S. by young women of Mexican descent, and in doing so had ignored the very positive, and culturally and educationally rich, lives (not to mention the mundane and very average ones, equally and perhaps especially worthy of attention) that they were crafting for themselves. Furthermore, the other main body of work – that by segmented assimilationists such as Portes and Zhou (1993) focusing on their educational trajectories – also framed them as being subject to an almost inevitable path of ‘downward assimilation’ in the United States. In response to such ‘deficit perspectives’ (Arzubiaga et al. 2009), I wanted to engage with young Mexican women again and hear in more depth how they perceived their lives to be unfolding vis-à-vis the range of ‘hegemonic narrative plots’ that abound about them and their families in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands today (Vila 2003).

This thesis therefore investigates the processes of identity formation that young women from Mexican families living in the United States engage in today. Drawing upon eleven months of qualitative ethnographic research conducted in San Diego, California in 2009-10, I examine the complex life worlds that young women create for themselves and I argue that they construct ‘transnational social fields’ (Basch et al. 1994) in order to make sense of the

multiple influences and connections in their lives. I show that young women engage in transnational practices to not only stay in touch with the Mexican elements of themselves whilst living in the U.S., but also as a conscious strategy to negotiate the often conflicting identity discourses that arise as they engage with normative notions of womanhood, ‘Mexicanness’ and *familia* (family). I show that whilst *some* young Mexican women might to varying degrees experience poverty, educational disillusionment, or negative ‘contexts of reception’ including discrimination rooted in gendered racism towards their brown female bodies - factors that segmented assimilationists contend render young Mexicans the ‘ideal type’ case for failure (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) – most young women are nonetheless often very willing to engage positively in their (Mexican) communities and in their (American) education, thereby securing upwardly mobile trajectories for themselves when compared to their parents (Alba et al. 2011).

In a related vein, I also respond to the ways in which the Mexican *familia* has been subject to scrutiny by social scientists (Ibarra 2003), and criticised both as a ‘pathological’ institution that sabotages its young people’s future prospects in a land of supposedly boundless opportunity, and as a patriarchal relic with particularly damaging outcomes for the young women held captive within its confines (Mirandé 1977). I evidence how discussions of *la familia* and the ‘traditional’ gender relations bound up within it rely upon an uncritical reproduction of the value-laden Mexico-United States binary – whereby Mexico, the homeland, is understood as socially backward, developmentally behind, and imbued with such poverty that the only avenue for upward mobility is to leave northwards for the conversely modern, forward-thinking and prosperous United States. I show that although some of these tropes about the restrictive *familia* may be manifested in their lives, in cases such as an unequal division of labour or a parental pressure to stay close to home when attending college, actually for the most part young women perceive themselves to gain high levels of social and cultural capital from their families, and indeed their attachments to a treasured homeland.

In addition to speaking to some of the context-specific literatures that focus on Mexican young people and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, I hope in this thesis to be able to contribute to dialogues currently ongoing in the range of other fields that this project is rooted in. In highlighting, for example, young Mexican women’s locatedness as transnational agents

forming their identities across two, at times competing and spatially-segregated, social worlds, I hope to add currency to the growing literatures on transnational communities and young people's production of 'transnational social fields'. Furthermore, in looking at manifestations of the post-migratory family, the thesis develops gender and migration scholarship, and also that which attends to the accumulation, value and strategic uses of social and cultural capital for migrants that arise out of their familial heritage and post-migrant communities.

I also hope that this thesis affirms the salience of intersectionality, that is, the attendance to the range of gender, age, race/ethnic/nationality, class, legal, sexuality, and religion based axes through which the *performance* of spatialised identities takes place more generally (Butler 1990, Dwyer 1999b). In addition, I anticipate that the thesis in its focus on suburban young women, and the way it foregrounds the mundane and everyday, enables it to contribute to the growing body of work which seeks to counter sensationalist notions of 'risky' or oppositional youth and complement work that has looked predominantly at urban youth experiences (Evans 2008). Finally, based on the detailed portrayal of how I went about conducting an in-depth qualitative ethnography, as well as my reflections upon my own positionality, I hope to add to work that critically examines the research process when young people, and Mexican or other immigrant communities, are involved.

It is important to note that my desire to explore these issues is also as a result of my own Mexican heritage and my identity as a British-Mexican young woman. My experience of negotiating a sense of Mexicanness outside of Mexico has led me to want to explore how this identifying process works for other young women, especially those like the young women in this study who grow up surrounded by a much larger Mexican community than I did, and who are in very close proximity to Mexico itself. I take care to examine the impact of my positionality on the research process in the Methodology Chapter of this thesis.

1.2 Thesis structure

The thesis begins with a review of the diverse literatures that have informed this project. I first detail the ways in which segmented assimilation theories have at times unfairly framed young Mexican trajectories in the United States. I then make the case for an alternative and more holistic reading of immigrant and second generation Mexican experiences in the U.S.-

Mexico borderlands, grounded in theories of transnationalism. The review then illustrates how applying an intersectionalist approach in such a transnational space, can aid a more holistic understanding of the ways in which gender, race, class and age combine in the identity performances of young Mexican women.

Chapter Three, the methodology, explains how this project's theoretical groundings required a set of epistemologies that acknowledged the gendered, racial, classed and age-based positionings of the project's participants. I introduce the research locale, detail the recruitment strategies and routes that I engaged to meet with young women of Mexican descent, and specify the qualitative research methods I employed to hear their stories. I then engage in critical reflection on my methods and the research process itself, whilst also attending to the impact of my positionality as an insider/outsider. Finally I detail the analytical toolkit that I have since employed to best interpret the data.

Chapter Four begins to introduce the women who took part in the study in more depth by listening to their choices of national and ethnic identity labels. The key purpose of this chapter is to explore how and why young women linguistically reproduce themselves as coming 'from Mexico' (the country today and a somewhat imagined past) and 'being Mexican', even when the majority were themselves born in the United States. This chapter shows that by using identity labels as prompts, they illuminate the multitude of factors that young women take into account when constructing their identities. It especially shows that young women's current national identity is deeply engrained in their familial *formations*, that is, it is bound up in imagery around parental heritage, bloodlines and especially, parental migration and 'struggle' narratives, which the next chapter elaborates.

Chapter Five develops upon these *formations* (Skeggs 1997) by examining the physical and social locations that young women perceive themselves to 'come from'. The first part of the chapter examines young women's memories of Mexico and shows that they mobilise images of Mexico as both 'poor' and 'beautiful', so that it is somewhere to love but leave. I illustrate that they do this to construct themselves as 'authentic Mexicans' vis-à-vis their Mexican peers in the U.S. but also to embody a 'sophisticated' and 'modern' Americanness. The chapter's second part then explores the salience of their parents' migration and 'struggle' narratives, and how these are operationalised by both young women and their parents to make sense of

their post-migratory lives in the U.S. I show that young women perceive their parents to strategically utilise such narratives for motivational and disciplinary purposes rooted in notions of 'success' in the U.S., and to instil in their children valuable cultural capital via connections to their Mexican homeland, thereby highlighting 'the power of being raised in a transnational social field' (Levitt 2009: 1225).

Chapter Six examines how traditional ideals of *la familia* are manifested in young women's homes. The first section explores the degree to which young women understand their *familias* as nurturing and compassionate, or patriarchal and pathological (Mirandé 1997). I show that young women critically appraise their homes as places where traditional roles are performed, contested and reworked by their parents and siblings. The second section pays special attention to how young women respond to expectations of them that centre on the gendered division of labour and how they perform being a 'good Mexican girl'. This chapter heeds Chicana theorists' demands for the recognition of a more complicated picture of the Mexican-American household that moves past limited notions of macho men and subservient women. I present the home as it exists both as a space of familial warmth and safety, and as one of ambiguity and contradiction, but especially as a space in flux where understandings of the *familia* and appropriate womanhood are not fixed, but are performed, contested and adapted simultaneously.

Chapter Seven develops upon this examination of young women's constructions of a 'good Mexican girl' identity within the home to explore how young women negotiate degrees of 'freedom' to leave the home and socialise outside. I show how young women perceive their parents to reproduce gendered discourses of appropriate sexuality that function to restrict young women's freedoms as compared to both their Mexican male peers and their White female American ones. This chapter illustrates that young women accept, contest and subvert the dominant discourses of young, female and Mexican sexuality that attempt to police their bodies, especially those that centre on images of the 'barefoot and pregnant' Latina (Bettie 2003: 58). I show that young women use discussion of freedom and sexuality to respond critically to both Mexican and American ideals of girlhood, and show how they frame their sexualised bodies in relation to their potential futures.

In Chapter Eight, I examine young women's experience of formal school spaces, since they emerged as key spaces where young women construct their identities. I first explore how young women perceive the school as a White American and English-speaking space that tends to foster the educational development and inclusion of White American students over Mexicans. I examine the ways in which formal school apparatus such as the curriculum, language of instruction and tracking (streaming) functions to re-inscribe social difference between pupils. I then show how young women experience targeted support services aimed at Mexicans, to show both the empowering and problematic effects of being Othered in such a way. The second section of this chapter explores young women's relationships with their White American peers, and the degree to which social mixing occurs (or not). I show that the school is a space of complicated negotiations of difference and relatedness, reflective and constitutive of broader racialised and classed processes underway in the borderland.

In Chapter Nine I present this study's conclusions. After offering an overview of my findings, I summarise the key contributions of each chapter and show how they develop a more holistic picture of young Mexican women's borderland lives. I show that young women of Mexican descent who live in Southern California perform inherently and strategically transnational lives, and contribute to the production of 'transnational social fields' (Basch et al. 1994). In doing so, I illustrate how they perform intersecting gender, race, class and age identities – rooted in constructions of both Mexicanness and Americanness – that enable them to construct positive and empowered lives in a social context that otherwise seeks to devalue their young, brown, bodies. I take care to show where I have contributed original additions to a small but valuable existing body of research on young Mexican women, and I also highlight the opportunities and avenues where future research could usefully be directed.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter makes the case for the integrated use of theories of transnationalism and intersectionality to understand how young Mexican-identifying women living in Southern California, United States, who have been framed in some literatures as ‘problematic’ for their ‘failure’ to ‘assimilate’, may instead be positioned more sensitively as social actors engaging in the production of transnational social fields.

It does this by first examining ‘segmented assimilation’, the predominant lens through which young Mexican women – and their identities, families and life trajectories - have been attended to in academic and policy spheres to date. It shows not only how its theoretical and practical parameters for assessing social identification/s and degrees of ‘assimilation’ amongst immigrant and second generation youth are somewhat flawed, but also how segmented assimilationists have consistently reproduced incomplete and damaging analyses of young Mexicans in particular. The chapter then demonstrates how transnationalism has developed since the early 1990s as a critique of traditional theories of assimilation, including segmented assimilation, and explores what it may offer in terms of a more holistic grounding for thinking about young Mexicans’ personal-social and educational-career trajectories in the U.S. It also explores how second generation and ‘intradiasporic’ transnationalisms may be especially useful for understanding the ‘simultaneity’, hybridity and naturalness of betweenness or ‘being both’ for Mexicans living in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands – a conceptualisation supported by border and Chicana/a scholars long working in the region.

The chapter then charts the evolution of intersectionality as a theoretical and empirical framework for examining the ways in which multiple axes of identification converge and are performed by social actors across particular spatial and temporal contexts. It attends in turn to the interlocking bodies of research by; feminist scholars on constructions of gender and how these may be transformed in the migratory process; critical race theorists and Chicana and black feminist theorists about the continued salience of race and ethnicity; and scholars focusing on the geographies of youth.

The concluding part of this chapter demonstrates how this thesis will draw together these wide-ranging bodies of work to investigate how multiple avenues of identification intersect for, and are performed by, young Mexican-identifying women in the borderlands. In doing this, the thesis is able to respond to ‘deficit perspectives’ and show that young Mexican women are not ‘failing’ to assimilate to a falsely imagined singular American identity, but are instead actively and creatively reproducing transnational social fields that foreground notions of simultaneity – that is, where performing both Mexicanness and Americanness is both valid and a borderland norm.

2.2 Transnationalism

2.2.1 The ‘problem’ of young Mexicans who ‘fail’ to ‘assimilate’

As detailed in the thesis introduction, the growing presence and embedded-ness of Mexicans in the U.S. is a topic of great interest, celebration and controversy across a variety of public, political and academic arenas (Fetzer 2000, Peutz and De Genova 2010). In recent decades academic focus has shifted towards the next generation of Mexicans in the United States - the children of migrants – to see how processes of assimilation, education and identification are unfolding in a longer-term post-migratory context (Alba and Waters 2011). The second generation (U.S.-born children with at least one foreign-born parent) are a significant and growing demographic in California especially – they account for nearly a quarter of the state’s population – and the children of Mexicans make up the large majority of this segment of society (Pitkin and Myers 2012). As such, policymakers and the media pay keen attention to them because of the economic and electoral power this diverse group of young people will increasingly wield in the future (Ramakrishnan and Johnson 2005, Rumbaut and Portes 2001). The degree to which the children of immigrants are integrating socially, succeeding educationally, and indeed, operating transnationally, are a key aspect of debates.

The predominant academic lens through which second generation Mexicans have been observed is through work borne out of Portes and Zhou’s seminal ‘segmented assimilation’ theory (1993). Under this framework, young Mexicans’ ‘uneducated’ parents, ‘limited’ familial resources brought from the country of origin, and exclusionary ‘contexts of reception’ are understood to by default render them likely to undergo ‘downward assimilation’ in the U.S. Epitomising what Arzubiaga et al. (2009) consider a ‘deficit perspective’, segmented assimilationists tend to repeatedly position young people from Mexican families as being at a disadvantage compared to ‘native’ born (White) Americans. Whilst segmented assimilation theory does offer some constructive insights as detailed later, this thesis engages carefully with such a deficit perspective. This is because it fails not only to take into account the diversity of life experienced by those who identify as Mexican in the U.S., but also because it obscures the evidence - including that arising out of Portes et al.’s own scholarship - that shows that for the children of immigrants, ‘downward assimilation...is a minority experience and that real, if often modest, upward mobility is much more common’ (Alba et al. 2011: 771). Nevertheless, it is important to understand the roots and main propositions of

segmented assimilation theory because of its pervasiveness in academic and policy debates about young Mexicans today. In addition, I attend to such assimilation theories in depth because I perceive them to frequently be used not only to talk about assimilation or *integration* into American society per se, but also to suggest something about, or indeed pass judgement on, the quality of the life migrant families are fostering for their children, and the kinds of hopeful/hopeless identities young people are constructing for themselves - factors this project is preoccupied with examining.

Segmented assimilation rose to prominence with the 1993 publication of Portes and Zhou's extensive study on the post-1965¹ integration of immigrant children in the U.S. These authors presented a solid critique of classical assimilation theory based on its assumptions of 'inevitability, full incorporation, ethnocentrism and one-sidedness without a positive contribution of ethnic cultures' (Hao 2005: 1309). Developed by Park's 'The Chicago School' in the 1920-30's, classical assimilation theory upheld that the assimilation of immigrants in terms of social status, culture, and residential locations occurred in a 'straight line' through processes of 'contact, competition, conflict, and accommodation between minority and majority groups' (Windzio 2010: 1). Warner and Srole (1945) developed the theory to recognise the importance for integration of institutional factors such as class and contemporary racialised hierarchies, and it was expanded by Gordon to include a more nuanced set of 'seven stages of assimilation' (1964). These traditional migration theories focused predominantly on early twentieth century migrants who were perceived to have permanently 'uprooted' themselves from their European homelands to forge new lives in the United States (Soehl and Waldinger 2010). In accordance with the 'melting pot' mantra that characterised public and political discourse around the United States' myriad new settlers, immigrants were encouraged, and in various ways coerced, to discard their old homeland customs, languages and attachments, and instead embrace and assimilate into a new shared American identity – what Hurtado has frames as a 'civilizing' project (1997). However, these theories and strategies became increasingly outdated and obsolete as immigrants' settlement trajectories proved to unfold in ever differentiated ways.

¹ This watershed pertains to the 1965 Immigration Act.

In response to these older theories, segmented assimilation countered that adaptation to American culture occurs at varying speeds and to varying degrees for different immigrant groups. There are three main ‘divergent paths of mobility’ as Portes and Zhou explain:

One [form of adaptation] replicates the time-honoured portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class; a second leads straight in the opposite direction to permanent poverty and assimilation into the underclass [Mexicans²]; still a third associates rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity [Punjabi Sikhs and Cubans].

1993: 82

Segmented assimilation holds that there are several forces that influence the ability of immigrants to assimilate. These include individual and family resources such as pre-migratory class and education level, and the ‘contexts of reception’ which are formed by the interaction of; the policies of the host government; the values and prejudices of the receiving society in relation to the immigrants’ race and ethnicity; and the characteristics of the co-ethnic community. Through a combination of these factors, different groups of immigrants will assimilate into different ‘segments of society’, not automatically into the middle-class. The children of low-skilled migrants are expected to ‘face distinct barriers to upward mobility’ (*ibid*) and become susceptible to downward assimilation, thereby forming part of a ‘rainbow underclass’ (López and Stanton-Salazar 2001), whilst the offspring of the middle-classes should be able to rapidly enter the American mainstream by drawing upon their parents’ class and the offerings of the U.S. education system.

There are certainly some valuable insights offered by segmented assimilation theory for thinking through how young people from immigrant families experience post-migratory life in the U.S. Indeed, Portes and Zhou’s foregrounding of difference across migrant groups in the assimilation process, and their attention to varying contexts of reception, are important.

² These labels reflect Portes and Zhou’s community case studies from their 1993 paper, the data for which is drawn from the ‘The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study’ (CILS).

However, whereas they draw their conclusions from the comparison of distinct ethnic and national groups, other scholars have argued that acknowledging generational and spatial difference *within* such groups – in this case, amongst the myriad types of Mexicans in the U.S. - offers a more realistic measure of the degree to which change is occurring in post-migratory communities (Alba et al. 2011, Kasinitz 2008).

By dividing difference across immigrant group lines, with East Asians most often framed as highly skilled and driven, South Asian students as shy but conscientious, and Cubans as deserving political exiles (Portes and Zhou 1993), for example, segmented assimilation often functions to homogenise diverse populations under essentialising and culturally deterministic labels. In the majority of studies rooted in segmented assimilation theory, Mexican immigrants exist on the bottom tier of these resource/reception/success hierarchies (Fernandez-Kelly 2008, Rumbaut and Portes 2001, Telles and Ortiz 2008).

Segmented assimilationists argue that there are three main reasons why the children of Mexicans are the ‘ideal-type case’ of those expected to undergo downward assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001); the new hour-glass economy; their ‘downtrodden’ communities; and their ‘brownness’. Firstly, whilst their under-educated and often undocumented parents are more willing to take any unskilled job they can find upon arrival - those characterised by high levels of manual labour, long hours, and low wages - their children are apparently less so. Influenced by ‘their U.S. acquired aspirations’ and consumption norms, second-generation Mexicans may be more likely to aim for higher status jobs, although Portes and Zhou question whether their careers can live up to such expectations (1993: 85). They posit that economic restructuring in the past few decades has ‘reduced the opportunities for incremental upward mobility through well-paid blue-collar positions’ (*ibid*), which previous immigrants would have enjoyed, a shift also acknowledged by Rouse (1991). Instead, ‘the advent of the new hour-glass economy confronts the immigrant children with a cruel choice: either acquire the college, and other advanced degrees needed to move into the professional/managerial elite, or else accept the same menial jobs to which the first generation was consigned’ (Waldinger and Feliciano, 2004: 377). Because Mexican parents are viewed by deficit perspectives as unlikely to win the ‘race against a narrowing middle [that] demands that [they] accumulate sufficient resources to allow their children to effect the passage’ upwards, assimilation for their children may not be into mainstream values and

expectations but ‘into the adversarial stance of impoverished groups confined to the bottom of the new economic hourglass’ (Portes and Zhou 1993: 83-85).

Such a reactive positioning is understood to develop for young U.S.-born Mexicans in the following way:

Seeing their parents and grandparents confined to humble menial jobs and increasingly aware of discrimination against them by the white mainstream, U.S.-born children of earlier Mexican immigrants readily join a reactive subculture as a means of protecting their sense of self-worth. Participation in this subculture then leads to serious barriers to their chances of upward mobility because school achievement is defined as antithetical to ethnic solidarity...The principal protection of *Mexicanos* against this type of assimilation lies in their strong identification with home-country language and values, which brings them closer to their parents' cultural stance.’

ibid. 89

An adversarial stance of this kind connects to the second ‘vulnerability’ of Mexican children who are first generation immigrants themselves - what Portes and Zhou understand as the ‘downtrodden’ co-ethnic communities’ that they live in. Because newly arrived immigrants tend to settle in existing urban co-ethnic neighbourhoods, they are in close contact with native-born Mexican identifying youth. This meeting is seen to be problematic for two reasons; firstly, because it ‘leads to the identification of the condition of both groups - immigrants and the native poor - as the same in the eyes of the majority (1993: 83); and secondly because new arrivals may be exposed to the ‘sub-culture developed by marginalized native youths to cope with their own difficult situation’ (*ibid.*). The process of peer socialisation into such disenfranchisement can render weaker or effectively block well-meaning parental plans for their children’s intergenerational mobility.

The final and perhaps most pernicious ‘vulnerability’ is the seeming inevitability of race and ethnic background to become a barrier to assimilation. In the process of border-crossing into a new socio-cultural environment, which Portes and Zhou suggest will be ‘marked by different values and prejudices’ from one’s place of origin, physical attributes such as skin

colour 'become redefined as a handicap' (1993: 83). They place such racialisation in a comparative historical context:

Descendants of European immigrants who confronted the dilemmas of conflicting cultures were uniformly white...their skin colour reduced a major barrier into the American mainstream. For this reason, the process of assimilation depended largely on individual decisions to leave the immigrant culture behind and embrace American ways. Such an advantage obviously does not exist for the...mestizo children of today's immigrants.

1993: 76

Segmented assimilation posits that Mexican immigrant children 'cannot escape' the 'enduring physical differences' afforded to them by their brownness (Portes, Fernandez-Kelly and Haller 2005: 1006). Instead, discrimination as a result of those differences 'throw[s] a barrier in the path of occupational mobility and social acceptance. Immigrant children's identities, their aspirations, and their academic performance are affected accordingly' (*ibid*). Combining their racial 'handicap' with their 'downtrodden' and 'reactive' senses of self, and placed in the context of a hostile educatory and economic system, it is understandable that young Mexicans, according to segmented assimilation theorists, are anticipated to 'stagnate' (Zhou 2001) on the bottom rung of the assimilation ladder for generations to come.

Despite the tendency of media, public and political debates to reproduce similar narratives, the degree to which 'The Problem' of the adaptation of the children of Mexican immigrants (Tienda and Haskins 2011: 4) manifests itself in reality however, is disputed (Alba et al. 2011). Instead, alternative and more nuanced analyses of post-migrant communities – those that foreground notions of immigrant *transnationalism* – have emerged, and the next section explores the implications of these for thinking about Mexicans in the U.S.

2.2.2 Immigrant transnationalism

International migration certainly raises questions in both sending and receiving countries around conceptions of national identity, difference and belonging (Bartram et al. 2014). It also necessarily involves change and adaptation to a new environment for migrants

themselves, and a degree of physical, social and perhaps emotional distancing from their home countries (Castles et al. 2014). Segmented assimilationist approaches to theorising post-migratory trajectories in the U.S. however, offer only a limited account of how such changes play out in the lives of migrants because they continue to rely on the very assumptions for which they critique their theoretical predecessors. That is, firstly, that there is a unified, measurable goal of an economic, educational and personal position/status/identity in the American ‘mainstream’ that immigrants need to achieve in order to be seen to have assimilated successfully. Secondly, that there is one (correct) linear pathway that immigrants should follow toward this end goal. And thirdly, that assimilation to such a mainstream is a process that immigrants and their families wish to, and indeed are permitted to, attempt to undergo in the first place.

Since the early 1990’s, scholars critiquing segmented assimilation theories have increasingly shown that these processes of adaptation are often never complete or exhaustive, and that they are certainly not incompatible with - or counter-intuitive to - the ongoing performance of identities informed by pre-migratory life (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Rouse 1991). Instead, the theory of *transnationalism* has gained support because it grants salience to the myriad connections that migrants and their children sustain with where they have come from (Faist 2000a, Phoenix and Bauer 2012) - simultaneous to their learning about, adaptation towards, and integration into a new and ever-evolving society that they are helping to shape (Glick Schiller et al. 1995, Jackson et al. 2004). Scholars have theorised how these ongoing exchanges between migrants, their fellow diaspora members and those family and community members who have stayed at home function to create ‘transnational social fields’ across nation state boundaries (Basch et al. 1994). They suggest that in these spaces, a state of ‘in-betweenness’ (Crang et al. 2003) may be normalised such that migrants gain the potential to employ cultural, social and economic capital fostered in more than one place (Plüss 2013). Levitt and Glick Schiller for example, present the ‘migrant experience as a kind of pivot which while anchored, pivots between a new land and transnational incorporation’ (2004: 1011) – although Waldinger argues that this is a ‘purely descriptive statement, lacking a framework to explain which ‘migrants manage that pivot,’ how they do so, under what conditions, with what success, and for how long’ (2013: 762).

Indeed, whilst the shift towards theorising the potentialities of such migrant ‘simultaneity’ (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) might respond to some of the rigidity of traditional theories of migrant adaptation, proponents of transnationalism have also been challenged to better evidence the tangible *practices* that constitute transnationalism in the emotional and social lives of migrants (Boccagni 2012, Crang et al. 2003, Kearney 1995, Kivisto 2001, Waldinger 2013). That is, they continue to ‘need to establish the *reality* of transnational social spaces’ on the ground, and how these are sustained in the everyday (Faist 2000b: 196. Emphasis added).

As Smith reassures, ‘research has begun to attend to the *emplacement* of mobile, subjects and the *embodiment* of their everyday practices and mobilities’ (2005: 235. Emphases added), and part of this refocusing has been to acknowledge that transnational linkages are not static, but instead ‘dynamic’ processes that are manifested in both the home and host communities in variegated ways for individual people and families (Faist 2000b: 196). Cross-border connections may manifest themselves in ‘concrete’ behavioural expressions (Levitt and Waters 2002) such as ‘particularistic’ interactions between individual family members (Faist 2000a, Waldinger 2013). Or they may take on a more symbolic form through a broader collective identification around notions of a shared cross-border space (such as the U.S.-Mexico borderland) or a ‘homeland’ (such as Mexico) (Levitt and Waters 2002). The frequency and intensity of these connections has been shown to shift with length of time in the new country, and with generational status, along what Levitt frames as a ‘continuum’ of connectivity (2001).

In the years immediately after migration, for example, many migrants have been shown to maintain direct links to ‘home’ via telephone and email communication, return visits or by sending remittances (Panagakos and Horst 2006, Vertovec 2004). These have all been made relatively more accessible and affordable in recent years by increasingly globalised technology and travel, although the degree to which migrants may access these varies greatly due to individual financial resources and legal constraints (Benitez 2006, Diminescu 2008, Fairlie et al. 2006). As the years and generations pass and as migrants become more settled – socially, economically and residentially – their attention is likely to be increasingly ‘captured’ by the ‘*national* social fields’ they are immersed in (Soehl and Waldinger 2010: 1492, emphasis added). The ‘simultaneity’ characteristic of transnational social fields is also manifested then as a process of being ‘pulled in opposite directions by the ‘national social fields’ to which

they are attached' (Waldinger 2013: 761) – in this study's case by those based in the U.S. and in Mexico. Furthermore, the growing social differences between migrants and those at home, as well as between migrants and other co-ethnics who are more or less settled in the United States than they are, can engender pressures and questions for migrants around authenticity and group membership. As direct ties to the homeland diminish, transnational identifications may take a more symbolic form related to heritage shared amongst their fellow diaspora members with whom they have more in common (Alarcon et al. 2013).

Indeed, co-ethnic contact in the host country plays a crucial role in processes of identification and transnational connectivity, as Soehl and Waldinger explain:

Since migrants engaged in intense, ongoing cross-border connections will be the neighbours, friends or acquaintances of migrants engaged in more occasional or evanescent contacts, high densities of migrants with *varying* degrees of home-country connectedness can facilitate connections for any and all that might be interested.

2010: 1491 (Emphasis in original)

Therefore, transnational social fields can extend 'beyond the direct experience of migration into domains of interaction where individuals who do not move themselves maintain social relations across borders' (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1009). This kind of 'intradiasporic transnationalism' (Lee 2011) opens up an important possibility for the children of migrants who are born in the new country and do not necessarily have direct experience of, or connections to, the 'home' country of their own, as explored in more detail shortly. As such, places with high numbers of migrants are especially likely to operate as transnational social spaces, including in this case, the U.S.-Mexico borderland.

In fact, Rouse (1991), who within geography arguably laid the founding narrative of transnational social spaces and the ways in which communities and shared systems of meaning and identification can transcend national boundaries, did so by drawing upon the case of Mexican migration to the U.S., and focused his study on the border region. Border spaces like San Diego, California, the regional focus of this project, facilitate and fuel transnationalism since it is the very "local identifications and meaning systems' which sustain the possibilities of transnationalism' and hybridity (Smith 2001 cited in Yeoh et al 2003: 208)

– thereby highlighting the importance of the specificity of place. As such, the border region’s large resident Mexican population - with its myriad ongoing connections to Mexico and its related social, historical, economic, political and geographical characteristics – reproduce a *distinct* transnational border culture, especially when compared to Mexican migrant destinations in other parts of the country such as New York, hundreds of miles north of the border. It is to the specificities of the Mexican population living in this region, and its transnational practices, that this chapter now turns.

2.2.2.1 Mexican transnationalism in the U.S.- Mexico borderland

As described in the thesis introduction, migratory flows between Mexico and the U.S. are long-established. Mexicans make up the largest minority group in the U.S. and are spread across the country, but the high majority continue to arrive, settle and raise their families in traditional receiving communities in southern border states such as California and Texas (Massey et al. 2003).

In localities with long histories of settlement such as San Diego, myriad expressions of Mexican culture, language and identity are often very visible and normalised, all perpetually reinforced by the general *presence* of U.S.-living, Mexican-identifying people, and by the ongoing ‘replenishment’ of this population by more recent immigrants, as elaborated momentarily (Jiménez 2008, Jiménez 2010, Waters and Jiménez 2005). Common in these areas are shops selling Mexican produce, restaurants serving regional Mexican food, Spanish-language advertising signage, or public service officials communicating with customers in Spanish – all existing alongside their American English language counterparts as part of the mixed cityscape and consumer society (Davis 2001, Peñaloza 1994, Palerm 2000, Reese et al. 2008). Living in such a ‘frontier region’ (Faist 2000a) can therefore strengthen Mexicanness (of some kind) for those with any degree of Mexican heritage. Griswold de Castillo explains this ‘special dynamic’ for those living in San Diego, California:

Geographic proximity has constantly reinforced the ‘Mexicanidad’ of the barrios and *colonias*, not only through immigration but also through the influence of the media, tourism, and the establishment of binational friendship and family ties.

2007: 4

Processes of national, ethnic and social identification for Mexicans who live in the ‘mélange’ of the borderland are therefore complex (Nederveen Pieterse 2004). Chicana/a and border scholars have long been thinking in transnational terms to understand these identification processes for Mexicans living along the U.S.-Mexico border corridor (Pérez-Torres 2006). Arising in response to everyday and institutionalised racism as well as an exclusionary academia, Chicana/o scholars from the 1970’s onwards have tried to reframe the possibility of claiming degrees of both Mexicanness and Americanness as an emancipatory position – where pride and cultural sustenance rooted in one’s Mexican heritage should be compatible with getting on in terms of education and social mobility in the U.S (Alarcón 1990, Gonzalez 1980, Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981). They have argued that Mexican-Americans in the borderland have inherently ‘plural personalities’ (Anzaldúa 1987) because of their community’s socio-cultural and migratory legacies that straddle and interweave two nation states:

The U.S.-Mexican border *es una herida abierta* [an open wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it haemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture.

ibid.: 25

Griswold de Castillo more recently posits that ‘Mexican and Chicano communities have engaged in creative elaboration of a third space, a place that is uniquely their own’ (2007: 7). Construction of such a space happens through hybridisation – that is, over time and through everyday performances and iterations, ‘socio-cultural processes in which discreet structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects and practices’ (García Canclini 2005: xxv). Furthermore, not only does such a ‘mestizo world view’ acknowledge Mexican-Americans’ in-betweenness (or ‘Mestizaje’ – intermixture [Macias 2006]), but it actively embraces its ‘ambiguous labyrinthine identity as a cultural signature’ (Stavans 2001: 9). Similarly, a broader transnational approach also acknowledges and validates the ‘contradictions’ that migrants grapple with when everyday life is informed by two sets of attitudes, practices and place-based attachments – a reality that traditional theories of migration have tended to gloss over in their preoccupation with assimilation into the host society (Rouse 1991: 11).

In a border region characterised by such socio-cultural overlapping, processes of identification are complicated. National, racial and ethnic identifications are important to examine because they are key indicators of the degree to which Mexican migrants and their post-migrant families feel a sense of *belonging* in the United States, as well how strongly transnational (or cross-border) connections outside of the U.S. inform who they are.

There are a variety of labels that people of Mexican descent employ to identify themselves (Vila 1999 and 2003). ‘Mexican’ tends to refer to those born in Mexico but is also commonly used as shorthand for anyone with any degree of Mexican heritage (De Genova 2005). ‘Mexican-American’ often refers to someone who was born in the U.S. to Mexican parents (or for anyone in the 2nd-4th and onward generations) or it can be someone who is of mixed Mexican and American heritage (with one parent of each). In addition to national identity labels, people of Mexican descent may concomitantly refer to themselves using the pan-continent labels of ‘Latina/o’ or ‘Hispanic’ – which tend to be based on notions of shared language and similar ‘cultures’ – although scholars have critiqued how the use of such labels in public and policy domains can function to homogenise diverse groups of very different people (Oboler 1995). People of Mexican descent may also choose to ascribe to a more politicised identity of Chicana/Chicano or Xicana/Xicano that is rooted in exposing and contesting the institutionalised racism that Mexicans in the U.S. have experienced and continue to experience today, and also that foregrounds the self-determination of Chicano communities (Zavella 1993).

The ways in which people of Mexican descent *choose* to racially and nationally identify themselves operates in dialogue with broader *constraints* exacted by how they are subject to labelling and identification processes by others, most importantly by Anglo-American White society (Waters 1990). Experiences of identity choice (more freedom) and enforcement (less freedom) can be seen to exist along what Vasquez frames as a ‘racialization process continuum’ (2010: 51). Where someone of Mexican heritage is positioned on the scale and how they choose to identify from that social location depends on the interplay of a number of factors. These include but are not limited to: length of residency in the United States; generation; legal status; residential location; skin colour/phenotype; language; class; gender; and local, regional or national ‘controlling images’ (Collins 1991) or ‘dominant narratives’ about particular groups (Vila 2000 and 2005). The ‘Mexican-American’ label, for example,

tends to only be employed by the White mainstream to describe people of Mexican descent on the condition that class and race based markers of acceptability – such as lighter skin colour and middle-class residential and employment status - are displayed (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008). In addition, people of recent and ‘visible’ Mexican descent tend not to self-identify, and are rarely identified by other U.S. citizens as ‘un-hyphenated’ American – because of the ways that ‘American’ identity is conflated with Whiteness, as examined shortly (Flores-González 2002, Golash-Boza 2006).

As explored in more depth in Section 2.3.2 on Race and Ethnicity, ‘symbolic ethnicity’ – or the ability to choose and perform racial or ethnic identity as and when an individual wishes – is emblematic of White American experiences of race and ethnicity as ‘optional’, ‘voluntary’ or effectively ‘meaningless’ in the everyday (Vasquez 2010: 48), but such flexibility is not something necessarily available to Mexicans. Instead, people of Mexican descent find themselves having to navigate the ‘racialization process continuum’ because of the amplified salience of race in areas marked by high levels of immigration – such as the borderland – and the resultant reification *and* contestation of ethnic and racial boundaries between groups (Jiménez 2010).

Indeed, constructions of race, nationality and discourses around the adaptation of migrants rely on the durability of ‘sharp’ (Jiménez 2008) or ‘bright’ (Alba 2005) social boundaries between racial and ethnic groups as yardsticks against which post-migrants’ progress along their expected assimilatory trajectories – and the degree to which they do or do not now ‘belong’ - can be assessed (Barth 1969). The historical legacy of the colonisation of Mexicans and their territory (Acuña 1988, Cadaval 1996, Pérez-Torres 2006), as well as decades of racialisation and ‘nativist’ anti-immigrant sentiment directed at them have been shown to certainly play a large role in defining and up-keeping such boundaries (Chavez 2003). But more recently, scholars have suggested that ‘immigrant replenishment’ (Jiménez 2010) is perhaps the key contemporary factor responsible for both the reinforcement of racial group demarcations in the borderland, and yet also for the heightened ambiguity of expected, acceptable or desired identification for individuals. Immigration affects both inter-group and intra-group boundaries and relations, as Jiménez explains:

Although Mexican Americans exhibit significant signs of structural assimilation, the influx of Mexican immigrants sharpens the boundaries that circumscribe Mexican Americans [vis-à-vis White Anglo-Americans, for example] and creates boundaries that slice through the Mexican-origin population.

2008: 1530

In terms of inter-group boundaries, as noted above, immigration heightens the salience of race in the region because of the continual arrival and evolving presence of ‘different’, non-White Others. In recent decades, there has been a growing backlash in California against immigration – predominantly amongst White Americans, although as described momentarily, also amongst more established Mexican-heritage American citizens – manifested in xenophobic rhetoric around ‘illegal’ immigration in the media, and racially-motivated incidents of verbal and physical abuse. Because Mexicans are the largest minority group in the region, and have traditionally been the main immigrant group, anyone who fits a particular racialised and classed template – based on phenotype (brown/dark skin), language (Spanish or indigenous dialect speaking), or general appearance (appearing ‘poor’ or wearing labourer’s clothes, for example) – may be coded variously as Mexican, as a relatively recent immigrant, and perhaps as ‘illegal’, even if they are none of these (Ochoa 2004). Being labelled as ‘Mexican’ in this light is decidedly negative, because of the pejorative ‘dominant narratives’ associated with Mexican immigrants in the region – that they are lazy, dirty, social benefits abusers, job stealers, and in the most recent phase of anti-immigrant rhetoric, carriers of disease (Rivera-Mills 2000, Vila 2003 and 2005). This hostility is experienced directly by recent immigrants themselves, but is also problematic for anyone who could mistakenly be coded as ‘illegal’ in such a way, including Mexican-origin people who have lived in the United States for a number of years or generations, and who are legal residents or American citizens (De Genova 2005).

In response to such racism by association, scholars have observed that some more established Mexicans increasingly wish to distance themselves from new arrivals, and delineate boundaries between themselves and other, less ‘acceptable’ types of Mexicans – thereby resulting in intra-group tensions (Gutiérrez 1995, Rivera-Mils 2000). Non-immigrant Mexicans may take care to mark themselves as ‘legal’ and more ‘American’, and therefore as

'belonging', through class-based symbols of social mobility like clothing, cars or residential neighbourhood, or through the performance of competencies, such as speaking English, in public places that are 'read' as American and where there is a high presence of White Americans (Vila 2000). Children have also been noted to organise themselves into particular friendship groups at school that can reflect similar generational, citizenship and language status (Sabatier 2008), such that American-born Mexican-heritage children and young people distinguish themselves from the newly arrived (Bettie 2003). In some cases, Mexican-Americans have been heavily involved in anti-immigration movements, or become employees in ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) to try to restrict the number of Mexican arrivals who they perceive to present a threat to their hard-earned, increasingly established way of life in California (Pulido 2007). Having said this, scholars have illustrated how intra-group solidarities also arise in response to such expressions of racism and discrimination (Leitner and Strunk 2014), as exemplified in the ways that the Mexican-American community rallied round to support the immigrant 'detainees' noted in the thesis introduction.

In addition, scholars have evidenced, contrary to assimilationist perspectives that promote the discarding of ethno-cultural heritage, that many people of Mexican descent positively experience the ways in which their Mexicanness is strengthened by living in the borderland and partially fuelled by the ongoing replenishment of the broader Mexican community (López 2008). In particular, they have shown how collective mobilisation of communities, extended families or kin groups can bolster individual people's abilities to contest and ameliorate the effects of racism, or cope with the difficulties of undocumented life, for example (Talavera et al. 2010, Zolniski 2006). Furthermore, in the last decade or so, and in response to deficit perspectives, scholars have tried to shed more light on the ways in which the children and grandchildren of immigrants, that is, the second and third (and subsequent) generations, experience life in the borderland in both empowering as well as negative ways (and everything in between), and especially, in *transnational* ways.

2.2.3 Second generation Mexicans and simultaneity

Explorations of the transnational practices of Mexican-origin people living in the Mexico-U.S. borderland have tended to focus on the social, economic and migratory

interconnectivity of *adult* migrant workers. Despite broad acknowledgement that the reunification of families is a key driver of migration, and that many migrants, in putting roots down, have children in the host country (Chamberlain 1995, Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004), until the last decade or so little attention had been paid to the ways in which children and young people may also contribute to the construction of transnational social spaces. As Orellana et al. explained, ‘research on the transnational family, household, and intimate relations assume that adults are the key social actors; children, with a few important exceptions (Olwig 1999; Soto 1987) are largely invisible’ (Orellana et al. 2001: 573). One reason for this omission could be that scholars presumed that connections to other places and homelands would be fairly limited to the first generation of migrants, and that children of immigrants, having been born in a new country, would be less likely to develop or maintain cross-border connections of their own or be strongly influenced by communities and cultures left behind (Kasinitz et al 2008, Levitt 2009).

More recently however, scholars have shown how children and young people also develop and sustain transnational attachments, and experience complicated processes of identity construction in the transnational social spaces in which they live – even down to the third, fourth and further generations. Levitt argues that it is inevitable for children who live within families with connections to ‘other’ people and places, to be socialised in such a way that identifications with, and connections to, these others become to varying degrees their own:

When children are brought up in households that are regularly influenced by people, objects, practices and know-how from their ancestral homes, they are socialised into its norms and values and they learn how to negotiate its institutions. They also form part of strong social networks.

2009: 1225

In the same way that migrants themselves (the first generation) engage in transnational practices to varying degrees, frequencies, intensities and ends, it follows that so too do young people of the ‘1.5’, second and third generations (Levitt 2003, Levitt and Waters 2002, Wessendorf 2013). This is because each household, family, and local post-migrant community context will be characterised by different flows of ‘people, money, labor, goods,

information, advice, stories, languages, care and love' (Sánchez 2007a: 260). Furthermore, whilst some young people may pick up their transnational cues from their parents, through vehicles such as family stories or particular expectations around contact with extended family in Mexico, dealt with shortly, others proactively and innovatively contribute to existing transnational social fields on their own terms, or construct their own independent connections. As Olwig (1999) confirms, children and young people play a 'pivotal' role in the production of transnational social fields, but in perhaps a different way to adult migrants and community members. In addition, Orellana et al. have demonstrated 'how the presence and actions of children may help families stay connected across [national] borders' (2001: 573). This can work in two ways: parental desire to instil within their children knowledge of and connection to a country and culture in which they no longer live can function to strengthen such connections for the whole family; and young people in establishing their own links with cousins in Mexico via the internet, for example, can reignite familial connections that may have waned at their parents' generational level.

Exploring young people's transnational ties is important because of the profound role they play in their inevitable (albeit variegated) experiences of acculturation – or the 'meeting of cultures and the resulting change' (Sam and Berry 2006: 1). Listening to and validating the connections that help young people develop their Mexican ethnic identities in the borderland is crucial for understanding their processes of socialisation, their everyday interactions with their co-ethnic and host culture peers, and ultimately 'who' this growing demographic are becoming (Berry 2006, Matsunaga et al. 2010). In fact, scholars have shown how adolescence is a critical period for acculturation (French et al. 2006, Phinney 2003). Whilst childhood tends to be marked by a period of affirmation, psychological attachment, and the somewhat taken for granted *belonging* in an ethnic community (Berry 2004, Phinney 1990), adolescence can bring a time of 'exploration' and iteration borne out of cultural meetings and processes of Othering (Hecht et al. 2005). It is during this time of negotiation that young people increasingly experience their 'home' culture and norms as different from the mainstream, and they must consider what both mean for them personally (Berry et al. 2006, Sam 2006). This is further complicated in a border space where there are heightened incidences of cultural intermixture and population replenishment, and also potentially stronger discourses of racism, hostility or pressures to Americanise (Kulis et al. 2007). Having said this, exploring and connecting to *both* of one's 'home' cultures, need not be wholly problematic – many

young Mexican Americans often ‘endorse’ their bicultural orientation, and as they get older are keen to develop more of an awareness of their ethnic heritage, at the same time as they engage with and perform host country socio-cultural norms and narratives of identity (Matsunaga et al. 2010, Williams and Adams 2013).

Kasinitz et al. in their ‘New York Second Generation Study’ (NYSGS) highlight this kind of ‘cultural creativity’, or the capability to mix norms and narratives from American society as well as their Mexican parents and co-ethnic communities (2008), as a valuable resource for young people in forming their identities. They also highlight the potential ‘advantage the second generation has over natives in being able to draw from multiple frames of reference and cultural traditions to fashion strategies to deal with issues that confront young adults’ (Alba et al. 2011: 764).

Because of their generational positioning, however, young people – perhaps even more so than the first generation who have actually been *mobile*, and in physically migrating may be perceived to have more of a claim to conceptions of ‘embodied transnationalism’ (Dunn 2009) – may find themselves having to respond to questions and confusions around belonging, authenticity, degrees of cultural knowledge and the right to claim some kind of a homeland-based identity (Lee 2008). Engaging in transnational practices may be a conscious strategy to negotiate some of these complexities and prove, display or develop particular attachments to their fellow Mexican diaspora members or extended communities who remain in the Mexican homeland.

The second generation’s transnationalisms take many forms – from tangible practices to more intangible emotional ties that will be explored shortly. Drawing upon her work with second generation Tongans in Australia, for example, Lee suggests that in addition to direct activities, such as being in telephone contact with grandparents who remain in Mexico, young people may also engage in ‘intradiasporic’, ‘indirect’ and ‘forced’ transnationalism (2011: 295). As this section will now detail, Mexican-heritage youth in the U.S. engage in all of these, although perhaps to a lesser extent undergo forced transnationalism which occurs when children are ‘sent back’ to the homeland, possibly against their will (perhaps even if they have never been there before and do not speak the language) (Soto 1987). Some scholars have noted incidences of parents employing threats of such ‘transnational disciplining’ (Orellana

et al. 2001) if they deem their children ‘at risk’ of getting into trouble in the U.S., although whether or not these threats actually materialise is another matter (Matthei and Smith 1998, Menjívar 2002). However, forced transnationalism for Mexican-origin young people may be more likely to manifest itself in the deportation (or threat of deportation) of those who are undocumented (Boehm 2008, Dreby 2012). A number of high-profile cases have emerged in recent years where youth who were brought by their parents to the U.S. as children and who grew up there (the 1.5 generation), have been deported ‘back’ to Mexico – despite perhaps not having been there for many years, not speaking Spanish, and not having any remaining family connections to rely upon for support upon arrival in an essentially ‘foreign’ or unknown Mexico (Gonzalez 2011, Zimmerman 2011).

Intradiasporic forms of transnationalism are the activities and shared forms of meaning that young women cultivate in the U.S. between themselves and their fellow diaspora members – and are especially interesting to thinking about given how significant and established the Mexican diasporic population is in Southern California. These ties are not necessarily bound to the ‘cultural hearth’ (Voigt-Graf 2004) of the Mexican homeland in any *direct* way but their performance still functions to reproduce their Mexicanness and their transnational identities, as Lee explains:

Intradiasporic transnationalism, the ties maintained across different diasporic populations, can occur independently of the home-host connections that are the primary focus of transnational studies. Some members of those diasporic populations do not engage in any direct transnational ties at all, yet their indirect involvement through practices such as contributing to family remittance pools...ensures that they remain enmeshed in transnational webs of connection, both intradiasporic and with the homeland...

2008: 295-6

As I will explore momentarily, intradiasporic forms of transnationalism often centre on Spanish language usage and on the construction and repetition of ‘meta-narratives’ about what it means to be Mexican in the borderland (Sánchez 2007a). But other more discrete or tangible examples of young people’s transnationalism can include their usage of email, video

chat such as Skype, social media and social networking websites to keep in touch with people in the homeland and their fellow diaspora members (Parham 2005), or what Lee calls ‘cyber-transnationalism’ (2008). Young people might also convey and receive ‘transnational messages’ as part of the flow of information from the U.S. to Mexico, and vice versa (Brittain 2002). Information and advice they might share could include how to navigate the U.S. education system (based on their experience) or how to get the right kind of visa, resulting in social capital that their Mexican family and kin networks might employ in the future if they too choose to move northwards. In addition, depending on their age and employment status, young people may also send money, goods or gifts to other Mexicans, or they may contribute to their family’s household economies and indirectly contribute to remittances. At the same time, the second generation may feel increasingly less responsibility to contribute to such flows, or be less concerned about the views or expectations of the broader community, for example, around gossip and status tied into the proper performance of particular Mexican identities (Lee 2007).

Similarly to what Batainah (2008) found amongst Palestinian and Lebanese Australians, second generation Mexicans often participate in a range of religious and cultural practices within the broader ‘ethnified community’ (Gowricharn 2009). Young people may take part in social clubs organised for and by post-migrant communities that are rooted in promoting pride in one’s ethnic identity, such as Ballet Folklórico groups (traditional dancing), youth groups run by neighbourhood cultural centres, Chicana student organisations at high school and college or political movements (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Church or religious communities may also offer young people a space in which to connect with each other, and shared symbols of specifically Mexican Catholicism, such as *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, Mexico’s patron saint, may be appropriated by young people as a sign of their Mexicanness, and displayed in the jewellery and clothes they wear, for example.

Young people may also experience direct, face-to-face contact with their extended family and fictive kin who continue to live in Mexico. They may either do this by hosting them as visitors (or indeed as recently arrived migrants) in their own U.S. homes, or some young people with the financial and legal ability are also able to engage in return visits to Mexico. Return trips are important because young people learn about a ‘different’ and yet familiar place, and they experience a direct ‘acquisition of local community knowledge’ (Sánchez 2007b: 492). Young

people can employ these transnational ‘funds of knowledge’ (González et al. 2013) to realise greater ‘cultural flexibility’ and authenticity in their Mexican communities in both the home and host country (Sánchez 2007b). Additionally, in contrast to using transnational disciplining as a threat, parents have also been shown to offer their children the opportunity to visit Mexico as a reward for good behaviour or school results – such as visiting Mexico exists as a positive, enjoyable and valued process (Sánchez 2007a).

Young people’s transnational ties go further than tangible activities though – they are also made up of intangible, emotional, and deeply felt relationships with people, and real or imagined places, all of which are profoundly influential for identity construction and a sense of belonging. Such ‘emotional transnationalism’ validates the affective connections young people develop to their parents’ homelands, perhaps without any direct contact to that place, as Wolf found with Filipino youth in the U.S. (2002). Emotional connections to and knowledge about the homeland (gleaned from stories or visits) can be so strong that young people born in the host country may even feel the desire to move ‘home’, despite never having lived there before, as scholars have also shown in the case of ‘return migrants’ (Christou 2006 and 2009, Plaza 2002, Potter 2005). These ties may be built through exploring genealogy (Parham 2008), and the reproduction of shared family identities (Falicov 2005) rooted in stories, symbols and cultural motifs, and ‘meta-narratives’ of family and community history (Sánchez 2007a).

As Pahl explains, immigrant families’ narratives may be “‘held” within artefacts and stories’ and they can be ‘linked to everyday life and conditions, while also spanning time frames and geographical spaces, allowing in longer term narratives of loss, displacement and migration’ (2004: 356-7). Certain repeated family stories become part of the shared family history that young people root their identities in – narratives that evolve and are internalised through iteration (Hymes 1996). Indeed, young people’s participation in, and reminiscing about, transnational family reunions, community celebrations, or shared cultural motifs such as typical ‘Mexican’ festivals, for example, and the warmth and enjoyment they may receive from these moments, constitutes an important part of post-migrant identity (Sutton 2004). The second generation may also develop transnational sensibilities relating to the ongoing salience of migration narratives in their lives, for example, particularly around educational and employment goals or expectations. As Chamberlain affirms, ‘although the original

motivations of migrants maybe "history" for their children, nevertheless the dreams and aspirations which were forged by them may retain a dynamic, translated and transformed by subsequent generations' (1995: 255). Indeed, García found in her study of Mexican-American second generation women that 'their parents' stories of immigration – their *memorias* of Mexico – left their imprint on the second generations' palimpsests of identity: layers of (re)memberings of Mexico, both real and imagined. Their family's memories of Mexico became a family heirloom, an intangible treasure' (2004: 44).

Young women not only 'inherit' narratives and memories, but they also construct their own, for example, from their own trips to Mexico, or their own interactions with family members who have visited them. Sánchez posits that for young people 'oral histories of humor, sacrifice, migration and religion are important themes within their own life narratives as well as the meta-narratives they construct about Mexican transnational families' (2007a: 276). They employ such narratives of belonging, experience and knowledge for a variety of reasons, including retelling or trading stories amongst their Mexican-American peer groups to gain cultural capital rooted in displays of Mexican authenticity (Sánchez 2007a). Young women's ownership of such narratives and a sense of positive grounding in a Mexican community can be empowering for them, at the same time as they experience acculturation towards mainstream American ways of life in their Southern Californian schools and towns. Importantly, they can also offer young women a powerful 'counter-text' (Aronowitz and Giroux 1991) that contests pejorative or detractive discourses of Mexicanness in the region – those that claim that post-migrant Mexicans do not belong in the U.S., that devalue the Mexican family or its culture, or that pressure children to relinquish their Spanish language, for example. Bishop explains the significance of such 'counter stories':

'When a group has been marginalized and oppressed, the cultural functions of story can take on even greater significance because storytelling can be seen as a means to counter the effects of that marginalization and oppression on children'

2003: 25

Therefore, whilst Portes and Zhou interpret an established co-ethnic community as a hindrance to young Mexicans' processes of acculturation and mobility, going as far as to say

that ‘the existence of a large but downtrodden co-ethnic community may be even less desirable than no community at all’ (1993: 87), there is much evidence to show that pride and involvement in their Mexican communities can offer a valuable source of positive social and cultural capital for young people to draw upon. Family, kin, friends and the wider neighbourhood, for example, have the potential to act as a protective buffer to discrimination that young people may face in the public sphere. Therefore, a deliberate choice to ascribe in some way to an ‘in group’ identity such as Mexican, does not have to result in a negative ‘racial-ethnic self schema’ (Altschul et al. 2008), but it can be conscientiously attached to a more positive conception of Mexicanness rooted in ambition and communal support.

A key aspect of the emotional and practical transnational practices that young women engage in is language. Second generation young women may choose (or be expected by their families and communities) to learn and develop linguistic and cultural repertoires to strategically perform their Mexicanness (using Spanish), and at other times, their Americanness (using English). Raising their children as ‘authentically’ Mexican by teaching them Spanish is often seen as an important role of transnational Mexican parents and can be a measure by which the broader homeland communities judge the degree to which a post-migrant family are still in touch with their heritage (Farr 2006, Guerra 1998). Post-migrant homes have been seen to commonly be spaces where home languages such as Spanish or indigenous dialects are spoken, but in transnational social spaces such as the borderland, interactions in local co-ethnic neighbourhood spaces such as shops are likely to also be conducted in the home language (Shankar 2008). At the same time, language is hotly contested in public and policy debates about the integration of migrant communities. English (positive/valued) or Spanish (negative/devalued) usage is often used as a measure to through which to police, herald or lament children’s educational development – or indeed to try to coerce them into acculturation to American norms via the English language. As such, more formal public spaces such as school or administrative offices are likely to be constructed as English-speaking spaces, resulting in bilingual young people code-switching between these spaces and according to who they’re speaking with (Lam 2004).

The second generation’s experience of language may be further complicated because they may be more likely than their parents to spend the everyday in predominantly English-speaking spaces (such as school, a place with an explicit emphasis on acculturation) (Phinney

et al. 2001). Growing disparities between Spanish and English competencies of parents and children can then occur, and this may result in distancing and alienation between the generations (Qin 2006). Tensions can arise when children acculturate at a faster rate than their parents, or lose their home language, leading to possible gaps in communication and also possibly socio-cultural understanding or empathy – what Portes and Rumbaut have termed ‘dissonant acculturation’ (2001). Having said this, it is also possible that young people’s experiences of the ‘constant flux of people from the country of origin bring...[them] into contact with more speakers of their home language, thus strengthening their use of it...in resistance to the subtractive policies and practices of many schools and classrooms’ (Sánchez 2007a: 260). Therefore, in a similar way to how emotional transnationalism can be experienced in an empowering way, so too can young people’s ongoing development of their bilingual, bicultural hybrid positionings – ‘gradually learn[ing] American ways while remaining embedded, at least in part, in the ethnic community’ (Waters et al. 2010: 1169).

This section has examined the literatures around post-migratory experiences as they have been theorised through assimilation, and more recently, transnationalism. It has made the case for a transnational perspective as a relevant and valuable lens through which to explore the lives of second generation Mexicans in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. This chapter now turns to theories of identity and intersectionality to better understand how young Mexican women may be constructing their identities in such a unique spatial and temporal context.

2.3 Identities and Intersectionality

As the previous section has started to establish, identifying or being identified variously as young, female and Mexican in the U.S. results in a differentiated frame of reference and set of life experiences from someone older, male and White American, for example. This section now explores how identities have been theorised so as to understand how such a positioned construction of selfhood amongst this study’s young women may take place within the transnational context of the Southern Californian borderlands.

Who we feel we ‘are’ and who we are perceived to ‘be’ by others are critical constituents of our social selves. But our ‘identities’ are complicated: they are not fixed, static or inherent, but are socially-constructed, fluid, and their performance is an ongoing and evolving process; they are relational and contextual because they are formulated vis-à-vis other people and

according to the particular spaces in which we find ourselves; and they encompass multiple and intersecting strands of identification along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, and dis/ability, for example (Hopkins 2010).

Such an understanding of the fluid and agentic nature of identity *performance* has emerged in recent decades in conjunction with broader post-structuralist, postcolonial and anti-essentialist interrogations of the apparent fixity of societal structures of power and normative labelling based on biologically or culturally deterministic stereotypes (Butler 1990, Pratt 2004). Geographers especially have examined the flexible and mutually constitutive relationships between identity and place, particularly in a contemporary context of heightened international migration, global connectivity and cross-cultural meetings – processes that inevitably engender both possibilities and questions around national/social/cultural belonging, and indeed identification (Massey, 2005, McDowell 1997, Taylor 2010). Scholars have explored these shifting possibilities for identities, loyalties and citizenships through lenses of hybridity (Bhabha 1994, Garcia Canclini 2005), third space (Routledge 1996, Soja 1996), and cosmopolitanism (Beck 2004, Cosgrove 2003, Harvey 2000).

However, scholars have also recently sought to temper some of the enthusiasm around these - at times romanticised - notions of unbridled fluidity, hybridity and freedom of choice in identification, refocusing instead on both the situatedness and translocality of subjectivities constructed within and across evolving structures of gendered, raced, and classed oppression and enablement (Acheraiou 2011, Anthias 2001, Kraidy 2005, Pieterse 2001, Prabhu 2007). They acknowledge that lived experience continues to matter, and whilst fluid to a degree, people must forge their individual identifications in dialogue with dominant narratives or 'controlling images' (Collins 1999) that re-inscribe difference to Others (Kobayashi 1997). Furthermore, the politics of identity and the empowering group-based solidarities that emerge amongst people who share similar identifications remain important, diverse as these groups are from within (Young 1990). In fact, such 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1991) may hold even more salience *because* of the growing instability and fragility of previously assumed entities such as 'the nation' (Hall 1992). It is important to note that these complexities of identification – notably the *betweenness* of the freedom of hybridity and the requirement to be grounded in everyday interactions – mirror those acknowledged by

transnationalism, as explored above, which validates such messiness and simultaneity as post-migrants traverse, and (re)connect across, diverse social spaces.

Whilst the degree to which people may perform hybrid identities is debatable, it is now broadly accepted that the varying attachments, embodiments, and identifications people experience necessarily *intersect* with, and inform, each other (Anthias 2013, Carbin and Edenheim 2013, Crenshaw 1989, Davis 2008). As Brah and Phoenix explain:

‘We regard the concept of ‘intersectionality’ as signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands.’

2004: 76

Scholars have demonstrated, for example, the parallels between constructions of gender and race since ‘both involve predicting social behaviours on the basis of allegedly fixed biological or cultural characteristics’ (Castles et al. 2014: 62) and both operate as the ‘foundations for systems of power and inequality’ (Anderson and Collins 2007: 5) – or what the Combahee River Collective frame as ‘interlocking systems of oppression’ (1977). Indeed, Essed argued that racism and sexism ‘narrowly intertwine and combine under certain conditions under one, hybrid phenomenon. Therefore it is useful to speak of *gendered racism* to refer to the racist oppression of black women as structured by racist and ethnicist perceptions of gender roles’ (Essed 1991: 31, emphasis in original).

However, hooks reminds that whilst an intersectional approach in the social sciences might now seem ‘commonplace’ and common sense, this has not always been the case – indeed, she has been a key advocate of the necessity for an exclusionary academia to grant more space, inclusion, attention to those writing from the ‘margins’ (2000). As Baca Zinn observed in 1980, for example, ‘intuitively, it makes sense to say that what it means to be a woman would vary according to whether one is Chicana, black, or white. However, the assumptions underlying this common sense notion have not been examined, nor has it been conceptually

specified' (1980: 18). In the last three decades Black, Asian and Chicana feminist scholars especially have fought hard to bring their critical analyses of the specificities of raced, classed and gendered bodies into dialogue with what was perceived as an alienating and universalist White 'mainstream' feminist arena that sought to speak for all (Collins 1986, Crenshaw 1991, McCall 2005, Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981). Nowadays, intersectionality 'provides a concise shorthand for describing ideas that have, through political struggle, come to be accepted in feminist thinking' (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006: 187) but which still need to be highlighted and interrogated in studies such as these. It is to the intersections of gender, race and ethnicity, and youth in the lives of young Mexican women that this section now turns.

2.3.1 Gender

Gender is not fixed or innate, but is a social construct, a process, a dialogue. As Butler attests, it is *performed*:

"There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; ... identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.'

1990: 25

Through regulated and repetitive patterns of labelling by ourselves and others, gender identity constructions are normalised and popularised (Butler 1990), which is why they can sometimes appear fixed, inherent or unquestionable (Bondi and Davidson 2003). Conceptions and performances of gender change over time and across space but have traditionally in Western patriarchal societies been associated with seemingly fixed biological or physiological sex divisions of male and female (Johnson 2008, Nightingale 2006) – although these can also be 'troubled' or rendered ambiguous (Bondi and Davidson 2003) – and also commonly tied into normative expectations of femininity and masculinity. As such, gender is a key tool in inscribing social difference – and inequality – between men and women and in Othering those 'queer' subjects who fail to, or choose not to, perform neatly prescribed notions of gender.

Feminist scholars have played a key role in developing and complicating our understandings of gender. From the 1970's onwards especially, they worked to lay bare the value-based

hierarchy that operates to legitimise women's subordination to men. They unpacked the socially constructed *spatial division of labour* enforced by patriarchy, for example, that renders certain spaces or social realms by/for/of men or women, and that attempts to impose appropriate behaviours and activities upon the men and women occupying their respective spaces (Massey 1984). They focused on breaking down the power-laden binaries that tied women and men in turn to the 'private' and the 'public' spheres, to 'passive' and 'active' ways of being, and to notions of disempowerment and empowerment (Duncan 1996). Scholarship also grappled with contesting masculinist theoretical and empirical analyses of society and space that had previously omitted, silenced or erased women's presence (Monk 1983, Rose 1993). McDowell contends that 'redefining geography to include 'women's issues' was one of the major achievements of the first stage of feminist geography. A whole range of new areas become admissable for investigation' (1992: 404).

With the advent in the 1990's of the cultural turn and post-structuralist theorisations of identities as unstable, socially-constructed, and yet as divisive and powerful as ever, feminists began to assert that scholarship could not just 'add women' to existing essentialising paradigms that favoured the historical and geographical narratives of (White) men, but instead that paradigmatic shifts were necessary to radically re-examine gender (and race and class) as inflecting all social processes, all representations, and all spaces (not just along traditional home/outside lines, for example) that people engage with, access and perform (Binnie 1997, Bondi 1992, Dwyer 2003, Johnson, 1990, McDowell 1993). Since the watershed moment of the launch of the *Gender, Place and Culture* journal in 1994 especially, feminist geographers have exposed and interrogated broader 'spatial politics of difference' and the ways in which 'space is central both to masculinist power and to feminist resistance' (Blunt and Rose 1994: 1). McDowell and Sharp explain the salience of space for the production of these gendered inequalities:

'Spatial relations and layout, the differences within and between places, the nature and form of the built environment, images and representations of this environment and of the 'natural' world, ways of writing about it, as well as our bodily place within it, are all part and parcel of the social constitution of gendered social relations and the structure and meaning of place. The spaces in which social relations occur affect the nature of those practices, who is 'in place' and who is 'out of place' and even who

is allowed to be there at all. But the spaces themselves in turn are constructed and given meaning through the social *practices* that define men and women as different and unequal.’

1997: 2-3 (emphasis added)

With such an emphasis on practice, and the *making* of space in particular ways, scholars have acknowledged that whilst identities are socially-constructed, fluid and not innate, people’s lived realities as well as popular conceptions of difference continue to matter. Through discourses of embodiment and corporeality, scholars have explored the implications of physically being in and moving through space, for example, and the ways in which particular bodies – such as young, female or Muslim bodies – are experienced and coded across different spaces (Davis 1997, Evans 2006, Longhurst and Johnston 2014, Mirza 2013).

Important work has also explored the ways in which masculinities are reproduced in varying contexts, and how male bodies are experienced relationally along race, class and sexuality lines (Berg and Longhurst 2003, Hopkins and Noble 2009, McDowell 2002, Nayak 2003) – thereby reaffirming the need for studies of ‘gender’ not to revolve primarily around the experiences of women, but to examine the ways in which men, as well as people who identify as queer or inter-sex, experience and perform gendered/ing processes (Connell 1995, O’Neill Gutierrez and Hopkins 2014). In a related vein, geographers have in recent years also interrogated the spatiality of sexuality as it intersects with gender (Brown 2012, Peake 2010). Whilst much work has focused on how lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer identities are formulated and differentiated across space (Binnie 2011, Podmore 2006, Taylor 2008), studies of sexuality also explore the performance of broader ‘sexual dissidence’ (Binnie and Valentine 1999) and complicate traditionalist and normative notions of heterosexuality (Attwood 2006, Hubbard 2000, Ward 2008). Particularly important for this study has been the examination of the use of discourses of sexuality to physically and emotionally control young women’s bodies, as well as that which illustrates the ways in which they contest such attempts and how they can instead be agentic in their performances of alternative and empowered sexualities (Dwyer 1999b, Harris 2004, Rydstrom 2006, Tan 2013) – developed upon shortly in the section on girlhood.

Also informing this study has been the ‘affective turn’ within geography, and its recognition not only of the important role of emotion in research (Bondi 2005), but also how bodily experiences of, and identity performances within, space are inherently affective processes (Ahmed 2010, Pile 2009). Debates around emotion and affect have been especially useful for theorising the ways in which young women from migrant families, for example, may perform both particular emotional identities in public or social spheres, and also find themselves experiencing deeper feelings tied into belonging, physiology, language, blood, roots, pride and shame provoked by bodily mobility to and from places of importance (Gorton 2007, Probyn 2005).

Literatures focusing on the gendered nature of im/mobilities and experiences of the urban, suburban, and rural have also enabled this study to think about how young Mexican women experience their Southern Californian localities (Cresswell and Uteng, 2008, Hanson 2010, Kern 2005, Nightingale 2006, Wright 2005). Feminist geographers have demonstrated the mutual constitution of gender and the sub/urban, particularly how women may experience public space affectively through anxieties and fear (Bondi and Rose 2003), or boldness and ‘spatial confidence’ (Koskela 1997). Gendered sub/urban experiences are also classed in that due to necessity working-class women may have less choice or flexibility about navigating safe or risky public spaces than their middle-class counterparts, and they may also have different conceptions of the safeness and riskiness of particular classed or racialised neighbourhoods or zones they know, trust, or believe they have a reason to fear (Pain 2001). Such nuances are salient in this study given the propensity for young women to be policed through gendered safety narratives (Green and Singleton 2007), and also because of the possibility of young Mexican women’s familial class positions necessitating their movement through isolated, dark and perceived dangerous public spaces during their journeys to and from home and school or night-time working shifts (Patel 2006). Furthermore, as Patel affirms, since ‘spatial issues such as mobility and access to public space are indicators of the status, power, and socioeconomic opportunities afforded to different groups in society’ (*ibid.*: 11), exploring mobilities is crucial to understand young women’s ability, permissibility to access, and feelings of belonging in particular public, semi-public/private and private spaces (Bondi 2005b, Garland and Chakraborti 2004, Nayak 2010).

In addition, a growing body of work on suburban geographies has been helpful to think through young women's experiences of more 'mundane', 'natural' or spatially spread out landscapes that may have been obscured by the focus on edgy 'urban' life that characterise much literature on youth, but also Mexican-American and other immigrant communities in the U.S. (Domosh 2014, Nayak 2010) Thinking through the gendered, classed and racialised nature of beaches, coastal spaces and lushly cultivated malls, for example, that characterise some of the 'rustic yet manicured' Californian surf towns that this project's participants live and go to school in has been useful - especially to understand how the marketing and selective consumption of a particular blonde 'all-American' middle-class beach-chic (strongly place-based) dream is at odds with the reality of many working-class White and Mexican families who live on the peripheries of these towns (McCarthy 2008, Palerm 2000, Short et al. 2007). Also useful have been analyses of the gendering of rural geographies (Garland and Chakraborti 2004, Little and Panelli 2003, Porter 2011, Woods 2010), since parts of San Diego North County are made up of semi-rural small-holdings where young women live with their agricultural worker parents. Social and familial rules about children and young people's freedom in rural areas tend to differ from urban areas, due to changing senses of rural-associated peace, nature (Nightingale 2006), and safety and urban-associated risk (for example, gang violence). Having said this, the potentially isolating nature of rural living raises questions again around women's gendered mobilities, work and necessity to travel (Carbó et al. 2013, Robson 2004, Worthen 2012).

Finally, and especially important for this study, I have engaged with the rich body of work that explores the ways in which gender is mutually constitutive of constructions of belonging, nation/hood, citizenship and migration (Sharp 1996, Yuval-Davis 1997). Gender influences migration and migration transforms constructions of gender and gendered relations – both in myriad ways (Chant and Radcliffe 1992). In relation to the former relationship, scholars have in recent decades charted the global feminisation of labour flows – the most common form of migration both globally and for Mexicans migrating to the U.S. (Castles et al. 2014). Women's migration should be understood as taking place within a broader context of neoliberal economic markets in both home and host countries, and the global flows of capital and services they are part of – changing employment sectors have resulted in growing male un(der)employment, and increasing work for women in unregulated service sector jobs in places like the U.S. (Carling 2005, Gills and Piper 2002). Indeed, whilst women's migration

tended to traditionally be seen to revolve around family reunification (where they followed ‘pioneer’ male partners who had migrated earlier), many more women are now migrating independently as economic migrants themselves (Donato et al. 2006). It is now also widely acknowledged that women are often key actors in the decision-making process about when, how and where to migrate (Bylander 2014, de Haas and Fokkema, 2010). Women have been shown to engage in complex, entrepreneurial and intimate migration networks, whereby they draw upon familial and kinship networks to facilitate both the migration journey itself and also the establishment of support networks upon arrival in the host country (Curran and Rivero-Fuentes 2003, Dannecker 2005). Furthermore, with the increasing difficulty for ‘unskilled’ migrants to obtain legal entry to countries such as the U.S., as well as the heightened securitisation of borders, women and their families increasingly rely upon clandestine networks of smugglers (*coyotes*) and other (at times exploitative) actors – thereby potentially experiencing gendered violence en-route (Krissman 2005).

Post-migratory experiences are also strongly gendered and their gendered nature can change over time (King et al. 2006), as Piper explains:

‘Although the bulk of both female and male migrants occupy the lowest jobs at the destination due to their migration status and skill level, gender inequalities frequently combine with those of race/ethnicity, and of being a non-national, to make many migrant women “triple disadvantaged”, and most likely to be over-represented in marginal, unregulated, and poorly paid jobs.’

2005: 2

Furthermore, women may have complicated and exclusionary relationships with the receiving state because of the ways in which social benefits, legal status and rights, for example, are granted or *not* – the latter resulting in greater risk of rights violations for women who work under the radar, such as in domestic services, but also in terms of their abilities to care for and educate their families (Grant 2005, Pe-Pua 2003). Having said this, there is much evidence that migration can result in positive and empowering change for women in terms of class positioning – such as earning potential and ability to send remittances – and also in terms of affective experiences in relation to feelings of independence and purpose (Gibson

et al. 2002, Hugo 2000). Post-migratory families may find that gender norms and roles shift, particularly because of women's employment, and partly perhaps because of different social institutions in the receiving country (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Cranford 2006). This may be manifested either in homes becoming more egalitarian, or where more traditional norms are re-inscribed and/or intensified as a reactionary attempt to preserve pre-migratory 'culture' or masculinist power that may be at threat (due to male un(der)employment, for example) (Jolly and Reeves 2005). Scholars have been careful to advise against culturally deterministic presumptions however, that with migration to the 'liberal' U.S., for example, women celebrate their 'hard-won' freedoms from the shackles of their patriarchal families and backward home countries (Castles et al. 2014) – firstly, Mexico is an evolving country where gender norms are undergoing adaption of their own accord, and also U.S. society is also arguably not as egalitarian as sometimes pronounced, since it too is organised through patriarchy (albeit a different form) (Impett et al. 2006, Williams and Adams 2013).

As this chapter has so far illustrated, social constructions of gender vary across time and space, and are strongly inflected with notions of race, particularly in relation to the embodied process of migration and resettlement in another society. This chapter will now turn to explore how race and ethnicity have been theorised in order to understand how processes of racialisation may be experienced by young women in the borderland.

2.3.2 Race and ethnicity

Race, in a similar way to gender, is a social construct that functions to maintain systems of power, oppression and control (Nagel 1994, Omi and Winant 1994). Conceptions of race do this by delineating racial group boundaries between people based on perceived differences in phenotype (appearance/observable traits) and biological and genetic origin (Barth 1969, Lamont and Molnár 2002). They also assume social and personal characteristics based on these physical markers of difference, and ascribe value to them to create a racial hierarchy in which people of different 'races' are more or less valuable, powerful and equal than others (Bonilla-Silva 2003, Collins 2000, Feagin 2001, Song 2004).

In the United States, the racial hierarchy is organised through a system of White supremacy such that Whiteness is privileged over non-Whiteness/Blackness/Brownness (Mills 1997, Trucios-Haynes 2000). This contemporary hierarchy is reproduced within a violent historical

context that is imbued with the enduring legacies of: the colonisation of North America by White British and European immigrants in the 16th century; the systematic enslavement of Black Africans in the 18th and 19th centuries; and the annexation and appropriation of Mexican territory and its peoples in 1848 (Allen 1994, Feagin 2001), as Ifekwunigwe affirms:

‘A broader historical and geographical vantage point...highlights the cross-cutting ways in which the global processes and erotic projects of slavery, imperialism and diaspora(s) have created similar shifts in the local making, management and regulation of status and power as articulated through the everyday discourses and practices of ‘race’, ‘mixed race’ and social hierarchies.’

2002: 323

Under this framework, non-Whites, including Black people, Latinos/Hispanics, and South and East Asians, for example, are in various ways subject to both overt and covert personal and institutionalised racisms. These are manifested in differentiated access to education, health and social care services, employment and wage levels, residential neighbourhoods and political and judicial representation (Oliver and Shapiro 2006, Quillian 2006, Saperstein and Penner 2012).

However, whilst ‘White supremacy creates and reinforces the existing economic, political and social structures, and convinces the dominated classes that the existing order is inevitable’ (Trucios-Haynes 2000: 3), critical race, Black and Chicana feminist theorists have successfully shown in recent decades that this racialised power structure is not fixed or natural, but is instead open to contestation.

Indeed, a crucial aspect of recognising the social constructedness of race has been the dismantling of normative notions of Whiteness, and the exposure of its unearned privilege and membership criteria as anything but fixed, unchanging, or inherent (Collins 2000). Scholars have demonstrated for example, that earlier twentieth century immigrant groups, such as the Irish and Italian, were originally perceived by White English-American society as inferior and non-White (Jacobson 1998, Roediger 2002), and as a result race ‘significantly structured daily life, determining their access to schools, labor unions, marriage partners, and neighborhoods, as well as their quotidian interactions with the native-born population’ (Jiménez 2008: 1528). Through gradual generational incorporation, including diminishing

phenotypic differences, upward mobility and intermarriage, these groups are now constructed as part of the 'White' 'American' mainstream where their race and ethnicity is experienced only as 'symbolic' (elaborated shortly) and does not, at least overtly, impact their everyday lives – thereby illustrating how constructions of whiteness change, but also how they appear to be rendered inconsequential in everyday life (Caldwell 1999, Sanjek 1994, Waters 1990). As such, 'race' has evolved to be popularly associated with people of color, while Whites are perceived to be without race (Lewis 2004) – what Flagg frames as the 'transparency' phenomenon, whereby whiteness is 'invisible' to White people (1997). Whiteness, instead, has tended to be equated with a kind of neutral, grounded, unquestioned expression of Americanness – to be 'American' is to be White, and vice versa – and to be non-White is to have your claims to true Americanness questioned or denied (Espiritu 2003).

Having said this, scholars have also interrogated these kinds of Black/White binaries that have dominated popular and academic discourses around race because their uses, even in anti-racist arenas, have been argued to re-inscribe the notions of race they seek to deconstruct (Caldwell 1999, Walter 1998). Furthermore, they can obscure the racialised experiences of other Others, such as Mexicans, Latinos or Hispanics (assumed to be in allegiance with Black Others vis-à-vis Whiteness), and also homogenise and romanticise the myriad positionalities within particular racial and ethnic groups (not allowing for in-group differences and 'colorism', for example) (Chavez-Dueñas et al. 2014, Hochschild 2007). Marable, for example, has highlighted the 'collapsing myth' of 'brown-black solidarity' and an imagined unified group of 'people of color' (1995: 448). Conceptions of race have also been complicated by the growing presence of 'mixed race' or 'multiracial' individuals, or those who are 'racially ambiguous' and who therefore defy traditional or folk categorisations based on phenotype (Aspinall and Song 2013).

Scholars have successfully exposed the social construction of race, and debated the status of 'race'/'post-race' or the utility/futility of thinking in racial terms (Gilroy 2000). However, the complexities of the 'lived' experience of race continue to matter (Harris and Sim 2002, Brown et al. 2006), since racial constructs are manifested in the lay public's everyday social interactions that hinge on 'popular folk concepts' about race and racial difference, and indeed people's own sense of their racial identity remain salient (Ifekwunigwe 2001).

Racial identity is relational because it is performed vis-à-vis others, and also contextual, because it manifests itself differently in different social moments and physical locations (Anderson and Collins 2007). Scholars have theorised this ‘situational’ and fluid nature of racial identity and the degree to which people are agentic, or not, in their racial identity ascription (Okamura 1981). Whilst the flexibility of foregrounding and backgrounding aspects of one’s racial or ethnic identity has an emancipatory potential in theory, ‘this volitional nature of racial identity has its enforced limits, such as phenotype and surname’ (Vasquez 2010: 47). Indeed, individuals’ performances of their racial self-identity take place in dialogue with broader processes of racialisation – that is, where a valorised racial or ethnic identity is forcibly projected on to their bodies by others. As Omi and Winant explain, racialisation relies upon the assumption that,

‘differences in skin colour, or other racially coded characteristics, explain social differences...Temperament, sexuality, intelligence, athletic ability, aesthetic preferences, and so on are presumed to be fixed and discernable from the palpable mark of race’ (1994: 60).

Scholars have shown that different groups of people are permitted different degrees of flexibility in defining their own identities, or being defined - some experience their ethnicity as ‘optional’ or ‘voluntary’, (White people) (Waters 1990), others ‘flexible’ (mixed-race people or light-skinned Latinos, able to ‘pass’ at certain times) (Vasquez 2010), and others still are ‘racialised’ (forced, fixed, non-white, Black) (Ochoa 2004). As such, Vasquez (2010) holds that people exist along a ‘racialization process continuum’, whose two poles are ‘flexible ethnicity’ (fluid, agentic) and ‘racialization’ (fixed, forced).

As explored in Section 2.2.2.1 on Mexican transnationalism in the U.S.-Mexico borderland, Mexicans experienced complicated processes of racialisation. Dependent on phenotype, class, legal status or language, for example, they may occupy or be placed at varying positions on the ‘racialization process continuum’. This is further complicated for young people, including the second generation, especially in school spaces where they undergo and also take part in processes of racialisation. This chapter will now turn to examine the scholarship on youth geographies, identity and education.

2.3.3 Youth

Although youth geographies is still a relatively small sub-discipline, in the last twenty-five years or so social geographers have increasingly focused their enquiries on the everyday lives of young people (Evans 2008, Holloway and Valentine 2000). It was arguably feminist geographers who first embarked on trying to bring research on youth into the geographical mainstream (O'Neill Gutierrez and Hopkins 2014), perhaps most notably so with the publication of Skelton and Valentine's *Cool places: Geographies of youth cultures* (1998). Indeed, some of the key studies within the field of young people's geographies have continued to be conducted by feminist geographers who are sensitive not only to politics of difference and the multiple inequalities wrought across diverse places as a result, but who are particularly attentive to the ways in which these processes are gendered (Dwyer 1999a, Skelton 2000).

Feminist studies of the spatialities of young life emerged somewhat in response to the masculinist focus of youth studies in the 1970-80's, which in its focus on working-class young men's resistance to dominant power structures through the performance of 'subcultures', tended not only to obscure young women's experiences, but also to preclude a more nuanced approach to youth more widely (Huq 2006, McRobbie 2003). In conjunction with broader shifts towards post-structuralist understandings of the social construction of identities, as explored above, scholarship has since evolved to acknowledge the heterogeneity and relationality of experiences of youth (Hopkins and Pain 2007). Indeed, constructions of 'youth' are reproduced vis-à-vis Others of different ages, generations, or stages in the life course, and also in relation to other social institutions such as the 'family' and 'community' or 'society' (Panelli et al. 2002). They also differ across cultural, geographical and temporal contexts, as shall be explored in more depth momentarily.

A key aim of youth geographies has been shed light on some of the constraints and opportunities that may characterise the period of 'youth' – the era between 'childhood' and 'adulthood' – although definitions and age groupings can vary (Evans 2008, Weller 2006). In fact, scholars have increasingly proposed that studies should focus less on charting a linear evolution of consciousness between particular parameters of *age* per se, but should instead explore the *blurry* period between childhood and adulthood as one of ambiguity, in-betweenness, possibility and *transition* (Valentine 2003, Worth 2009). Johnson-Hanks'

conception of ‘vital conjunctures’ has gained currency as a way of thinking about how young people experience ‘socially structured zone[s] of possibility that emerge...around specific periods of potential transformation in a life or lives. [A vital conjuncture] is a temporary configuration of possible change, a duration of uncertainty and potential’ (2000: 871). Transition periods or moments such as leaving school or home, migrating, finding work, or starting a relationship, can then be understood as individual processes of change, opportunity and difficulty within broader social structures and expectations (Holdsworth 2000, Jeffrey 2010). Furthermore, whilst young people can tend to be portrayed as lost, risky, delinquent or disempowered – or perhaps as being the ‘wrong age’ in the ‘wrong place’ (Skelton 2000: 69) – scholars have also been keen to demonstrate the ways in which young people exhibit agency in dialogue with structures that may otherwise seek to control or marginalise them (Jeffrey 2011, Malone 2002, Skelton and Hamed 2011).

In particular, the school space has received increasing scholarly attention as a key site for the education, control and citizen-making of young people (Holloway et al. 2010, Malone 2002, Weller 2006), as well as for performances of their agency and resistance (Hopkins and Pain 2007). It is also a space of social meeting and mixing, where through processes of Othering and relating young people reproduce and contest discourses of social difference along race, class and gender lines (Hidalgo et al. 2001, Hollingworth and Mansaray 2012, Hubbard 2005). These social differences can be reinforced or challenged by formal educational structures such as through curricula or ability streaming and the potentially ensuing academic and social segregation of classrooms, for example (Kamberelis 2001, Koole 2003, Mirza 2005, Thomas 2005b). Discourses of youth aspiration, educational achievement and future possibilities are also formulated and realised (or not) through the school, and relate strongly to young people’s abilities to fulfil their desired further education or career trajectories (Dwyer et al. 2011, Gibson and Hidalgo 2009, Syed et al. 2011).

On a much larger spatial scale, ‘global social and economic changes are transforming the lives of children and youth’ in myriad ways (Jeffrey 2010: 496). Work looking at the effects of globalisation on young people and their local geographies has examined how – dependent on their class positionings – they may positively and entrepreneurially harness tools such the internet, social media, and global travel to connect with friends, family and strangers from across the globe, or engage with collective identities and activism in new ways (Aitken 2004, Holt et al. 2011). They have also, however, shown how global neoliberal shifts can operate

to exploit vulnerable young people in terms of their labour (Jeffrey 2008, Katz 2004), for example, or how new racisms that have emerged in the post-9/11 era have impacted upon young people's lives (Dwyer and Bressey 2008, Hopkins 2008). In addition, whilst youth geographies have arguably tended to be Anglo-American-centric (Skelton 2009, Aitken et al. 2008) there is a growing body of work that examines the experiences of young people from across a range of global contexts, both in their own countries (Dyson 2008, Nilan 2008, Panelli et al. 2007), but also when it comes to their mobilities, migrations and diasporas (Ansell and Van Blerk 2005, Collins et al. 2013, Holt and Costello 2011), as the section on second generation transnationalism illustrated.

Indeed, scholars have been increasingly attentive in recent years to the intersections of race, class, religion and gender in the lives of young women, although it is still a relatively small body of research. Focusing on post-migratory contexts, scholars have explored young women's embodied practices, feelings of belonging, and their use of their social and cultural capital in new and different places (Krajewski and Blumberg 2014, Mansson McGinty 2014, Rootham 2014, Shah 2007). Work on young Mexicans, gender, race and class is still relatively limited, although especially interesting for this study has been Stuart Aitken's work around young Mexicans in the San Diego region, particularly in relation to young men's gendered experiences of agricultural labouring (2010), and the complicated ways in which young people experiencing age-related 'transition' simultaneously experience the border space as one of ambiguity and betweenness (Aitken and Plows 2010). Aitken also notes the 'struggles' that young Mexican people may experience in relation to parental expectations, and 'larger clashes between Mexican and American values' (2010: 363).

The small but growing number of scholars who have explored young women's intersectional experiences of Mexicanness, gender, race and class are crucial for this study, and I develop upon their work throughout this thesis. Hyams, for example, has examined young women's experiencing of gendered policing – in relation to competing discourses of educational achievement and teenage pregnancy – by their families and schools in ways that construct them as 'home girls with home bodies' (2000). At the same time, scholars have shown young Mexican women to perform agency and take pleasure in their sexualities and dating practices (Flores et al. 1998, Thomas 2004, Williams and Adams 2013). Thomas has also examined their consumption and 'hanging out' practices and what these might mean for their performances of classed and racialised connotations of Mexicanness and Americanness in

public space (2005a). Others have explored their experiences of school vis-à-vis their peers, and in particular, how processes of racialised and classed Othering play out in socially mixed high schools (Flores-Gonzalez 2002, Flores-Gonzalez 2005, Thomas 2005b and 2009). Finally, they have theorised young Mexican women's feelings of belonging and emotional connectedness to their Mexican homelands, and their transnational ties with extended family and kin – crucial components of transnational identities that this study seeks to analyse in more depth (Fletcher 1999, García 2004, Williams et al. 2002).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has made the case for transnationalism as a framework through which to explore the intersecting subjectivities of young Mexican women in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. It began by examining 'segmented assimilation' theories, what I understand to be 'deficit perspectives', since they are the predominant, albeit limited, lenses through which most scholarship on young Mexicans in the U.S. has been so far conducted. I detailed the ways in which conceptions of transnationalism have evolved from these previous theories of migration and assimilation, and how they can better aid an understanding of Mexican migrant experiences specifically, especially those of the second generation. This chapter has shown that far from permanently uprooting themselves and denying, or being effectively denied, all contact with their homelands, it is now widely understood that migrants have long tended to sustain connections with where (and who) they have come from, albeit to varying degrees (Kivisto 2001, Waldinger 2013, Erel and Lutz 2012). These ties may be emotional, financial, physical, or familial, or take myriad other forms. Furthermore, in order to engage conceptualisations of transnationalism more fruitfully, scholars must respond to Waldinger's call to examine the everyday, highly differentiated manifestations of transnational sensibilities amongst a range of migrants and the second generation (2013) – something that this thesis actively seeks to do.

I have also shown that, in the case of Mexicans who have migrated to the United States, the possibilities for the continuity of relationships between the 'host' and 'home' countries are heightened due to immigrant replenishment and geographical proximity of the homeland, such that their identities are inherently transnational. In fact, the nature of the region that

straddles these two nation states, the *borderlands*, is such that any study of those who live within or across its realms is best rooted in a perspective that foregrounds *betweenness* in the way that transnationalism does. I also explored the ways in which young people as part of the second generation, the U.S.-born children of Mexican migrants, may also maintain and develop their own intradiasporic forms of transnational belonging.

The second part of this review has demonstrated how an intersectional approach enables this project to attend to the multiple axes of young women's identities – along gender, race, class and age lines. I detailed the ways in which feminist geographers have theorised the mutual constitution of identity and space, as well as the relationality, contextuality and social constructedness of gender. The chapter attended to the valuable work on embodied practices, women's experiences of urban, suburban and rural spaces, and also the ways in which gender is complicated by, and critical to, processes of migration and gendered mobility. The chapter then examined the social construction of race, and the ongoing pervasiveness of the racial hierarchy in the U.S. that operates through White privilege. It showed how critical race theorists and activists have deconstructed conceptions of Whiteness, and shown how, despite the instability of race, that 'flexible' ethnicity, or the ability to choose to perform fluid racial-ethnic identities (or not) must be negotiated within structures that racialise particular (brown) bodies, including young Mexican women. Finally, this section examined the growing body of work on young people's geographies, and illustrated the potentialities and ambivalence of this transitory period in the life-course – or what Johnson-Hanks has theorised as landscape of 'vital conjunctures' (2002). Building upon the earlier attendance to second generation transnationalisms, it showed how youth identities are increasingly constructed in relation to global connectivity, mobilities, and migrations. I examined the small but valuable collection of scholarship on young women's intersectional identities as they incorporate dimensions of gender, race, class and age. I also introduced the key studies of young Mexican women and their experiences of growing up in the U.S. that have informed this study and which this thesis will continue to develop upon.

These two broad bodies of work allow for a more nuanced analysis of the convergence of multiple axes of identification as they are performed in and through the borderland spaces that young Mexicans living in San Diego inhabit. Indeed, these literatures allow for an exploration of young women's experiences that foreground the possibilities and difficulties

of performing transnational identities - those which inherently and strategically incorporate constructions of both Mexicanness and Americanness – and show that young women are not ‘failing to assimilate’ to a singular, imagined ‘American’ identity, but instead are constructing positive *transnational* lives and futures for themselves and their post-migratory communities.

2.5 Project Objective and Research Questions

Objective:

To explore how young Mexican women living in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands engage with notions of gender, race and class in their processes of identity construction.

Research Questions:

- How do young Mexican women living in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands negotiate the intersecting gender, race, class and age dimensions of their identities?
- In what ways do they construct 'transnational social fields' and perform transnational identities in order to negotiate, manage and contest normative expectations of them?
- How do young women experience the various spaces they inhabit in the everyday, both in terms of home and school spaces, and also in relation to the specificity of the Southern Californian U.S.-Mexico borderlands?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Building upon my examination of the theoretical roots that inform this project, this chapter details how I developed and implemented a robust research strategy for working with young women of Mexican descent. The chapter is arranged in three parts. In the first I attend to the project's epistemological groundings and show how their conceptual frameworks have guided my methodological approach as a whole. The second focuses on how my empirical research strategy for interacting with young Mexican women in San Diego manifested itself in the everyday. The third acts as something of a post fieldwork review of how effective the data collection methods were, how and where issues of positionality made themselves apparent, and how I developed and deployed ethics and permissions strategies according to the changing research context.

I begin with considering the three core epistemological starting points that have informed this work; feminist theories, border and Chicana theories as postcolonial frameworks, and theories of education and youth research. I explain how existing theorists' positions on ethnographic research have shaped my own methodological approach to answering the project's research questions. I then make a case for my choice of narrative and biography based data collection and analytical methods.

The chapter's second part follows this with a focus on the empirical period of the project. Here, I detail the physical location and socio-economic context in which fieldwork took place, and I justify my rationale for choosing the four sites and recruitment avenues that I did. I present each avenue independently by specifying its gatekeepers and the degrees of access I was granted, as well as introducing briefly the sample of young women I recruited there. Then I describe the formats that interviews and focus groups took and present in a table the complete make-up of participants and interaction methods. I have chosen to use a deliberately narrative form in this part of the chapter because the journey I travelled in recruiting participants across San Diego County offers insight not only into how the profile of participants evolved, but also because it illuminates other important factors that pertain to doing research in the borderlands with young Mexicans.

I move into the third part with an assessment of the effectiveness and success of my chosen methods and indicate where pivotal lessons regarding interaction and direction took place. I then explore in depth how my positionality as an insider/outsider affected the research encounters in multiple and complex ways. I connect these nuances of power in the research relationship to my subsequent discussion of the ethical strategies I have used throughout the project, including issues related to informed consent, permissions, data protection and anonymity. Finally, I describe the analytical tool kit that I have since employed and relate my reasoning to the project's epistemological groundings.

3.2 Epistemological Starting Points

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 4

First and foremost, this project is about *meaning, identity and representation*: the meanings that young women attach to borderland discourses of gender, race and class, the transnational identities they choose to perform in relation to these discourses, and my interpretation of both of these throughout the research process. As Denzin and Lincoln indicate above, it is qualitative research that enables the situatedness and the closeness necessary to understand and re-present the opinions, feelings and experiences of a research population. Because the project's participants are young, female and Mexican, I needed to engage with at least three core sets of epistemologies in order to work as productively, sensitively and appropriately with them as possible; feminist methodologies; border and Chicana theories as postcolonial research frameworks, and youth and education methodologies.

3.2.1 Feminist geography methodologies

This project's core aim is to shed light on the complex ways that young women from Mexican families engage with, utilise, reproduce and contest the multiply conflicting identity discourses that are present in their lives. The daily and repetitive nature of many of these discourses requires that in the research process we pay attention to participants' practices that foreground the everyday, the mundane and the seemingly invisible. For this project I turned immediately to feminist geography methodologies to help me illuminate the previously hidden nuances of these young women's lives, their quotidian invisibility being a characteristic shared by many women across the globe that feminist theorists and activists have sought to redress (McDowell 1993). Moss describes feminist methodologies as encompassing the practical design of research, the collection of data and its analysis, but also the 'relationships among people involved in the research process, the actual conduct of the research, and process through which the research comes to be undertaken and completed' (2002: 12). As I explored in the literature review, I have also drawn upon feminist migration research because it recognises that mobility across borders and life in the diaspora are experienced by women in specific ways (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999; Silvey 2004; Willis and Yeoh 2000).

Because of the intimately personal and lived nature of the research issues in this project, I required a methodology that claims '*not* to be representative...but to understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives' (Valentine 2005: 111. Emphasis in original). Conducting in-depth interviews and focus groups, and engaging in participant observation, are the key ways that feminists, and indeed other social and cultural geographers, do research of this kind (Davies and Dwyer 2007, Longhurst 2010).

In-depth interviews are particularly valuable because they allow for a loosely structured verbal interaction to take place between two people that illuminates a participant's views or situation in ways that a questionnaire or a focus group cannot. As Valentine describes, they 'take a conversational, fluid form, each interview varying according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees' (2005: 111). In my experience, one-to-one interviews with participants are often very enjoyable to conduct and elicit the richest data due to the way that rapport and trust can be fostered. Indeed, McDowell suggests that 'there has in human

geography been a shift towards what Sayer and Morgan have termed intensive methods...involving detailed, often case-study based methods to uncover the social processes and relations of power that lie beneath geographical patterns' (1992: 400). This is an important recognition because people rarely talk about abstract notions of identity and power explicitly but instead use anecdotes and storytelling to place themselves and their views in the context of social structures around them. Another person's, in this case the researcher's, awareness of the inscribed and inferred identity meanings can only be arrived at through intensive methods of communication – that is, by asking, listening, rephrasing, clarifying, and responding. It is through sitting down and talking to other women about their lives that I anticipated I would be able to do this.

Whilst one-to-one interviews are my preferred method of research interaction, other methods can offer other unique contributions to a research project of this kind. Indeed, feminist geographers emphasise the importance of utilising a mixed-method approach to encompass the diversity of female experience. As DeVault explains,

'Feminist methodologists do not use or prescribe any single research method; rather, they are united through various efforts to include women's lives and concerns in accounts of society, to minimize the harms of research, and to support changes that will improve women's status.'

DeVault 1996: 29

Focus groups, for example, allow for a multiplicity of voices and opinions to arise in the same moment that may never have been expressed in an individual interview. The group dynamic enables the contestation, agreement, compromise and learning of opinions, views and life-experiences. I find this dynamic very insightful in terms of how young women may adapt the manner in which they articulate themselves according to the company they are in – in this case in a group of their peers.

Being presented with an opportunity to discuss and take part in an exchange of ideas with peers tends to go one of two ways. Hyams, who has also worked with adolescent Latinas, explains how the first has manifested itself in her experience:

Group discussions are potentially empowering as they explore and enable group members' social agency and collective knowledge production; in other words, their 'voice(s)', and thereby constitute a space of resistance. This is based on at least two assumptions. First, that group discussion provides mutuality and engenders support and validation of shared ideas and experiences. Second, that multi-vocality and members' 'safety in numbers' enable the group to establish its own agenda and not be continually guided or manipulated by the researcher and research agenda.

Hyams 2004: 106

I would agree that focus groups appear to offer an empowering way of making a claim or stating an opinion in the presence of others that would perhaps not be possible or socially acceptable in 'reality'. If a focus group space is constructed as a space of freedom and safety participants may feel they can say what they wish to, and they can agree or disagree with another participant without fear of recrimination or effect outside of the research space.

Focus groups can operate in a less positive way however, in that they can lessen the amount of depth a participant is able to go in to. In addition to time pressures, for some people, having to formulate and present opinions to a group of waiting eyes and ears is nerve-racking, uncomfortable or simply impossible. The worry that one's personal viewpoints or experiences will be judged negatively, or even the thought of sharing such information, is sufficient to keep some young women's mouths firmly closed. As I elaborate in the reflective section below, I believe I managed to avoid some of these pitfalls associated with focus groups, and for the most part participants seemed very comfortable. Indeed, I think the project benefitted from the use of focus groups in conjunction with individual interviews because of their relational nature.

Participant observation enables a researcher to incorporate their on-going impressions of the relationships and situations that they witness in the research locale into a formal analysis. By recording carefully their thoughts on what they see, hear and experience around them, they can achieve a wider sense of the context in which their research participants operate. Participant observation is particularly useful in studies of identity because so much of identity performance is just that, *performance*. Used in conjunction with more formal methods of eliciting information such as interviews and focus groups, participant observation can fill in

some of the gaps between hearing about what people *say* they do, and what they actually do in practice, as well as illuminating practices they may not consider raising in an interview (Punch 2001).

Researchers can engage in participant observation at distinct moments such as community events, but this project relies on my observations of more of the everyday aspects of young women's lives. For example, by spending time with young women at school and on their way home through the streets of their neighbourhoods, I have been able to think about what these places means for their identity performances, and see how they are tied into and use the places they inhabit.

Feminist research methodologies also foreground attention to emotion and positionality in the research encounter. A decade ago Coffey (1999) wrote of the 'silent space' that exists in the discipline of ethnography where in-depth discussion and analysis of the self, the personal in fieldwork are absent. She contended that although in previous years there had been a move for feminist and ethnographic texts to promote the importance of getting personal with one's fieldwork, there was less exploration of the role of the self *throughout* the whole research process, i.e. the pre-, during, and post- fieldwork parts. She also acknowledged the lack of attention paid to how *emotions* are invested in every part of a research project, by all participants. Blackman (2007) more recently asserts that this failure to attend to the emotive nature of fieldwork continues. He refers to 'hidden ethnographies', what he calls the body of text related to the feelings and experiences that are talked about between researchers but rarely written down or included in academic prose. As I explain in the analysis section below, I pay careful attention to the ways in which young women's and my own responses are tied into emotional aspects of the research topics covered – particularly, for example, in the case of the young women, when my interactions with them came soon after highly charged emotional discussions about violence or substance abuse at their summer school sessions.

Along with the effect of the researcher on participants during fieldwork, we must also pay attention in debates of positionality to the effect of the fieldwork on the researcher. This dialectical relationship is crucial to the production of knowledge and the representation of voice and therefore we as social scientists have a responsibility to both our participants, but also to the academy, in attending to the exposure of commonly 'hidden ethnographies'. Indeed, Bondi (2005) encourages the inclusion of reflection on emotional aspects of research

in the formal parts of the process, such as in this thesis. I have certainly tried throughout the project to engage in this kind of reflection, and I go into this in more depth in the sections on positionality below. Furthermore, feminist attendance to emotion and personal positioning chimes with the priorities of Chicana/o scholars working on the Mexico-U.S. border due to the legacies of, and continuing emancipatory potential for, the use of biography and personal narrative in activist scholarship in the region.

3.2.2 Border theory and Chicana theory as postcolonial groundings

This project is informed by Chicano studies and Chicana feminism as postcolonial theoretical and methodological frameworks because of the ways in which they destabilise colonialist and masculinist scholarship and potentially exploitative research relationships with minority communities. As I noted in the literature review, Chicana/o theory and border literature offer methods for working in the border region that pay attention to the manner in which racial and national identities are performed in both traditional and re-imagined ways, exemplified by García Canclini's examinations of 'hybrid cultures' (2005).

Perhaps one of the most profound validations of this project as I see it is that it responds to Vila's call for scholars on the border to fuse *writing about* the border with doing *ethnography in* the border region. As he believes, there exists a requirement to test and 'validate through ethnographic works the ideas of García Canclini, Anzaldúa, and Rosaldo – ideas that were mostly developed within a literary criticism framework, not an ethnographic one' (2005: 229). In a similar way to the pilot study which was part of my Masters research on the *quinceañera*, I intend for this project to highlight the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of everyday life on the border, thereby contributing towards an understanding of border lives as they exist in 'mundane' reality.

In addition to engaging a border studies lens through which to view the specificities of the research locale, I find that Chicana feminist epistemologies are also key for going 'beyond the commonalities of women's experience and examin[ing] how family backgrounds, school practices, male privilege, and class and ethnic discrimination shape Chicanas' educational experiences and choices' specifically (Delgado Bernal 1998: 558). In particular, the importance placed on the use of storytelling and biographical narrative to talk about one's history and familial past, is a valuable legacy left to Chicana feminism by Anzaldúa and her

comadres from the 1970s onwards. Today for example, Delgado Bernal encourages the coming together of women in groups to share with each other otherwise silenced stories, since the collective realisation that others have experienced similar life events can be both powerful and empowering (1998).

As well as focusing on the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, age and gender, and the value of storytelling, Chicana scholars – who have been positioned, and have chosen to strategically position themselves, on the margins of elitist higher education institutions – attempt to disrupt the status quo that is rooted in ‘objective’ and ‘distanced’ scientific research by producing and promoting auto-ethnographies (Chávez 2012). That is, by examining their own lives and experiences and recognising these as valid locations from which to speak from, they are able to ‘provide a truth far greater than any telling of a tale frozen to the facts’ (Moraga 2011: 4). I incorporated these principles into my work by exploring my own social location and experiences of Mexicanness and allowing them into the research encounter. I spoke to the young women about my heritage on numerous occasions because they had lots of questions about me. I develop an exploration of my positionality later in this chapter.

Finally, by utilising a set of Chicana feminist epistemologies in an educational research setting, I am able to expose some of the ways in which the production, ownership and validation of knowledges operates for a population who are consistently excluded from upwardly mobile educational trajectories. Indeed, as Delgado Bernal affirms, ‘employing a Chicana feminist epistemology in educational research thus becomes a means to resist epistemological racism (Scheurich and Young, 1997) and to recover untold histories’ (1998: 556) – an end this project attempts to achieve through examining some of the ways in which young Mexican women experience formal and informal education structures and produce their own knowledges.

3.2.3 Youth methodologies

Doing research with young people enables an understanding of how social and structural systems affect a population at a distinct point in the life course. Not only does paying attention to what young people have to say counter their marginality and the sensational stereotypes often associated with them (Kelly 2003), but it can also illuminate lessons about social processes that are transferable to wider debates about the production of space (Skelton and Valentine 1998).

Working with young people can also encourage researchers to try out and adopt alternative methods of interaction and data collection. Using participatory methodologies, for example, has become popular when working with young people because they enable them to take part in the production of their own knowledges, and ‘analyze and transform their own lives’ (Cahill 2007: 297). Arnett Jenson (2003) suggests that ‘methodological multiplicity’ is particularly necessary when examining the complex questions surrounding youth, identity, and globalisation or transnationalism. This approach has enabled the project to engage with ideas of change and difference from a number of perspectives, potentially opening up access to non-hegemonic ways of thinking by giving voice to the perspectives of (previously silenced) young women.

Engaging in ethnographic research in schools, higher education institutions and extra-curricular educational space is crucial for understanding the production of young minds and bodies since these are key sites of ‘vital conjunctures’, the taken-for-granted formative periods in one’s life which sit outside of distinct life ‘events’ (Johnson-Hanks 2002). High schools, for example, provide the backdrop for the daily convergence of valorised social identifiers such as gender and ethnicity, and where lessons about being ‘young’, ‘Mexican’ and ‘American’ take place. Because of their school-going age, this is also the main public space in which young Mexican women experience the most overt interaction with formal state-structures. Having said this, I also recognise that an emphasis on young lives as they exist in formal educational spheres is limiting because it ignores the variety of life worlds that young people create for themselves outside of school. This is why the project also interacts with young women in non-school spaces, such as leisure and street spaces.

Finally, Punch (2001) speaks about the implications of a double distancing when working with children and young people from a different ethnic group to one’s own. The researcher is an outsider in two ways - firstly due to their older age and perceived positionality as an ‘adult’, and secondly due to their ethnic background. I hope I managed to alleviate this problem somewhat by being of a similar age to many of the young women I spoke to. As a young woman myself, I am perhaps more able than an older woman to empathise with someone at a similar life stage to me. I am generally able to create a good rapport with other young women and I keep up to date with popular culture. Both seemed to enable the participants and myself to find something of a ‘level playing field’ with each other during the

interviews. Having said this I do not deny the fact that I *am* different to them, in age and in other ways, as I explore in more depth in the section on positionality below.

3.2.4 Choice of Data Collection Methods

The bodies of work above have all led me to develop a mixed methods research strategy. In-depth narrative interviews (n=55) offered the most appropriate and valuable opportunities for eliciting the kinds of personal data needed to respond to the project's research questions. I chose to convene focus groups (n=6) to supplement these interviews. I also conducted extended periods of participant observation throughout the eight months I worked in schools and non-formal settings with young women. I examine the implementation and success of these methods in Section 3.4 below.

3.3 Research Strategy

3.3.1 Research Locale

San Diego County is located in the State of California in the Southwest-most corner of the United States. San Diego County itself extends northwards into California towards Los Angeles, and south towards the U.S.-Mexico border and the Mexican city of Tijuana, Baja California Norte. My project was based predominantly in the North County of San Diego around the city of Encinitas (see Map 1).



Map 1. San Diego Region, Southern California, United States

As I explained in the introduction and literature review, San Diego region is a valuable place to be doing research of this nature due of the high numbers of Mexicans living there. Mexicans are the largest non-white ethnic group in the region – in the 2010 census, people of Mexican-descent numbered 992,000 and accounted for approximately 30 per cent of the

metropolitan area's total population (U.S. Census Bureau cited in Pew Hispanic Center 2012a and 2012c). It is an important place for Mexicans, a community who have a long history of inhabitation in the surrounding region and a complex and layered record of migration. And in a broader sense, Rumbaut explains why the region is so valuable a place for research on migration:

The nation's largest regional site of immigrant incorporation over the past three decades, Southern California is home to the greatest diversity of immigrants (in both national and social-class origins) to have settled in the US, over this period, as well as to their rapidly growing second generations, providing a strategic site for research.

2014: 182

In order to offer an original perspective on Mexican post-migrants in the region, I chose to focus the research primarily in the small coastal city of Encinitas, based in North County San Diego, which in 2010 had a total population of just under 60,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010) and which has quite a different demography from the more diverse San Diego metropolitan area. The high majority of Encinitas' population racially identified in the most recent census (2010, the year this study was conducted) as White (85.8%) (this could include Mexicans), 5.6% identified as 'Some other race' (this could include those who identify as Latino/Hispanic and not White), 3.9% identified as Asian, 3.4% said they were racially mixed (two or more races), and 0.6% identified as Black or African American (*ibid*). People who chose to identify as Hispanic or Latino (a separate question to race), and who chose 'Mexican' as a subcategory of this, numbered just over 10% of the city's population (*ibid*)³.

Encinitas is arguably a spatially, socially and economically segregated city. When driving along Route 101 (the eponymous highway), past Spanish-style villas, tropical gardens and

³ See appendix 1 for 2010 demographic data for Encinitas, CA. Because of the ways in which the Census collects information about race and ethnicity – particularly in the way it offers people the opportunity to identify themselves racially (White, Black or African American, Some Other Race, for example) and also as Hispanic or Latino, and then to specify a nation-based Hispanic or Latino identity (Mexican, for example), and the at times racially ambiguous position that people of Mexican heritage may feel themselves to occupy (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008) – it is difficult to surmise the exact number of Mexican-origin people living in the area. Furthermore, the unlikelihood of undocumented migrants taking part in the census, which could include people who have lived in the region for many years (such as some of the parents of young women in this study), compounds their invisibility in formal analyses of the U.S.-living Mexican population.

bright sandy beaches, one's over-riding impression of Encinitas would likely chime with the city authority's description:

Located along six miles of Pacific coastline in northern San Diego County, Encinitas...is characterized by coastal beaches, cliffs, flat-topped coastal areas, steep mesa bluffs and rolling hills...There is a significant flower growing industry in the City and many people claim that Encinitas is the Flower Growing Capital...Golf enthusiasts will enjoy our Encinitas Ranch Golf Course, a championship 18 hole par 72 course with panoramic ocean views...Downtown 101 is a coastal shopping district over 100 years old featuring historic architecture, quaint shops, sidewalk cafes, and restaurants framed by beautiful flower baskets...The beaches in Encinitas are outstanding...The surfing is unbeatable and many surf contests are held throughout the year in Encinitas. The San Elijo Lagoon Reserve is the largest coastal wetland in San Diego County and is home to nearly 300 different bird species throughout the year...The natural beauty of our communities, along with temperatures between 40 and 85 degrees year-round make Encinitas a spectacular place to live.

City of Encinitas, 2014: no page number

Indeed, at first glance, Encinitas appears very middle-class and very White, but in recent years, the city and surrounding semi-rural ranch areas, which extend inland towards Escondido and Fallbrook, have experienced increasing levels of immigration from Mexico and Central America – as well as internal migration where earlier Mexican migrants have moved out of their initial arrival locations (such as more urban San Diego) and chosen a more suburban place to settle long-term. This shift reflects a broader one towards the diversifying of migrant destinations into new, more rural or suburban, areas (Nelson and Hiemstra 2008). Whilst the region has long required the male bodies of migrant agricultural or construction labourers (Crotty and Bosco 2008), the last 20-30 years have, with the rural and coastal gentrification and growing desirability of beach towns like Encinitas, also heightened the demand for migrant women to work in domestic and service industries (Nelson and Nelson 2011). As such, a growing population of Mexican post-migrant families has settled on the inland outskirts of Encinitas (not generally in the wealthier beach-front

communities), in apartment blocks and increasingly, for newer arrivals, in more informal housing such as trailer parks along the rural roads heading inland.

Most previous studies of Mexican communities in the U.S. have focused on those in traditional sites of arrival and settlement, such as strongly co-ethnic urban neighbourhoods in places such as Los Angeles, or indeed metropolitan San Diego. Examining the experiences of the Mexican population in Encinitas then, offers a novel perspective on how Mexican young women experience their Mexicanness in a place inhabited by a predominantly White middle-class population. It is possible that some of the resources and security that have been shown to be available to those living in a more established communities of post-migrant Mexicans (where being 'Mexican' is fairly unremarkable in the everyday and does not result in being read as particularly 'different'), may not be on offer to those living in spaces of heightened demographic and socio-cultural difference (where their position as a member of the visible Mexican minority could more problematically mark them as Other). In addition, some of the small ranch towns surrounding Encinitas and that stretch down towards the U.S.-Mexico border are known to be home to racist, anti-immigration, nativist and vigilante groups (Southern Poverty Law Center 2014). Social meetings or tensions between such groups (and their local empathisers) and Mexican post-migrants may be more likely to occur in this region than in more co-ethnic ones – and could be increasingly likely as post-migrant families are priced further out of Encinitas and into more semi-rural locations. As such, the salience of racial and socio-cultural difference is amplified in the area, compounded by 'immigrant replenishment', growing racist sentiments in Southern California more widely, and increasing and more public 'illegal immigration' raids in the area (Nevins 2014). Therefore, Encinitas, whilst appearing the epitome of the laid-back, harmonious and privileged Southern Californian beach town, can be understood as also exemplifying the 'harsh geographies' of the borderland that Núñez and Heyman (2007) speak of, and that was explored in the Introduction and Literature Review.

The ongoing spatialised (re)negotiations around identity and the right to belong between different people who live in and around Encinitas, provide an interesting context across which to do research. The pilot study I conducted in the region in Summer 2008, which was part of my Masters research on the performance of the *quinceañera* in relation to notions of gender and ethnicity, also suggested this. The project showed how the socio-territorial

complexity of a border space like San Diego County offers the opportunity to think about notions of transnationalism and hybridity and the ways that Mexican-identifying people choose to embody such constructions, in a way that other places may not. Furthermore, the breadth of life experience and migration ‘generations’ in San Diego gave me the opportunity to interact with young Mexican women from a range of socio-economic and legal backgrounds whose life worlds varied dramatically. This was important for seeing how normative views change according to background, and is in keeping with Chicana methodologies and the recognition of the variety of the Mexican-American female experience. Not only that, but the pilot study showed me that conducting an in-depth qualitative research project looking at young Mexicans was both feasible and lucrative in terms of the richness of data available – people in the region were very interested to talk about Mexican identity and especially how it is inflected by conceptions of gender and age.

The pilot study also highlighted the deeply personalised nature of identity labels, an acknowledgement that informed not only a large part of the research topics I raised with young women, but also how I initially accessed them. I used a range of labels in advertising, describing and recruiting for the project; Mexican; Mexican-American; ‘of Mexican descent/heritage’; ‘from a Mexican family’; ‘with a Mexican background’. I did this to be inclusive of anyone who wished to ascribe themselves a Mexican identity of some kind – once welcomed into the project, we would then explore in more depth their identity label choices. As I explain in Chapter Four on processes of identification, young women ascribe to and respond to these labels in many different ways. I tended not to use ‘Latino’ or ‘Hispanic’ as these are pan-Latin American terms that encompass a range of countries of origin and not just Mexico, although some women did indeed choose to refer to themselves as such in interviews. In thinking about labels, it is important to note that the ways young women are grouped or defined officially, such as in the national census or other state documentation, can vary. Whilst in the 2010 census respondents were able to define their Latino or Hispanic Origin as ‘Mexican, Mexican-American or Chicano’ (Pew Hispanic Center 2011), data still tends to be summarised under the broader terms of ‘Hispanic’ or ‘Latino’ which functions to homogenise divergent communities, and blurs or ignores the ways that the lives of young Mexican women are distinct.

I certainly had some interesting experiences with gatekeepers' interpretations of identity labels and definitions. For example, on three separate occasions it was arranged for me to interview Guatemalan young women, despite having been clear that the project was about Mexicans. These misunderstandings illuminate the ways in which labels are interchanged or 'lost in translation', for example, 'Mexican' is read as 'Latino', which in turn might be understood to include 'Guatemalan'. I would suggest that it also shows how people of Latino background are homogenised as coming from similar places and cultures so the ways that they experience life in the U.S. are understood to be similar also. I did conduct interviews with the Guatemalan young women to be respectful towards them as they were very prepared to give me their time, and also because they offered important insights into what it is like being from a minority Latino group in a region where the 'majority' minority group are Mexicans. Young dark-skinned women, whatever their heritage, tend to be labelled as or 'pass' as Mexican in the area I conducted research and I was intrigued to explore the implications of this.

3.3.2 Gatekeepers and Access

For eleven months between September 2009 and August 2010 I gathered qualitative data from young women aged 14-24 years in a variety of formal and informal educational settings across San Diego County. This section describes the processes of networking, trust building and recruitment that I was involved in during this time in the field. Taking a narrative form here to introduce the dynamic relationships that I developed, I show how their eclecticism resulted in not only a multi-strand participant pool but also how they are testament to the diverse life worlds and complexities of young Mexican-American life on the border.

Originally I had planned to conduct comparative research across four of San Diego's urban neighbourhoods in the Central and Southern parts of the county that lie close to the U.S.-Mexico border. However, during the initial three months of fieldwork I learnt from futile attempts at connecting with 'inner city' schools and after-school youth empowerment programs that Mexican-American communities in those neighbourhoods were fatigued by, and perhaps suspicious of, administrative or scholarly attention on what one informant characterised as their 'caricatured urban Latino problems', often conflated with gang crime. I managed to make contact with one guidance counsellor in an inner-city high school in San Diego and conduct an impromptu focus group with some of her female students but further attempts at conducting more detailed interviews were unsuccessful.

Beth⁴, a Program Coordinator for a state-led 'Migrant Education' program who I interviewed early on confirmed my experience of this kind of reluctance to interact with researchers, and instead introduced to me to one of her colleagues Gloria who worked as a Migrant Aide⁵ in public middle and high schools in the more suburban and rural North County of San Diego. Gloria was very open to encouraging her young charges to take part in the project. She saw it as an exciting, necessary and rare opportunity for them to talk about themselves, to give their perspectives on 'Southern Californian life' and to be listened to when they spoke about their hopes for the future, all empowering practices that she stressed on numerous occasions they very infrequently get to take part in.

⁴ All names have been changed.

⁵ Similar to a guidance counsellor for children of families who have migrated to work in the local agricultural industry. This role will be described in more depth below.

In talking to both Beth and Gloria about doing this kind of project in the region, I began to see manifested in real-life some of the biases that some recent scholarship on youth has illuminated – that is, the recognition that attention to young people in the media and in academia has tended to prioritise the lives of urban youth, particularly those deemed oppositional or ‘at risk’ (Kelly 2003). Perhaps my own project planning had also been influenced by these prejudices in that I had wanted to focus on the urban nature of young Mexican experience. It took me meeting this urban resistance to foster what has turned out to be a set of much more varied and productive research relationships. Whilst still incorporating some urban voices, the project now has more of a focus on young Mexican women’s suburban and semi-rural existences, ones that are increasingly common and equally valid for scholarly attention as the urban Mexican-American experience⁶.

The project relied upon my interaction with approximately thirty ‘gatekeepers’ who helped me meet participants at various stages, the majority of whom I met through the Migrant Education program that I introduce more thoroughly below. These key informants included Migrant Aides, teachers, counsellors, and youth group leaders and I conducted formal and informal interviews with most of them. The diversity of their experience and their educational connections resulted in an equally varied set of participant avenues; ‘High Schoolers’, ‘Middle Schoolers’, ‘Young Women in Higher Education’ and ‘Youth in Employment’. I am very satisfied with the project’s eventual focus on young women attending high schools in the North County region because high school seems to be where many of the conflicting discourses of young womanhood begin to expose themselves most problematically. The attention to a smaller number of young women in the realms of middle school, higher education, and those not in formal education, grants the project an insight into some of the other important trajectories that young women from Mexican backgrounds have experienced or may end up experiencing.

My sampling strategy was to offer any young woman who identified in some way as Mexican the opportunity to be interviewed about what that identification meant for her. Since I did not wish to coerce any participants into taking part, I was very clear to repeat that young

⁶ In fact, a more rural and suburban bias in the project chimes with an emerging branch of research which looks at ‘new migrant destinations’ in the US (see for example, Kandel and Cromartie 2004, Marrow 2011, Nelson and Hiemstra 2008, Nelson and Nelson 2011).

women did not have to take part if they did not want to, even if Gloria for example, had encouraged them to come and see me. Some girls may nonetheless have felt that they had to speak to me because teachers or other staff had told them about my project, but upon meeting them I would reassure them again that they did not have to take part, and ultimately there were some girls who chose not to come back for an interview. Because of the immeasurable and personal nature of notions such as ‘identity’, I did not seek to employ a fully ‘representative’ sampling strategy, but instead a self-selecting one through snowballing. The next section describes my sampling strategy through each ‘avenue’ individually and closes with a table providing a consolidated overview of the various participant strands.

3.3.3 Field Sites and Participant Recruitment

3.3.3.1 High Schoolers

High School 1

The first high school contact I initiated resulted in my meeting a Mexican-American woman called Frances, a guidance counsellor in a school located in downtown San Diego that has a high proportion of Mexican-American students. I visited her on three separate afternoons in March 2010. For approximately eight hours over the three occasions I conducted participant observation in the counselling and attendance office waiting room. I sat talking casually with young women who were waiting to see their guidance counsellor or who were completing their homework before leaving school for the day. I recorded my observations and thoughts in a research diary.

On the second occasion that we met, Frances was in the midst of a particularly fraught day because it was the deadline for a set of university scholarship applications aimed at young Latino students. She allowed me to sit in her office for the afternoon observing and listening to the steady stream of young people, mostly women, clamour for her assistance with their hastily completed scholarship forms. One girl allowed me to interview her whilst Frances proofread the personal statement for her application. Once the 5pm application deadline passed, the guidance counsellor gathered a group of seven students in her office and let me introduce myself and the project. All of them agreed to stay and take part in an impromptu

focus group then. All of these participants were seniors in high school aged eighteen, apart from one who was nineteen.

Subsequent attempts to plan more focus groups and interviews in this school proved difficult. I anticipate that this was because this particular guidance counsellor was overloaded with casework in what seemed like quite a chaotic and resource-stretched school, and as such didn't have the time to encourage her students to meet with me – those who said they would meet me for a second focus group and bring some of their friends decided on the day to go to a local concert instead. At the risk of continuing to pester and eventually frustrate Frances, after a fourth attempt at contact I decided to forego this avenue in favour of the high schools I had by then been introduced to in North County.

High Schools 2 and 3

As noted above, it was Gloria who granted extensive institutional access on a daily basis and a multitude of participant introductions in San Diego's North County. She also introduced me to school administrators, teachers and principals in both high schools I worked in and informed them of my project. In doing this she helped me to gain their permission for me to conduct interviews, focus groups and participant observation with their students on campus.

With Gloria's facilitation, thirty-four of the project's fifty-five interviewees were young women who attended two public high schools in the town. One is historically the main high school of the town which was recently turned into an 'Academy' of approximately 1500 students, and the second is a newer and much larger comprehensive high school of approximately 2500 students. I also interviewed one young woman who attended a different academy in the school district who I met at the summer school that I introduce below. In addition, I interviewed two young students of a small 'continuation' high school also in the district whose attendees require a more flexible schooling curriculum due to personal and academic difficulties.

Gloria's particular Migrant Education program works mainly with children whose families have migrated to this region of Southern California to work in the agricultural sector as farm-

workers, fruit-pickers and nursery hands, the majority of whom are Mexican or Central American. Based on its knowledge that children from families who are dependent on seasonal and insecure labour industries tend to move frequently to follow the work, or be subject to unstable rental housing arrangements, this program places Aides in middle and high schools across the region to provide pastoral and practical support to these students and their families. These Aides represent some kind of stable educational touch-stone and a Spanish-speaking information point amid what can be a very turbulent and spatially disjointed time for these young people.

Gloria's positionality as a self-identifying politicised Chicana, a person of Mexican-descent who has lived in the town all her life, and her formal role as a Migrant Aide who works mostly with Mexican students, marked her to other students (whether or not they're the children of agricultural workers) and staff for that matter, as an advocate for Mexicans and Latinos. As such she provided informal support to many Mexican and Mexican-American young people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, and her office was constantly bustling with students eager to be in the comfort of her company. This is important to note because whilst young people whose families rely upon employment in the agricultural sector are represented in the interviews, the area has long been home to a much wider population of Mexicans, and many of the young women I interviewed via Gloria had parents working in other industries such as house cleaning, restaurant work, teaching and in their own family businesses.

During high-school term times, I held introduction groups during lunchtimes and breaks where Gloria called a range of young women from Mexican and Latina backgrounds into her office and allowed me to introduce myself and the project. This initial recruitment meeting enabled them to ask questions about me and what the interviews would be like before they decided whether or not they wanted to be involved. Those who did so were then re-contacted for interview at times that suited them over the following weeks.

It is quite likely that some young women of Mexican descent attending the schools may not have wanted to take part in the study because of the ways it may have been associated with Migrant Education. This is because, whilst utilised by young women from a wide range of social backgrounds, Migrant Education may have been stigmatised in broader social circles

in the school because of negative racialised and classed connotations around Mexicanness, and because it may be characterised as supporting children experiencing ‘Mexican problems’ such as poverty, unstable legal status or involvement in gangs and drug-use. Those young women who may be sensitive to performing more ‘Americanised’ or middle-class educational and social positionings, may not have wanted to be seen at the Migrant Education office, and by association, with me, someone researching ‘Mexicans’.

Indeed, as the Literature Review and Chapter Eight both explore, young women are acutely aware of processes of Othering underway at school, and take care to manage the degree to which they are perceived as ‘different’ or not. Such processes may have precluded my interaction with a more diverse group of young women of Mexican heritage, including those who due to their class positionings may never have felt the need to use Migrant Education services. However, I am still confident that whilst the majority of young women I interviewed were working-class, I did interview a range of women from other social backgrounds and this thesis attends to a broad range of young women’s experiences. Furthermore, it is important to say that because of the positivity, support and effectiveness of Migrant Education, many young women appeared to enjoy passing through the office area, and did not necessarily do so because they were experiencing ‘problems’. As I explore in more depth in Chapter Eight, young women enact agency in relation to what services they wish to utilise, whatever the social connotations and dominant narratives around them.

Once term-time ended in June, I was invited to be a facilitator at a summer leadership and empowerment program called ‘Having a Voice’, which was for young Mexican and Latino women *and* men who had not been allocated formal summer school places⁷. For two sets of two weeks, I assisted a group of local teachers and guidance counsellors who had volunteered their time, most of whom were of Mexican or Latino descent themselves, to run full-day activity programs that sought to provide the young people with the skills necessary to become ‘leaders’ or role-models within their communities. This is where I came into contact not only

⁷ One teacher told me that the last two years have seen a dramatic reduction in the provision of financial scholarships for economically-deprived young people to attend summer schools in the North County region. The prevalence of young people of Mexican-descent in the area living in conditions of economic deprivation are disproportionately high, as I will illustrate later in this document, and as such, they are less likely to fill their three-month summer vacation with summer school tuition compared to their native U.S born or ‘Anglo’ peers.

with high school students, but also a small group of final-year middle school students who staff thought would benefit from interaction with the older students. The young people got to know me from my daily presence and I was introduced as a researcher and student from England who wanted to find out about young women's lives. I encouraged the female students to approach me and ask questions about the project throughout the two-week sessions. Because of the intense nature of the program, I got to know many of them and observe them quite closely and approximately half of the young women eventually agreed to be interviewed.

Interviews took place mostly between April-August, with the school year finishing in June, and graduations and summer schools taking place over the summer break before term started again at the end of August. This timing had an important influence on the content of the interviews – as explored in Chapter Eight on education and identity – because as the end of the school year grew closer, the participants were subject to increasingly intensive competency testing and rhetoric about their procession through the school grades, graduation and future-planning.

Interviews were kept to non-class times such as lunchtimes and free periods but most took place immediately after school in a middle school near the high schools (where Gloria's main office was located). Gloria was present in the school buildings during interviews but the participant and I always spoke in private, whether it was in a meeting room, in a counselling office or outside on the quiet lawn. A large number of interviews also took place at the local public library because Gloria held family information and literacy meetings there. This enabled young women to come and talk to me while their parents (most often mothers) spoke to Gloria about the various educational and social-service queries they had. The library, as well as being a well-known public meeting centre in the town, was also a location that most young women were allowed to be by themselves under the proviso that 'Miss Gloria' was in the vicinity (either bringing themselves or getting dropped there by their parents). Here we either spoke in the private meeting rooms provided by the library or on the library's balcony that overlooks the town and the ocean.

During the summer 'Having a Voice' program, I conducted interviews with the female attendees during lunchtimes and at the end of the day, either in a counsellor's office or out

on the lawn on the other side of campus, away from the rest of the group. Topics covered during the two-week program included self-motivation, verbal communication skills, conflict mediation, dealing with substance abuse, gang-politics and domestic violence, and future-planning, amongst many others. Issues that arose in the day's program were understandably fresh in the participants' minds and as such they were commonly referred to in interviews⁸.

3.3.3.2 Middle Schoolers

As I indicated above, I met a small group of younger women during the 'Having a Voice' summer program. These young women were all in their final year of middle school and after that summer were graduating to high school. In the same way that I explained the project to the older high school young women, so I did to the middle school girls, although fewer of them took part in interviews. This was partly down to a degree of shyness on their part perhaps, but also because I was hesitant to pursue too heavily interviews with women under the age of fifteen due to ethical issues, something I explore in more depth in the ethics and permissions section below.

Perhaps a more unique and intriguing set of interactions I had with middle school girls was during my presence at a young women's empowerment and social club run by a volunteer in a downtown neighbourhood in San Diego. After initiating contact with the director of a well-known community centre in the historically Mexican area, I was introduced to Martha, a thirty-something year old woman born in the neighbourhood but now living in Los Angeles. As an educator and Chicana activist at a university in LA, she felt that she should 'give back' to her community and act as a role model to the locality's young women. To this aim, she singularly runs the 'Comadritas' club, travelling from LA on one Saturday each month to receive middle and high school girls at the centre for a morning of empowering and self-confidence-boosting activities. On hearing about my work she, like Gloria, had a lot to say about why these young women should be granted a voice, and she was very forthcoming with offering me the opportunity to interact with the young women. On the four occasions

⁸ Although I grant importance to these narratives, I ensure that I do not prioritise them by putting them in the context of the other aspects of their lives they spoke about.

I met with the girls, they were for the most part very chatty and they seemed happy to talk to me.

3.3.3.3 Young Women in Higher Education

During the eleven-month fieldwork period I held a Visiting Scholar position in a large private university in Central San Diego County. From my office base I communicated the details of my project to friends and colleagues, and encouraged them to pass on my contact information to any young woman they thought may be interested in taking part. This snowballing resulted in my interviewing one of my departmental graduate colleagues and one undergraduate friend-of-a-friend. During my time on campus I also volunteered at the university's Women's Center. Through the centre's on-campus newsletter and online network I distributed a poster call for participants that elicited responses from four young women, two of whom eventually met me for an interview. I conducted one of the interviews in my office, and the other three in campus social spaces such as cafes and open seating areas.

3.3.3.4 Youth in Employment and Out of School Youth (OSY)

I was also interested in speaking to out-of-school youth, those who are of school age (under eighteen years old) but whose economic situation requires that they engage in paid employment instead of attending school. I recruited for formal interview two of these young women through the Out of School Youth (OSY) scheme related to the Migrant Education program, and interacted informally with approximately five young women at that organisation's events. These young people are often recent migrants from Mexico who spoke little English, who were unlikely to have legal documentation, who were financially the poorest, and who were the most likely to be in exploitative and unregulated working environments, such as agriculture and housekeeping. Understandably, these young people proved very hard to meet, mostly due to a combination of their busy schedules (some of them also taking English classes in their spare time) and their often rural and dispersed working locations. In addition, in some cases where potential participants were without legal status in the U.S., many exhibited a distrust or fear of, and reluctance to speak to, 'officials' or 'administrators' (as I may have seemed) outside of those few in the OSY scheme who had

earned their trust. When I did meet with OSY youth interviews tended to take place in public spaces like parks or cafes and were conducted in Spanish.

3.4 The Methods Manifested

3.4.1 The interview process

I conducted fifty-five in-depth interviews with young women. Because of the varied and personal nature of many of the issues interviews were to cover, I refrained from asking a set list of questions, and instead guided the interviews with a group of key words, phrases and themes that I wanted to cover. These included areas such as personal natal history; decisions about ethnic identity labels; familial and parental roots; in/direct experiences of migration; connections to Mexico; conceptions of community and neighbourhood; peers and friends; dating; interests; education and schooling; and plans for the future⁹. This collection of prompts developed throughout the project as I grew to understand more clearly the discourses and methods of articulation that the young women tended to prioritise and feel comfortable utilising. Interviews ranged from twenty minutes to two hours long, but most lasted around 45-60 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded, bar one that was due to the recorder battery dying immediately beforehand. All interviews were conducted solely between the young woman involved and myself. I ensured no one else was present in the immediate interview space because the presence of peers or adults would have most likely altered the young woman's responses or made her uncomfortable.

3.4.2 Focus group formats

I convened six focus groups that ranged from between three and seven young women. I conducted them early on in the project to gain insight into some of the issues around identity that young women highlight as important, and to enable me to hone the individual interview schedule. Of the high school focus groups, approximately half of the participants went on to take part an interview individually. I began the groups by introducing the project again and proposing an initial theme about the labels young women use to describe themselves.

⁹ See appendix 2 for sample interview prompt sheet.

From here, I tended to let young women lead the direction of conversation because they often all had a story or anecdote to tell about 'being Mexican'. These often ignited a wider debate about what it means to be Mexican at home, at school and more widely, which is what the project is looking at. As such, I found myself only lightly guiding conversation as per the focus group prompt sheet.

3.4.3 Participant observation

I engaged in extensive periods of participant observation. The most sustained periods were in the middle and high schools during term time, and then when I was a Facilitator at the summer holiday workshops, all of which totalled eight months. I also regularly visited the Out of School Youth branch of Migrant Education at their rural offices and with them I went on two day trips to agricultural nurseries to meet young undocumented workers. I spent over fourteen days taking part in various activities at a local community centre and spent six Saturdays with the middle school girls' empowerment group. In addition to these, I spent many other moments speaking with and observing young women of Mexican descent during the eleven months I lived in California, most of which I recorded in my research diary or in digital voice memos to myself. The friendships and professional relationships that I developed with some of them also gave me an extra insight into their daily lives.

3.4.4 Table of Participants

| Avenue | Age range ¹⁰ | No. of Interviews | No. of Focus Groups (a) and no. of participants in each (b) |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Middle School | 12-14 | 2 | (a) 2 (b) 2, 3 |
| High Schools 1, 2 and 3 | 14-18 | 38 | (a) 4 (b) 7, 5, 6, 2 |
| University / Community College | 18-24 | 13 | 0 |
| 'Out of school' youth / Youth in employment | 15-24 | 2 | 0 |
| Total | | n=55 | n=6 |

¹⁰ Age range of young women I interviewed, not entire school age range.

3.5 Reflection

3.5.1 Review of chosen methods

For the most part I think my application of a variety of qualitative data collection methods, used in conjunction with each other, has allowed me to succeed in uncovering some of the social processes that young Mexican women engage in. Utilising a mixture of methods including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and extended periods of participant observation has resulted in a generous range of participant narratives. Through triangulation of these methods I have been offered a glimpse of the issues, sentiments and dominant identity discourses that young women consistently expressed throughout my interactions with them, and also those that seemed to be performed in only certain spaces or amongst selected company.

This mixed methodological approach allowed me to reassess, rebalance and adapt data collection techniques fluidly in the field to make them culturally appropriate to the research population and locale. Enlisting such methods also enabled me to adapt research sessions in response to the gendered practices that the female participants engaged in during their days. For example, their degrees of freedom after school, and as such how much time they had to meet with me, impacted on how and where we were able to engage with each other.

I found that the majority of interviews went very well, and in the two or three cases when they did not it was often down to logistical issues such as being rushed because a girl had to leave school. A couple of young women initially seemed unsure of what or how much to say, but soon relaxed and seemed to become more comfortable with talking as our conversation developed. For the most part though, I was very satisfied with the interviews. As many key informants commented, it is rare for ‘outsiders’ to ask young Mexican women for their opinions – they are normally a group silenced or ignored in wider public discourses. This sentiment was echoed by the young women’s desire to take part– they suggested it was something of a novelty for them to answer questions about topics such as gender norms and what it means to really be a ‘good Mexican girl’, topics that are important to them but rarely directly addressed. Many of them said after their interviews that they had thoroughly enjoyed speaking with me and the experience had triggered a whole set of interesting feelings for them about ‘who they are’.

I also found focus groups valuable, although to a lesser degree than interviews. Again, young women commented on the novelty of talking about themselves and also that it was good to hear that their schools peers were going through similar things to them. I mitigated problem of nervousness and fear of sharing opinions and personal information with peers by explaining what the group would cover and I made sure women only took part if they granted informed consent. This happened infrequently but if a young woman seemed very uncomfortable in a focus group situation I tried my best to reassure her and include her. Sometimes it was those who seemed more timid or unsure of the focus group setting who came forward and contributed the most powerful communications to the group. Similarly, as Hyams has found for example, silences are meaningful and can be taken as valid indications of participant sentiments – they may well indicate more than they first appear to (2004).

I found the months of participant observation in the range of educational and informal sites to be extremely valuable. Firstly, I was able to supplement my learning about individual interviewees with observations of them in interactions with their teachers, counsellors, peers and family members in their schools and social spaces. For example, when I worked at Having a Voice, a free summer school youth empowerment program, I witnessed some of the younger women taking in the gendered and ethnic performances of the older female and male students, many of whom they look up to as role models. Secondly, my wider understanding of life for Mexicans in that region of the U.S. grew substantially. I spent time with lots of Mexicans, both personal friends and people I met through the project. Whilst I witnessed lots of positive aspects of life on the border, I also saw lots of financial hardship, discrimination and downright racism towards Mexicans. All of these experiences have contributed to forming the lens through which I now see and write this project.

Throughout the fieldwork and therefore in this thesis, I have allowed for aspects of personal and emotional discourse to come through, whether it be my expressing empathy towards a young woman whilst she is telling me a story, or admitting that I too have experienced confusion about the various parts of my identity. Far from viewing these moments of affinity or closeness as inappropriate, I believe they are crucial to recognise and write about because they expose how ‘identity work’ takes place in relation to others.

3.5.2 Positionality

In developing this doctoral project through feminist and postcolonial optics I have attempted to make it more collaborative, for example by including young women in the development of questions, and self-reflexive, by taking care to examine the impact of my presence on the research participants and what they have to say. I hope that I have been able to reduce some of the disparities that often exist between a researcher and the ‘researched’.

Having said this, I do not naively presume to have wholly eliminated the existence of an unequal power dynamic in my research – most especially because such relationships are based on a variety of power-giving and power-taking positions that the researcher and researched embody simultaneously. There is always a difference and therefore a power inequality in a research relationship because even when a researcher is deemed to be an ethnic or racial ‘insider’, other factors such as class, education, and perceived life chances are likely to vary between the two parties. My position as both an insider and outsider offers unique twists on these already complicated negotiations, as I will illustrate below.

Wolf identifies three key aspects of power relations that continue to pervade feminist research:

1. Power differences stemming from different positionalities of the researcher and the researched (race, class, nationality, life chances, urban-rural background);
2. Power exerted during the research process, such as defining the research relationship, unequal exchange, and exploitation; and
3. Power exerted during the post fieldwork period – writing and representing.

1996 cited in Blake 1998: 25

As Wolf’s second and third points especially illustrate, we must acknowledge that unequal power dynamics do not exist solely in the field - the researcher’s ability to define the research relationship and their role as writer or presenter of someone else’s narrative grants them a power that the researched do not have. As Blake confirms from her own experience doing work in Chicano ethnic studies, ‘despite the application of feminist methodological perspectives (methods and theories), I found that the power differences between the working-class women and myself, a white, tenure-aspiring academic, may not be readily identified or altered and may even be perpetuated’ (1998: 25).

And of course, in our ‘defining’ of the field we raise problems of interpretation and representation well before we begin the ‘presentation’ phase of a project. The very questions I went into the field hoping to answer, the questions I posed to the girls in the interviews themselves, and the way I responded and return questioned reflect the ideas or representations of these young women I already held internally. They also represent the ideas and perspectives of the gatekeepers that facilitated my meetings with the young women – for example, I was told on more than one occasion, ‘Oh, she’ll be a good person to interview because...her situation is very *interesting*’.

Nonetheless, the acknowledgements above are not to say however that white women, or mixed-heritage women like myself, working with ethnic or class minorities should not, or cannot, do so – my instinct is to suggest that they can so long as they acknowledge the racialised and class positions both parties are situated in and, as Anderson encourages, recognise and challenge white privilege and its effects on the research encounter (Anderson 1993 cited in Blake 1998: 26). In this sense I hope that by using more relaxed, openly communicative methods such as loosely-structured discussions and the encouraging of oral histories, I have been able to manage the research relationship in the same way as Blake and Anderson - so that I earned the trust of the project’s participants by trying not to appear as a distanced or ‘stuck up’ white researcher, an image perhaps immediately conjured up by my skin colouring and my educational appearance.

3.5.3 Being an Insider/Outsider

My argument itself traces a border – between recognition of the artificiality of the distinctions drawn between research and politics, the operations of research and the research itself, the field and the “not field”, the researcher and the participant; and the need to live by these distinctions in order to accomplish something, however partial and incomplete, to avoid paralysis, cynicism, the “waste” of our training, skills, and talents. At this historical moment and in all the geographical sites of research, it is crucial that social scientists inhabit a difficult and inherently unstable space of betweenness (cf. Katz 1992; Trinh 1986-87) in order to engage in rhetorical, empirical, and strategic displacements, that merge our scholarship with a clear politics that works against the forces of oppression (Mascia-Lees et al. 1989).

Similarly to Katz above, I need to acknowledge my inhabitation of the ‘unstable space of betweenness’ so that I can better understand the role and influence of ‘me and where I come from’ on the research process and the participants I met. To look at, my skin-colour marks me as ‘white’, but I am of mixed ethnic and cultural heritage. My mother English, my father Mexican, I was brought up in London but lived my first few months in Mexico and have continued to visit annually since then. My first language is English and I speak Spanish almost fluently. I would say that I am educationally and economically privileged. My feminist postcolonial educational standpoint marks me as different from many people I met, most of whom had not engaged with such theories unless they had been to university. This is not to say that women I met did not know of or believe in gender equality, or question white privilege, this thesis will illustrate they do and are, but my experience of education is for the most part different to theirs. No matter how I might be half-Mexican, or they might be university (-bound) students, we have not grown up in the same worlds, and so neither of us can assume to fully understand the workings of each other’s daily lives.

Baca Zinn has written extensively on the intricacies of being an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ in relation to research populations. She suggested thirty years ago that whilst gender was increasingly becoming a lens through which to think about the role of the researcher, ethnicity or race had not been explored sufficiently for their effect on possible researcher-participant relationships (1979). This remains the case because whilst there have been calls for more researchers of an ethnic minority background to do research in their own communities, there has been little written about how people of mixed-heritage, or those positioned on the hazy boundary between insider and outsider, can manage their research. I particularly admire Baca Zinn’s work because she openly explores the positive and negative aspects of researching through this duality.

I knew from my pilot study and saw again in this doctoral study that the disclosure of my (half-) Mexicanness opened up doors that may have remained shut if I had continued to be marked as a ‘white’ woman from London with no claim to a degree of Mexicanness. Participants were almost always intrigued as to how ‘I’ came to be, with young women and gatekeepers frequently asking ‘but how did your parents *meet*?’. To them I was often exciting and different because although they knew of, or were themselves, people of half-Mexican

and half something else (usually American) descent, they had almost never heard of being Mexican-British and this made me something of a novelty that they wanted to explore.

Many participants asked if I had been to Mexico, if I still had family there, if I spoke Spanish. On more than one occasion I sensed that participants were trying to gauge 'how Mexican' I was, or what degree of authenticity of Mexicanness I could claim. The more Mexican I 'proved' myself to be, i.e. the greater knowledge of Mexican cooking or language and cultural practices I indicated, the greater degree of *respeto* (respect) and trust I was granted. On one occasion, I strongly sensed that the participant felt perturbed that I had travelled to Mexico more than her and possibly 'knew' Mexico as a country better than her – I would never have suggested this and she could have certainly argued that she was more Mexican than me because she lived in the borderlands, but I got a strong sense that she viewed it as a competition between us over the strength and validity of our *Mexicanidad*. This made for very interesting dynamics in the interview: she spoke of some really interesting gender and sexuality issues, but was especially clear to point out how she felt about national identity and where she placed herself as a Mexican or Mexican-American.

This example acts as a reminder that however open participants might be to a researcher who can claim some kind of 'insider' status, there are methods of border-policing that take place to keep 'outsiders' at a distance, or at least to identify where on the insider-outsider scale a researcher might sit. This situation also illustrates how important the context and location is for the performance of an identity. Mohammad, as someone who has written about being on the Pakistani 'insider/outsider' cusp and how it affects performances in the interview situation, explains in detail similar cases she has experienced:

The respondents performed particular identities to me, negotiating different, simultaneously illusory and real boundaries through contestation and resistances from those they regarded as the "Other" (white), the "Other within" (the Pakistani male) and me (seen variously as "Same", "Other" and simultaneously "Same" and "Other").

2001: 110

This scale of being an 'insider' or 'outsider' is dynamic in itself and I was aware in the field that I was able to place myself or be placed at varying locations along the scale – on separate

occasions and in different physical locations, but I could also embody the insider/outsider dualism *simultaneously*. I could manipulate how British or how Mexican I wished to be or sound by altering the language I used (English, Spanish, ‘Spanglish’, formal, colloquial), by how I presented myself (my clothes, what transport I used to reach the interview), and by what obvious ‘researcher’ materials I displayed (laying a voice-recorder on a desk or making notes, or having none of these and ‘just’ observing someone as they went about their business).

This last point is a reminder that it was not only my mixed-ethnicity that served to mark me as different, but my identity as a western-educated researcher. Previous studies have indicated that minority populations are increasingly suspicious of white ‘outsider’ researchers because of their previous experiences with an exclusionary academia – one that doesn’t facilitate their entry into it and one that functions to ‘take’ information from them without giving much, if anything, back. Baca Zinn reminds ‘white and non-white researchers would do well to recognize the reported resistance in minority communities’ (Baca Zinn 1979: 210) especially in the case of Chicano communities because they have historically been more critical of social science researchers.

Whilst I understand the necessity to think through the ‘position’ I am coming from and how I must try and write this into my research practice (McDowell 1992), I empathise with Rose (1997) when she expresses the difficulty she has when she tries embrace this kind of reflexivity. Rose goes as far as to critique some aspects of reflexivity, as a way of situating knowledges, because of its near impossibility to make real – there will always be differing positionalities in the research relationship, no matter how hard one tries to make these differences benign by acknowledging them and writing them into the research. As I have shown, exploring my positionality is certainly useful but it does not necessarily ‘solve’ the issue of my difference from the research participants. In fact, I have found that in many cases within my own research and particularly in this project, that there exists an exciting possibility for knowledge production and cultural exchange when the researcher and researched recognise and embrace their differences explicitly in the research encounter.

3.5.4 Ethical Strategies

Following the discussion above of my positionality and its various effects on the research encounter, I now present the steps I took to mitigate these issues and endow the project with adaptive and inclusive ethical research procedures.

I completed a robust ethical approval form for the Department of Geography, UCL, which was approved ahead of fieldwork, and which gave me approval to work with young women under the age of eighteen. Before they became involved, I talked all participants through the Project Information Sheet to make the purpose of the project clear, and had them sign the Informed Consent Form¹¹. I asked every participant for their permission to record our conversation with a digital voice recorder, reassuring them that the recordings would be for my personal use only when transcribing and any quotes that ended up in the final document would be made anonymous. I avoided imposing a rigid set of presumptions upon our conversations by using broad themes and I improved the process through feedback from young women. I also invited young women to suggest questions and adapt interview schedules at the beginning of the project since they were the ‘experts’ in what was important to them. In terms of appropriate content of interviews, sensitive topics such as dating or violence arose frequently with many of the high school girls, but always on the participant’s terms. I did not actively introduce such topics into the interview but pursued such issues gently and appropriately if the girl seemed comfortable to talk about these issues and if they were indeed relevant. I avoided discussions of such a sensitive nature with the younger participants but again if they chose to raise them then I would listen and respond carefully.

In terms of safeguarding the young women and myself during interviews I made sure to conduct them in what I deemed as safe semi-public places such as school offices and grounds, and public spaces like libraries and cafes. When women were under eighteen I made sure there was always an adult (for the most part this was Gloria) nearby or within calling distance. I also took care to check with young women that they were comfortable making the decision to stay after school, whether or not they chose to get parental permission (this was not a prerequisite to take part). I was aware of the need to negotiate the balance between enabling them to make their own decisions regarding consent and also ensuring that they did

¹¹ See appendices 3 and 4 for the project information sheet and the sample consent form.

not get in trouble with their parents for being late home or delaying their after-school responsibilities.

I did not explicitly ask if the participants had legal documents granting them the right to live and work in the U.S. Some of them chose to tell me and when they did so I reassured them that I would not tell anyone and that any discussion of those who took part who did not 'have papers' would be made completely anonymous. I was amazed by the degree to which some undocumented young women trusted me with their personal information, and wanted to engage in the research process. Due to the sensitivity of information I have taken great care to protect and keep private the data. I have made anonymous all names and identifying features throughout the document.

3.6 Analytical Tool Kit

3.6.1 On-going grounded analysis

Analysis started to take place before the data collection with young women began. Ahead of fieldwork I had to interrogate the questions, themes and preconceived ideas I was going into the research interaction with because they framed the type, content and recording of interviews. For example, I chose early on to digitally record interviews so that I could transcribe and analyse my participants' words verbatim. I was also careful to pay attention to and actively engage in reflection throughout my time in the field, thereby ensuring on-going grounded analysis. Within each individual interview, I conducted in-the-moment analysis, which allowed me to respond and direct the interview in certain ways. This was an iterative process and each interview shaped the themes I proposed in all subsequent interviews. I found it especially helpful, given the evolving nature of the interviews, to record my thoughts in my research diary and to regularly write summaries of what I perceived to be the emergent themes coming through.

3.6.2 Transcription

Interview transcription was also imbued with analysis in that it was an interpretive and reductive process where I had to choose *what* to include or discard, and *how* to record linguistic tendencies, dialects or accents, for example. I always tried to record things like silences, pauses, 'umm/ahh', and 'I don't know' as these can all have meaning for a project

that explores such an emotional and personal subject as identity. I transcribed interviews as soon as possible after they took place and I recorded any insights or realisations that struck me during the transcription process in my research diary. I typed up my research diary notes and attached them to the participant file so that I could go back to my initial thoughts about the interaction if I needed to, and it meant I could code these notes later on.

3.6.3 Coding

Initially I took a very hands-on approach to developing my coding categories. I manually annotated the transcripts by underlining, writing notes in the margins, and highlighting emergent themes with colour-codes. I preferred to do this instead of using coding software such as Atlas.ti as I find working with printed transcripts enables me to connect with the data in more depth. I read and coded transcripts in chronological order, starting with the earliest, which allowed me to see the development of my questioning during the interview process and take into account the analysis that had already begun to happen. Initially I tended not to apply rigid coding categories to the data, but instead as I have already noted, during the interview and transcription process I wrote detailed summaries of the key emergent themes and with these already collated, I looked for these themes in each transcript. For example, I looked for where people spoke about broad areas such as family, or home, or migration. Within these areas, I then paid attention to the issues and more specific themes that emerged, such as positive parental relations, housework, or negative memories of migration. I was then working at quote level, where individuals spoke about specific experiences, emotions or events that were unique to their lives, and yet which were exemplary of the central questions of the project. At this detailed level, I was also on the look-out for anomalies, or deviations from the broader pattern of responses. These 'unexpected moments' were especially telling, and in a project that seeks to recognise the difference of life experience, these were especially important to pay attention to. I found diagrams very helpful for organising my thoughts around what relationships emerged between issues, and once I had some of this mapped, I started to formalise these repeating ideas or codes into thematic families. I also coded supplementary documents and resources such as diary notes or leaflets that I acquired in the field.

Throughout the formal analytical period I made sure to talk to my colleagues about what themes and messages I thought were arising as I found an outsider's perspective helped to illuminate alternative interpretations of the data. Finally, I believe that analysis has continued through the process of writing chapters, and indeed this whole thesis because the qualitative data has looked different each time I returned to it - particularly in relation to other literature that I have come across. Whilst the analysis has continued right up until this thesis was 'finished', there had to come a stage where I saw that I had explored each issue to its natural end point. For a study like this, however, that explores the dynamic, relational and political nature of identity, such an 'end point' engenders wholly new questions to be explored in the future.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the epistemological underpinnings of the study and has shown how I translated these into a tangible research strategy. Because of the ways in which feminist, Chicana postcolonial, and youth methodologies intersect and share many of the same objectives – especially in relation to decentering the White male gaze that has historically dominated much social science research, and to listening to previously silenced groups – it worked positively to incorporate them and they enabled me to work sensitively with young Mexican women. Developing upon the Introduction and Literature Review, which framed the specific and complicated negotiations underway within the borderland around identities and belonging, this chapter has also demonstrated why Encinitas and the broader Southern California region are valuable and fascinating sites for the exploration of young Mexican women’s identities, especially in the context of growing migration to more suburban and rural destinations like North County San Diego. I took care to explain my sampling strategy across the different school avenues I engaged, particularly because of how crucial a site the school is for young Mexican women’s identity formations – I develop upon these specificities in Chapter Eight on School, Education and Identity. Overall, I hope I have shown that I was able, through multiple qualitative and ethnographic methods, to communicate with my participants in a way that was sensitive and hopefully enjoyable for them, and which have provided this project with a wealth of valuable empirical data. The following chapters of this thesis now draw upon this data to respond to this project’s research questions, and hopefully illustrate the diversity of voices that have contributed to shedding more light on the lives of young Mexican women in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

Chapter Four: Processes of Identification – The value of labels

4.1 Introduction

Living on the border offers a multitude of mirrors generating images which can be used [by Mexicans] to categorize and compile narratives about others and about themselves.

Vila 1999: 79

Young women of Mexican descent who live in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands face a difficult task of constructing coherent national and ethnic identities in the face of the diverse, and at times conflicting, discourses of Mexicanness and Americanness in the region. In order to navigate such ambiguous terrain, young women carefully and deliberately draw upon multiple frames of reference to construct fluid, and yet sound, transnational identities.

Beginning this thesis' journey in understanding how young women make sense of the various parts of themselves, this chapter examines the identity labels that young women choose to describe themselves. The use of national, ethnic and political group identifiers such as 'Mexican', 'Mexican-American', 'Chicana', 'Latina/o' or 'Hispanic' operate as windows through which to view the complex interplay between historical formations and the current or future lives that young women are forging. This chapter shows that young women born in the U.S. to Mexican parents often experience tension between their own birthplace (roots) and symbolic attachments to bloodlines and parental migration narratives (routes) (Gilroy 1993). Drawing upon Vila's theorisations of identification in the borderland (2000 and 2003), this chapter proposes that in order to make sense of these departures, young women strategically separate, valorise, and then often reunite in a layered form, their Mexican ethnicity and their American nationality. The identity labels they subsequently ascribe to are very personally interpreted, rooted in individual and family circumstances and reproduced through nuanced processes of Othering, especially in relation to their White American peers at school, explored in much more depth in Chapter Eight.

Understanding the relevance of national and ethnic labels to young women themselves is important, since as the literature review showed, the identification of the children of

immigrants may influence their educational and integration trajectories into wider society. Some scholarship, for example, holds that ‘thick’ in-group identification for Mexicans results in a reactionary ambivalence toward symbols of the exclusionary white American mainstream, which in the case of youngsters may be manifested in their distancing from schooling institutions and/or their immersion in gang counter-culture (Altschul et al. 2008, Portes and Zhou 1993). Others have shown that identifying strongly as a member of the Mexican community imbues young people with social and cultural capital that they leverage to construct positive schooling experiences and futures for themselves in the borderlands (Kasinitz et al. 2008, Urrieta and Martínez 2011). These studies, whilst supplemented with some qualitative data are often largely based on quantitative analysis of educational data sets, and have so far not examined in depth young people’s own understandings of the social categories to which they identify. In response, this chapter listens to young women’s choices about their identity and renders visible a myriad set of meanings and values that they attach to Mexicanness and Americanness, and indeed what being Mexican or Mexican-American means for them.

In addition to paying attention to the more discursive and subtle expressions of ethnic identity that young women exhibited throughout our interviews and which inform the thesis more widely, I also chose to ask young women explicitly about their choice of identity label, with the question, ‘what label would you use to describe yourself in terms of national or ethnic identity?’ I did this because whilst popularly and creatively used, such labels can also be taken for granted and go unquestioned, and function to blur and homogenise those who ascribe to them.

The chapter is arranged in three parts. The first explores how many young women foreground their ethnicity as it is rooted in bloodlines and migration narratives to identify as ‘Mexican’ via parental proxy. The chapter shows secondly that the majority of others selectively incorporate into their identity label recognition of what they understand to be the ‘American’ elements of their daily lives and outlooks, whilst still prioritising their Mexicanness, thereby identifying as ‘Mexican-American’. The third section illuminates the minority of young women’s choices to ascribe to a politicised ‘Chicana’ identity.

Throughout, I show that the use of these labels is evidence of the ways in which young women's processes of identification are transnational; they are rooted in their parents' border-crossing journeys and bloodlines that span nation states; and they grant salience to the influences of two cultures and societies, which intermingle across their daily practices. Furthermore, narratives of school, education and social interactions with their White American peers figure heavily in their discussions of identity. These relational aspects of their identification and feelings of belonging appeared so powerful and often so starkly portrayed that although many of them arise in this chapter, I also pay special attention to them in Chapter Eight which focuses on School, Education and Identity.

This chapter illustrates that young women perform agency in that they choose for themselves the labels that they perceive to best reflect their identities, even if they are in contrast to what broader narratives in the region or amongst peers suggest they are 'supposed to be'.

4.2 'Mexican' by Parental Proxy

In a project which endeavoured to speak to young women of 'Mexican' descent, it is not unexpected that a significant number, roughly half in fact, of young women I interviewed chose to identify as 'Mexican' – although their reasons for doing so were diverse. It is important to note that the large majority of young women who took part in this project were born in the U.S. to Mexican parents, whilst the remaining fifth were born in Mexico and migrated as infants or young children. Young women's own places of birth, however, do not necessarily inform the identity they ascribe to as much as other less tangible attachments.

Being 'Mexican' is in fact organised around one of two understandings; that someone is themselves 'from' or born in Mexico, or that they have parents who are 'from' or were born in Mexico, the latter of which is more relevant to the majority of those in this project. In explaining who she thought might be expected to ascribe to her own label of choice, 'Mexican', Marta illustrates that being 'considered' to be *from* Mexico may not actually depend on one being *born* there:

To me, Mexican is just like anyone that's from Mexico that, even though you were born here but your parents were born in Mexico, I still consider them Mexican.

Marta

I posit that much like Marta, most young women ascribe to a Mexican identity by parental proxy – that is, they directly source their ability to claim their own Mexicanness from their parents' places of birth in Mexico, even when they themselves were born on U.S. soil. Even Nina, herself born in Mexico, relates her understanding of being Mexican not so much because of her own place of birth, but more explicitly towards parental and grandparental nascence, and to her *culture*, a key aspect that informs identity which I shall shortly deal with in depth:

[Being Mexican] means that your original parents or grandparents are from there [Mexico] and that's your culture, that's where you were born, or where your parents had their genetic information.

Nina

References to hereditary, biological and genetic ties that connect young women to 'Mexico' via their parents were frequently incorporated into young women's national identity descriptions. Certainly, it has been well-documented in Chicana/o literatures that post-migratory Mexican families reproduce notions of connectivity to the homeland through discourses of lineage, origins and *sangre* (blood) (Anzaldúa 1987, Alarcón 1990). However, *why* young women choose to attach their identities to their parents' place of birth and not their own was harder for them to explain.

Sabrina, for example, produces her Mexicanness through the recognition of bloodlines, thereby illuminating both the visceral connection that most young women feel towards their Mexican 'roots', and the marked absence of such a feeling towards their own American place of birth:

Caitlin: How would you describe yourself in terms of national identity?

Sabrina: Umm...I don't know. I don't really think I'm an American. Because both of my parents are from Mexico and I have their blood and I was just *born* here, I wasn't really...I'm not really part American. I don't know. I think I'm more Mexican, than American.

Caitlin: So when you say you're not American, or you don't feel American, in your mind what does American mean?

Sabrina: A white person. And someone whose parents are from here. My parents are not from here, so I don't consider myself American. That's why.

Caitlin: So you would call yourself...?

Sabrina: Mexican, yeah, I would...

Caitlin: What do you think being Mexican means then?

Sabrina: (She struggles to find the words)...I don't know. It's just that I think that I am more Mexican because...my parents are from Mexico and I have their blood. I'm here in America, I was just born here, but it doesn't mean that I'm an American...I'm confused....

Sabrina

Sabrina became uncomfortable when answering these questions and struggled to articulate her feelings on the matter of *not being* American further than that her parents ‘are not from here [the U.S.]’. Part of the discomfort that surrounds young women’s deliberation around an appropriate term for their identity arises out of their recognition that they were born in the U.S. and are therefore expected to claim American nationality (at least to some degree). Many women however, do not *feel* American, and would rarely identify themselves solely as such. This is for the most part because, like Sabrina, they equate being American with being ‘white’, Caucasian or ‘Anglo’, and to having parents who were also born on U.S. soil. Although only a few young women explicitly referred to themselves or other Mexicans as ‘brown’ or ‘dark-skinned’, many more of them repeatedly constructed themselves as non-white.

But not identifying as American is related to more than phenotypical characteristics – young women understand that ‘being an American is an ideological commitment, and not a matter of birth’ (Lipset 1996 cited in Owen 2005: 2). Despite the promotion in government and schooling institutions of the multicultural ‘American mosaic’, where ‘individuals can be Americans and at the same time claim other identities, including those based on racial and ethnic heritage’ (Owen 2005: 2-3), there remains substantial support for the ‘melting pot’ mantra where a diverse immigrant public ought to shed their differentiating factors and *become* American as part of one imagined mainstream. Such a mainstream is rooted in American exceptionalism, the revered model ‘which assumed that the nation’s extraordinary history and development warrants its special place in the world. [Where] the country’s vast frontier offers boundless and equal opportunities for individuals to achieve their goals through hard work and self-sacrifice’ (*ibid.*: 1).

As I will document in more depth in Chapter Five, the majority of young women’s parents have struggled as undocumented workers since their arrival in the United States up to twenty years ago. Young women may witness daily their parents’ hard work and self-sacrifice, for which they receive little respect, remuneration or benefits, and are starkly aware of the absence of the ‘boundless and equal opportunities’ that such efforts should afford them. Why then would young women choose to invest in a concept and identity that consistently devalues their parents, and by association, excludes young women themselves from the very upward mobility they are supposed to be seeking? Perhaps their decisions to identify as *not*

American, despite their birthplace, should be seen as a decisive rejection of a system that they do not believe in nor have the resources to enter into fully. It is noteworthy that Marta, Nina and Sabrina did not appear to be the adversarial or reactive youngsters that Portes and Zhou (1993) speak of in relation to oppositional stances borne out of exclusion – their identification as Mexican and not American coincided with their experiences of positive home and educational lifestyles, indicating that ascribing to a strong Mexican identity operates positively for them.

Sabrina's quote above then, exemplifies the process of othering that young women engage in to distinguish themselves from what they perceive themselves *not* to be - in this case she formulates notions of Mexicanness in opposition to her constructions of Americanness. Sabrina's difficulty in justifying her aversion to calling herself American and her willingness to embrace a Mexican identity illustrate the importance of the emotional and intuitive nature of ethnic identity ascription over the legal pronouncement of nationality in a passport, for example. In her words, she 'was *just* born here [the U.S.]', thereby minimising the technicality of her place of birth, and prioritising the cultural and blood connections that function to inform her Mexicanness. Gilroy's conceptions of 'roots' and 'routes' are useful here for thinking about how young women negotiate notions of rootedness and belonging in relation to the historical mobility of their parents (1993). As Sabrina illustrates, there exists a tension, or 'confusion', between the fact of one's own natal 'roots' being in their birthplace on American soil, and the familial residue and collective memory of the 'routes' formed through their parents' passage from the Mexican homeland into the U.S. I posit that young women make sense of this tension by claiming their Mexican identity via parental proxy – that is, they forego the grounded certainties of their own national *roots*, whose Americanness is undermined by the stronger feeling of ethnic Mexicanness instilled by their parents' mobility and current cultural practices, and replace them with the transnational contingencies of *routes*, allowing them, by identifying as 'Mexican', to 'forge a relationship between the past, present and future' (McLeod 2000: 215).

So what are the elements of an ethnic Mexican identity that young women feel so much affiliation with? I posit that their choice to align themselves with a strong ethnic Mexican identity is born out of the recognition of the struggles their parents have endured, the pride

they have in the resultant typology of Mexicans as ‘hard workers’¹², and the daily infusion of their lives with Mexican culture, which I shall examine in depth in Chapter Five. Firstly, Rita explains how ‘struggles’ are relevant to her own identification as Mexican:

Caitlin: What label would you choose to describe yourself in terms of national identity?

Rita: Mexican, yeah. (She sounds very firm).

Caitlin: What does that mean for you?

Rita: Um...(long pause)...I personally...I have dreams. And even though there are many, what would you call it? Many...struggles? I’ll go for it. I’ll try my best to reach that goal. For example, becoming a nurse, I’ll do it. Being Mexican, it’s like, I’m not going to give up. I’m going to fight for what I want, work hard for what I want. Mexican means ‘I can do it’. I’m able to do it, even if I have a lot of struggles. It’s also like remembering the place where I’m from? I came from over here but I can do a lot more to help my country [Mexico], or just to help people in general here too [United States]. A lot of people are like ‘oh, Mexicans blah blah blah...’, ‘Mexicans are lazy’, ‘Mexicans just cause trouble’, ‘Mexicans...’, you know? It may be true sometimes, but it’s just like any other place. And when you ask me about being Mexican, I’m proud of being a Mexican. I don’t want to say ‘oh, no, I’m not from Mexico’, I don’t want to hide it. Because that’s where I’m from. I love that place. I love my family. I love everything.

Rita

To identify as Mexican in such a way is a powerful expression of the collective proactivity, perseverance, and determination to fulfil one’s goals, which are perceived by the community to be characteristic of Mexicans in the U.S. To ‘have dreams’ is also viewed as inherently Mexican, thanks largely to the wider rhetoric of the borderlands that frames Mexican immigrants as those seeking to make a ‘better life’ for themselves and their families (Durand

¹² I explore the notions of the ‘hard working’ Mexican in more depth in chapter five.

and Massey 2006). These positively framed attributes of Mexicans stand in contrast to Rita's acknowledgement of wider disparaging public discourses where 'Mexican' is equated with being 'lazy' or *flojo*, a construct that I address in more depth at the end of this section (Rivera-Mills 2000). She is illustrative of how young women respond to those stereotypes by both denouncing them and also acknowledging that they might be representatives of *some* cases, although certainly not all.

Rita's words are also important because they indicate that it is not only Mexican parents and adults who experience 'struggles', but indeed young women's own lives may have been characterised by racism, poverty and residential instability, as was certainly the case for some women in the project. As I will discuss in more depth in Chapter Five, young women respond to their perceived struggles in various ways, with many of them utilising them to spur them forward and achieve success, which in turn they say will allow them to help and give back to their (specifically Mexican) community in the future. Others may be affected by their struggles in more negative ways, with some young women in the project suggesting that their peers used their Mexican struggles as an 'excuse' for not trying at school.

Young women exhibited an enormous sense of pride when justifying their identity label: pride in Mexico, the place itself; pride in the family who embodies Mexicanness in the U.S.; and then pride in their own identity as Mexican. In fact, reproducing one's own identity by honouring parental nascence and their migration and 'struggle' narratives is also sanctioned and encouraged through young women's engagement in programmes directed at young Mexicans or minority groups. AVID¹³ and Having a Voice, for example, both attended by a range of my participants, are educational and pastoral programmes rooted in 'affirmative action'¹⁴ that foster within young people a sense of pride in their Mexican identity in an attempt to counter the racism and discrimination they may otherwise face. I witnessed teachers encouraging young people to respect and take care of their ancestry and Mexican 'culture' at home, and to recognise all of the work and sacrifices their parents had undertaken on their behalf. Such a celebration and validation of one's parental past may therefore be

¹³ Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a school program aimed at low and middle-achieving children, especially Latino children or children from families without a history of college education, to enable them to 'attain the socialization required to achieve success' and 'navigate the opportunity structure and achieve social mobility' (Mehan et al. 1996 cited in Conchas 2001: 479).

¹⁴ The American interpretation of 'positive discrimination'.

partially responsible for young women's choice to ascribe to a Mexican identity via parental proxy and will be discussed in more depth in relation to migration and struggle narratives in Chapter Five. In addition to acknowledging one's parental origins and journeys as part of the sacred family history, identifying as Mexican also pertains to the current, visible or tangible aspects of life that young women experience and witness around them every day – most especially the performance of Mexican 'culture' through *la familia*, which I discuss in Chapter Six.

This extract from Ana Rosa's interview illustrates the power of cultural practice to inform ethnic identity in comparison to how young women understand and then distance themselves from national identity definitions that they are 'supposed' to apply to themselves:

Ana Rosa: I'm *supposed* to be Mexican-American because I was born here and I went to school here, but I feel that I'm more Mexican than American. In my house we always speak Spanish and we always watch Mexican TV shows. So I think I'm Mexican.

Caitlin: And what do you mean when you say you're 'supposed' to be Mexican-American?

Ana Rosa: Well I think I'm supposed to be Mexican-American because from the definition that I've heard of before it refers to people that come from a Mexican family but who were born here or who grew up here. So I think since I was born in the U.S. and I never went to school in Mexico, I'm supposed to be Mexican-American.

Caitlin: So what do you think makes you Mexican?

Ana Rosa: Just my cultural background...my first language is Spanish, so I relate more to Mexican people.

Ana Rosa

Rather than identifying as Mexican-American, which she defines as someone who is born in the U.S. and who grows up there like herself, Ana Rosa finds that 'Mexican' is a more appropriate term for her because of the Mexican cultural markers that characterise her daily

life. Along with the majority of young women, Ana Rosa chose to foreground the home space as a key site for the performance of Mexican culture, where speaking Spanish and the watching of Mexican TV shows, for example, are quotidian practices which inform one's ethnic Mexicanness. She reasons that it is this *cultural* background that holds most sway in her life, allowing her to 'relate more' to Mexican people. This leads her to quite comfortably choose to ascribe to a Mexican label, despite it being different to what she is 'supposed' to be. Young women's ability to connect with others through the acknowledgement of their shared cultural practices was commonly raised as a reason for, and benefit of, identifying as Mexican. This was particularly salient outside of the home in spaces which were seen as on the whole as 'not Mexican'. Young women at university, for example, find a sense of kinship and allegiance with other Mexicans who perform Mexican cultural practices, such as attending church, in an environment that is broadly white and Asian American – thereby performing intradiasporic transnationalist practices.

Most telling about Ana Rosa's words though is that they highlight that labels are constructs performed in a wider system of social stratification. Her understanding is that there is an overarching definition of 'Mexican-American' that she says she has 'heard of', and that by virtue of her background she is supposed to identify with. Young women were able to provide quite similar basic definitions, with their own personal flourishes of interpretation added as evidenced so far, but often found it difficult to identify who polices the parameters of what people are 'supposed' to identify. In this sense, they recognise that they undergo a regulated and repetitive pattern of labelling by others which functions to normalise and popularise such identity constructions (Butler 1990).

Mariana is able to shed some more light on the implications of 'being labelled'. She displayed an especially strong conviction to promote her pride in her Mexican identity which she understands to be the result of being 'from [her] parents', themselves born in Mexico. The energy with which she expresses her Mexicanness is arguably channelled from her frustration at the expectation that she should consider herself a 'Mexican-American':

Mariana: What do I call myself? I just call myself Mexican. Not Mexican-American, just Mexican. Because I grew up with a Mexican culture, I grew up with both my parents speaking Mexican, and raising me with

that culture. And I don't know, I just don't see myself as a Mexican-American, I don't know if that makes sense. And I don't want to consider myself a Mexican-American because it's really funny how a person when they start off, they're always labelled Mexican, as they grow older and as they achieve more, when they have achieved something, they get labelled Mexican-American. So if I end up being something big, I don't want them to label me Mexican-American, I'm Mexican, you know. Before you called me Mexican, so keep on calling me Mexican. Because that's what I am. So that's basically my whole viewpoint on the Mexican and Mexican-American thing.

Caitlin: That makes sense. I'm interested because I've heard a lot of people use a similar language...

Mariana: Yeah, I don't like that because it's like when you're a nobody, you're just Mexican. I don't like people saying when they achieve something 'oh yeah we have to say she's American now, because she achieved something, she's American, she's not Mexican'. I feel like they're saying that Mexicans alone can't achieve anything. So I hope that if I do get successful, I really hope they just call me Mexican, I do not want to be labelled Mexican-American. Because I want them to see that just because I'm successful doesn't mean that you can call me Mexican-American. If you called me Mexican before, stick with it, because that's what you've labelled me and that's what I'll be.

Caitlin: What do you think about things like labels?

Mariana: I really don't think much of labels. I myself consider myself Mexican, I labelled myself Mexican I guess, because that's what I think I am. My parents are from Mexico, that means I'm Mexican, and I'm from my parents so that means I'm Mexican. So I don't think anyone really gave me the label.

Mariana

Mariana's case illustrates that some young women were cognisant of the power dynamics and relative values that are given to identity labels, and that they engage in strategic use of

them. Mariana perceives society to attach socio-economic and educational markers of 'success' to Americanness and as someone from an immigrant family becomes more settled, successful or educated, so they are viewed as more Americanised, something reflected in the appendage of '-American' to 'Mexican'. This is deemed a positive attribute or process, moving away from the negative characteristics of Mexicanness that are associated with 'laziness' or 'causing trouble' as Rita commented earlier.

Indeed, this is the trajectory promoted by Portes and his colleagues (Portes and Zhou 1993, Portes and Rumbaut 2001). For Mariana though, this change in status is unacceptable because it relies on the assumption that being 'just Mexican' means being a 'nobody' who 'cannot achieve anything'. Most of the young women also recognised and disagreed with the higher valorisation of Americanness over Mexicanness in terms of social hierarchy and the resultant re-labelling. Mariana actively contests this process by demanding that she continue to be known as 'Mexican' in the event of her future successes. Her stance mirrors that of Chicana activists who rejected the Mexican-American label because to them it connoted assimilation (Zavella 1993). I would argue therefore that Mariana's words represent a powerful rebuttal of the segmented assimilation framework – to be successful and achieve in America does not have to mean the discarding of one's valuable Mexican heritage in favour of a regime that previously had her marked as a 'nobody', as the lives of plenty of other young women in this project evidence.

Francesca's situation also evidences the ways in which identities are part of a system of expectations and external perceptions. Her case varies from most of those above in that she was born in Mexico and moved to the U.S. when she was eight months old. She is what some of the young women referred to as being '*sin papeles*' (literally 'without papers', or without the immigration documents allowing her legitimate legal status in the U.S.). Her position is very common in this area of Southern California, where young women migrated with their parents when they were just babies. Here she explains her choice of identity label and the public perceptions of how people of different backgrounds should appear, an important aspect of identity which I examine in more depth in Chapter Five on cultural performances:

Francesca: When anybody asks me I say that I'm Mexican. Even though a lot of people when I first meet them, they say my English is really fluent so

everybody thinks that my parents are from Mexico and I'm from here. But it's not like that, I'm from Mexico. I've never been there since I came over here when I was eight months. I don't remember anything, but when people ask me I say I'm Mexican. Like a hundred-and-fully per cent Mexican.

Caitlin: And why do you choose to identify like that?

Francesca: Because, I mean, I don't want to deny who I am, you know? I'm not embarrassed of saying I'm Mexican. Even though there's a lot of racism going on, I don't deny who I am. I don't feel I need to. I'm not embarrassed of it, and it's just who I am. Yeah (she laughs).

Caitlin: Yeah, that's a really strong position to have.

Francesca: Yeah.

Caitlin: You were saying that some people, when they hear your English and they think you're very fluent they think you were born here - if you were born here what kind of label do you think they would call you by?

Francesca: I think they would probably call me Mexican-American. I think that's how they notice me right now. But really I'm not, there are just a couple of people that really know I'm from Mexico.

Francesca

Francesca uses affirmative language to express her pride in being 'a hundred-and-fully-per cent Mexican', an indication that she perceives there to be scale of varying degrees of Mexicanness and due to her place of birth is able to claim a 'authentic' Mexican identity with conviction. Her deliberate refusal to be embarrassed by her identity in the face of what she recognises as overt racism in the region is also telling. In other parts of the interview, Francesca spoke of the painful experiences of racism and classism that she has encountered as a result of her undocumented status, exerted by both wider 'white' American society, but especially from within the U.S.-based Mexican community. Vila has also witnessed the othering processes such as these that are at work amongst members of the broader Mexican

community living in the borderlands. He suggests that the homogenisation of Mexicans by Anglos in the region, in accordance with the regional discourse of 'all poverty is Mexican', results in Mexican-Americans attempting to separate themselves from more recently arrived Mexico-born Mexicans, like Francesca. They do this by foregrounding their own American nationality, whilst retaining their ethnic Mexicanness, and by promoting narratives whereby Mexican nationals are 'poor because they are lazy' (Vila 1997).

Francesca and Rita's quotes also both speak to another manifestation of the tensions between those who identify as Mexican, and those who identify as Mexican-American. That they both portray themselves as being against the 'denying' or 'hiding' of one's Mexican identity is important since this is a process that some Mexicans imply to be underway amongst those who identify as Mexican-American. Vila acknowledges the existence of resentment between some Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, with the former at times perceiving 'Mexican-Americans [to be] betraying their own 'race' and rejecting their cultural heritage in order to become a part of American society' (Vila 1999: 76). Whilst none of the young women referred to these kinds of feelings explicitly in relation to identity labels, some of them certainly spoke about other young women of Mexican descent who they felt were distancing themselves from the Mexican community by performing what were perceived to be more 'American' practices, such as hanging out with white American girls at school, or letting their Spanish language skills fade. Both of these processes of othering were apparent amongst the different types of Mexicans who took part in this project and I will highlight them as when they arise, particularly in Chapters Five and Seven.

This section has shown that of those who took part in this project, around half of the young women choose to foreground their ethnic Mexican identity over their American nationality and call themselves 'Mexican'. They do this out of acknowledgment and pride for their bloodlines and parental struggles, as well through affiliation with their Mexican communities via shared cultural practices. They also engage in nuanced processes of othering, both to mark themselves as 'not American', but also as 'not Mexican-American'. As the next section will show, the majority of other young women in the project drew upon similar understandings of their parental and cultural heritage, but chose to incorporate elements of their national and cultural American identity into the label of 'Mexican-American'.

4.3 'Mexican-American' – '*First I'm Mexican and then I'm American*'

Mexicans living on the border are constantly grappling with awareness of their identity as an ethnic group and as part of a nation at one and the same time.

Vila 1997 cited in Vila 1999: 79

As this chapter has so far shown, the roots and routes that connect them to Mexico remain crucial to many young women's ethnic identity ascription as Mexican. Others however, negotiate their identities slightly differently and for varying reasons decide to acknowledge their American national identity in their label also. As such, the label 'Mexican-American' was also chosen very frequently, by just under half of the young women interviewed.

Young women who identify as Mexican-American often give very similar, if not the same, definitions of their label that young women gave to 'Mexican'. Sofia, for example, says that Mexican-American means being born in America and having Mexican parents, exactly the same understanding as Mariana in the previous section. Sofia though, chooses to recognise both her Mexican parental heritage and her American birthplace in her identity label, thereby highlighting the significance of personal interpretation when it comes to the construction of seemingly universal labels:

Sofia: 'Mexican-American', I'm used to that.

Caitlin: So what makes you Mexican-American?

Sofia: Born in America, and having Mexican parents.

Sofia

Sofia's words also illustrate the way in which identity labels are interpreted and used by young women in very 'common sense' ways. For her, she has become 'used to' Mexican-American in her everyday life and as such it comes almost effortlessly as a definition for her identity. Indeed, this is evidence of the ways in which the social constructs of national and ethnic

identity take on a “natural” presence through the repeated performance of...norms’ (Sharp 1996: 98).

In a similar way, Abigail’s extract shows the degree to which young women feel relaxed about allowing slippage between the terms ‘Mexican’ and Mexican-American’ – for some they are almost interchangeable. Even after she goes through the process of defining herself as Mexican-American because she was born in the U.S. and not in Mexico, she exclaims that alongside one’s Mexican-American identity, someone would *still* be Mexican, thereby evidencing that young women choose to see themselves as *both* at the same time;

A lot of people get offended when they’re like ‘oh, you’re Hispanic’, or ‘you’re Latino’, but I don’t. I’m just like, ‘I’m Mexican’, I was born here, so I guess I’m Mexican-American...the way I see it is if you were born in Mexico you’re like full Mexican...that’s where you’re a citizen. And then if you’re Mexican-American you were born here, and you’re still Mexican! (She laughs).

Abigail

If ‘Mexican’ was a label chosen on more of an emotional than technical basis, ascribing to a ‘Mexican-American’ identity seemed to involve more deliberation, negotiation, and at times, resignation. Young women use the term ‘Mexican-American’ to carefully express the dual facets of their lives, the ‘Mexican’ parts of themselves, and the ‘American’. Young women do two quite different things when explaining their Mexican-American identity label. Sometimes, they split into Mexican and American the separate parts of themselves, and consequently valorise them - with Mexican valued higher than American when it comes to questions of culture, and American valued higher than Mexican when it comes to questions of educational and socio-economic success. In other moments, they acknowledge the fusion and interplay between the two ‘distinct’ parts of themselves, thereby producing transnational identities that comfortably reflect both.

As Rossi’s logic evidences, young women prioritise their identity labels by placing Mexican and American parts of themselves in order of importance or perceived influence upon them:

Caitlin: Would you say that you’re from a Mexican background?

- Rossi: Yes. Both my parents were born in Mexico. And my first language is Spanish. So...
- Caitlin: Ok, and where were you born yourself?
- Rossi: I was born in National City, San Diego.
- Caitlin: And so what would your national identity be?
- Rossi: I would be Mexican-American.
- Caitlin: What does that mean to you?
- Rossi: To me, it means that first I'm Mexican and then I'm American because I was born here. But...my first nationality is Mexican, because that's what my parents are from. And just being born here makes me American. That's about it.
- Caitlin: And so for you growing up, which cultures, if you could think about Mexican culture and American culture, what do you think has had the most influence on you?
- Rossi: Definitely Mexican.

Rossi

Rossi asserts that she is *first* Mexican because that is her 'nationality' by way of her parents being from Mexico and having Spanish as her first language. For her, being American is an appendage to her identity 'just' because she was born in the U.S. She seems here to accept her degree of Americanness because she should, or as an afterthought to supplement her larger, more important Mexican self. Indeed, other young women also expressed a degree of ambivalence or even reticence to call themselves Mexican-American, but did so because they felt they should. As shown in the previous section, some young women like Mariana feel strongly that they do *not* have to call themselves Mexican-American because it is associated with assimilation towards American culture whilst simultaneously devaluing that which is Mexican.

As Vila has shown, identity within the borderlands is fluid and is subject to change upon meeting other members of 'the Mexican community' who identify in slightly different ways (1997). In fact, sometimes young women who have previously identified as Mexican alone,

were exposed to new ways of thinking about the American elements of their identity label through challenges from the outside, as Lorena's words show:

I used to think that I was just Mexican and then we had a discussion in my AVID class, because the teacher told us like 'raise your hand if you think you're American?' and nobody, like nobody did. And then she gave us a lecture about 'does it matter if your background is Mexican? You're still American so that would be called Mexican-American'. And ever since I've thought 'it's true', because you are Mexican-American, you have the rights to be an American because you were born here, but then you can't forget about your heritage that both your parents are from. So I consider myself a Mexican-American now.

Lorena

Lorena's quote illustrates the influence of education on identity where others may offer insight into the meanings behind a label and encourage people to ascribe it to themselves. In this case, Lorena had her viewpoint expanded by her AVID teacher. In her school this is a class that is for the most part made up of young people from Mexican backgrounds and the teachers actively promote the exploration of their pupils' natal and cultural history. As this chapter has so far shown, young women are often reluctant to promote or recognise explicitly the American elements of their lives, sometimes because they feel that to do so might threaten their ability to claim a peer and community-recognised authentic and respected Mexicanness, or because they do not feel like they have the right to claim an American identity outright. As such, a number of the teachers I spoke to during the course of this study said how they had tried to encourage young people to think of themselves as American citizens too. They believed that by celebrating and discussing more openly the fact of their American nationality, so they may claim a more valid identity in wider American society. Kasinitz (2008) points to such a positive element of identifying as a minority Mexican – by engaging in such educational opportunities that are aimed at Mexicans, young people can interact with teachers and role models who teach them about embracing both Mexicanness and Americanness as a strategy for empowerment.

Indeed, the majority of young women who ascribed to a Mexican-American identity did so in a more proactive and optimistic sense. They recognised more positively or with more overt acceptance the perceived ‘American’ elements of their lives and labelled themselves accordingly. In these cases they refer more explicitly to *culture* and the process of being raised in and incorporating both Mexican and American cultures:

Caitlin: What about your like identity in terms of would you say you are Mexican, or Mexican-American or American, or Chicana, or Latina, or Hispanic, for example?

Paola: What’s the difference in all of them?! (She laughs). I don’t know. I guess I’m Mexican-American because the culture I’ve been raised up in isn’t just Mexican. It’s also the American culture, because they are my surroundings. But I also have the surroundings of my parents and their culture. So...

Paola

I think I would describe myself as a Mexican-American because I have the part of the culture from my mum and I see that goes into me, but then there’s also that other culture, here, and I guess, I have a little of both.

Alicia

For Paola and Alicia, that they have been exposed to two cultures simultaneously requires an identity label that recognises this dualism. Whilst family and parents are seen as the primary purveyors of Mexican culture to young women, it is young women’s wider ‘surroundings’ that offer them regular doses of Americanness too. Whereas other young women were keen to express a strong preference for prioritising their Mexican identity over the technicality of their U.S. place of birth, Paola and Alicia offer a more holistic interpretation of the various socio-cultural influences that touch on them throughout their lives. As such, these young women’s labels could be seen to embody what Canclini (2005) has theorised as hybridity in the borderlands, where two cultures are lived daily in such a way that they may become infused with each of the other and a new mixed identity formed.

In forming a hybrid identity, young women selectively perform elements of both cultures. For Nati, the ‘American’ part of herself is related to fashion or appearance and the way in which she displays her attachment to American culture is through the clothes she wears:

Nati: I think I would be Mexican-American. I guess it’s someone that is from a Mexican family but is accustomed to American lifestyles.

Caitlin: OK, and what would you say an American lifestyle is?

Nati: Just like, someone... (She laughs). American lifestyle? I don’t know. (She becomes shy)

Caitlin: What was on the tip of your tongue?

Nati: I think it would be someone that wants everything, expensive things, that wants the new things that just came out.

Caitlin: And you say you are Mexican-American, what would you say the Mexican side is?

Nati: I think, for me, it would be that in my family we celebrate Mexican celebrations, that they celebrate over there [in Mexico], and just the culture, you know?

Caitlin: What sort of things, other than celebrations, are Mexican about Mexican culture?

Nati: The foods.

Caitlin: And where would you say that you’re more attached to American culture?

Nati: With the fashion I guess.

Caitlin: What kinds of shops do you get your fashion from?

Nati: Um, mostly like at the mall, like Papaya and Forever 21.

Nati

That she says she buys from the mall and lists a set of very popular teenage clothing stores as where she consumes her fashion is telling since the mall is perceived to be a very ‘American’ institution and a centre of extra-curricular social life for many white Southern Californian teenage girls (Bettie 2003). As I will detail in more depth in the next chapter on perceptions of a ‘rich’ Mexican culture, young women often found it difficult to formulate

definitions of ‘American culture’ but when they did so they tended to focus around notions of Americanness as being ‘culture-less’, bland, or as centred on more ‘superficial’ or consumption-based lifestyles than Mexicanness. Furthermore, Nati’s coyness around divulging her thoughts on what constitutes an American lifestyle - consumerist desires to own the latest, most fashionable and importantly, *expensive* things - is also evidence of how young women attach class meanings to racial and cultural identities. It is of note that Nati indicated in other parts of the interview that she came from a very low-income single-parent family and would have been unlikely to be able to partake in expensive retail consumption of the kind she associates with her American identity. As such, her use in her identification of such a token of Americanness as the mall may be an attempt at trying to claim a higher classed positioning than what her family’s material resources would have actually allowed. Therefore, her case is evident of how young women, although they frame Americanness as less culturally rich than Mexican culture still do aspire in some capacities to perform a sophisticated Americanness, something which I explore in Chapter Five.

Finally, Samantha goes further than the other women who chose a ‘Mexican-American’ identity by not only recognising the two key cultural elements that make up her life but splits her identity description along the lines of her split day, where one part is characterised as ‘white’ and the other as ‘Mexican’. These are split along explicitly spatial lines, with school being a white American space and the home space being Mexican:

Samantha: I like Mexican-American...most of my day revolves around mostly white people, and then I go home and then it’s all Mexican, the Mexican culture.

Caitlin: What kind of proportion do you feel, like half and half?

Samantha: Yeah, it’s well balanced.

Caitlin: And your home, you say that it’s more Mexican, in what ways?

Samantha: Well, the food. During the day I mostly speak English, and then I get home and sometimes my parents speak, like not everyday, but it’s mostly Spanish there.

Caitlin: How do you find changing between?

Samantha: I think it’s easy, it’s not hard. I’ve got used to it, everyday, so it’s fine.

This quote has a key role in this chapter and indeed the thesis as a whole because Samantha was able to most clearly articulate what every other young woman alluded to throughout their interviews – that for young women of Mexican descent there is a clear spatial division of the Mexican and American elements of their lives. That is, the home is experienced as Mexican, and school or the outside is experienced as American, a binary that is constructed in relation to *la familia*, as I will detail in Chapter Six.

There is certainly a complexity, fluidity and overlapping nature to this binary, for in many cases young women's lived experiences actually contradict any clear-cut spatial division. As the following chapters will show, for example, young women are Mexican in their Mexican homes, but are also viewed by their parents as more 'American' in some of their behaviours and attitudes. Furthermore, in the 'American' space of the school, young women may appear more 'Mexican' because they hang out with groups of Mexicans. In practice, young women act and experience being both Mexican and American at home, and outside. However, for the most part, the ways in which young women *talk* about their lives function to reproduce this Mexican/American differentiation. It is important to note that Samantha was also one of the most 'Americanised' young women who took part in the project and seemed to come from one of the most financially comfortable situations (although her parents were separated). I got the sense that her comfort with moving through and switching between the two spaces which she deems as Mexican and American was due to her ability more than other young women in the study to 'take part' in American society as a result of her slightly higher class.

Despite the acknowledgement of the American elements of their lives and their place of birth, not one young woman chose to identify solely as American. This reflects what López and Stanton-Salazar also found in their analysis of the 1992 and 1995 Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) San Diego Survey - 'only 2 percent of the U.S. born and none of the immigrants had adopted nonethnic terms such as *American* in 1992 or 1995' (2001: 68. Emphasis in original). As I have already touched on, this could be for a number of reasons including the continuing potency of Mexican culture in the areas that young women live in, the desires of their parents to instil in their daughters a sense of Mexicanness, and the often

underlying feeling that young women are not able to or allowed to enter fully into the white American mainstream. But one of the key things, which I shall explore in more depth in Chapter Five in terms of connectivity to the homeland and travelling to Mexico, is that for many young women of Mexican descent living in the borderland, they have little *choice* but to incorporate some degree of Mexicanness into their identity ascription because of the proximity and influence of Mexico today. As Vila confirms, ascribing to a Mexican identity operates in a special way for those who live in the borderland since ‘Mexico (the country defining Mexican-American ethnicity) is still *there*, actually visible from [the U.S.]. For Mexican-Americans living on the American side of the border, the *origin* of their difference is always present, serving as a constant reminder.’ (1999:79. Emphasis in original).

4.4 'Chicana' as hybridity and acceptance

Given the complexity that surrounds young women's deliberation over their national and ethnic identity, it could be suggested that taking on a Chicana/o identity might offer some resolution since it foregrounds the necessary hybridity of living in the borderlands and embraces positively such an 'ambiguous labyrinthine identity as a cultural signature' (Stavans 2001: 9). However, only three young women in this project chose to refer to themselves as Chicana.

Whilst many young women celebrate their 'mestizo racial and cultural mixtures' (Zavella 1993: 57), as this thesis will continue to show, they rarely feel the need to do so through ascribing to a Chicana/o identity. This is most likely because it is still largely understood in wider society to be a derogatory way to refer to low income second and third generation Mexicans, and is sometimes still associated with oppositional gang or *cholo* culture (Rios and Lopez-Aguado 2012). This would suggest that the re-appropriation of the term by Chicana/o activists and scholars to embody a more positive and politicised meaning has not yet trickled down to communities on the ground.

Instead, when young women do ascribe to a Chicana identity, they do so in a similar way to those who choose Mexican-American, recognising both cultures but with more emphasis on the importance of their lives of growing up among American surroundings. Dani, for example, relates her understanding of the term Chicana to the acquisition and retention of Mexican culture and one's heritage whilst living in the U.S.:

Caitlin: Your parents were born in Mexico (yes), you were born here (yes), and you grew up here, so what label would you choose to describe yourself?

Dani: Chicana.

Caitlin: Chicana? What does that mean for you?

Dani: That even though you're here, you still have your culture and your heritage.

Caitlin: Ok, and where did you first hear that word and get to know it?

Dani: Oh, well, a long time ago (laughs) yeah. I just think that because I don't really know how it is growing up in Mexico, I don't know how it would be over there but I know here, because this is my whole life, you know?

Dani

Dani's quote is valuable because she is the first young woman to acknowledge her lack of knowledge about what growing up in Mexico might be like, given that she has grown up all her life in the U.S.. For her then, identity is about the experiential nature of living in and through one's identity, as well as process of acquiring knowledge of a culture through being in it. Since she has grown up in the U.S. with her Mexican culture and heritage playing a significant part throughout, her life experience informs her choice of identity label; it recognises the fusion and interplay between these two influences, and also the dislocated nature of her life in relation to Mexico itself.

As I illustrated in the literature review, taking on a politicised Chicana identity is understood by scholars and activists to be about recognising and countering the racism that Mexicans in the U.S. have faced in the past and which they continue to experience today, and about promoting the self-determination of Chicano communities (Zavella 1993). Young Mexican women who understand and ascribe to a politicised Chicana identity of this kind tend to do so because they have encountered Chicana/o studies courses and/or campus activism in the colleges or universities they attend. In this extended quote, Anabel explains how she was prompted to identify as Chicana after being exposed to Chicana/o thinking at university. Its key tenets of mixture and diversity of experience chimed with her own personal story of being from a mixed race family, being half-Mexican and half-American:

I'd be more towards...Chicana. Mexican-American too, but I feel that Chicana is more...at least the Chicana groups on campus are very empowering, so I feel like the word 'Chicana' is more culturally empowering than just Mexican-American, even though that is kind of what I am. (How did you learn about what being a Chicana meant?) I took a class on the study of Chicana and Chicano Culture, so it was more about the culture and obviously I already knew a lot of the stuff, but I remember we talked about what it meant to be Chicana or Chicano and everyone suggested

different things. I remember in high school, I always felt like since I was half-Mexican, and most people would say half-white, I was either too White to be considered Mexican to some people, and too Mexican to be considered White. So I was just a mix and I didn't really fit in any place. I had a group of friends that didn't really care if you're full or not, but there are a lot of people that feel that if you're not full Mexican you can't be considered Mexican, you can't call yourself Mexican or Chicano or Chicana. So that's why I never really even labelled myself as Chicana or sometimes I didn't even label myself Mexican in school, because I felt like people wouldn't accept it, because I'm half...

...And then once I got to college and we talked about the definition of Chicano, it was more like a mind-set or being, you don't necessarily have to be Mexican, you just have to be related with the culture or live in that culture, or even like the culture, or work for the cause of being Chicano, which should be to progress and to help others go to school and stuff like that. And it was more of a definition of a mind-set, like I said, and so I felt a lot more better about calling myself a Chicana because I learned that I don't have to be full Mexican, I don't even have to be Mexican at all to be called Chicana, you just have to live in that culture, have pieces of that culture, hold those pieces that you have with pride and help the whole...help other people that need help and help people that come from your culture, your background to do better.

Anabel

Anabel's words are exemplary of two important processes experienced by some young women. Firstly, they illuminate the potential for the politicisation of young women when they go to university. This is as a result of young women being exposed to alternative definitions of 'Chicana/o', witnessing empowered young people and leaders talking positively about their Mexican/Chicano identity, and then deciding that it is an identity and/or way of life that might be relevant to them. That such a small number of women called themselves Chicana is almost certainly because of the relatively small number of young women in the project who were attending university, but it is also illustrative of the limited dispersal of this term down to young women living in everyday working-class communities

in Southern California. When I asked high school young women if they might identify as Chicana, many struggled to give a definition of it and as such did not view it as a viable identity label option for themselves. That's not to say it's not an important term, and its use by young women should certainly be paid attention to because it is indicative of a conscious and politicised choice, often accompanied with activist lifestyle choices and wider socio-political beliefs.

Secondly, for some young women like Anabel, identifying as Chicana is a therapeutic decision because of the way that the movement is rooted in notions of acceptance and inclusion of all those who feel like they want to ascribe to some kind of Mexican, Mexican-American, *mestizo* or border identity. Young women like Anabel who are 'half' Mexican and half something else, in her case American, experience the policing effects of the Mexican community that Vila has also noted (2000). Because, as this chapter has so far shown, connotations of bloodlines and parentage are viewed by young women as being very important to identity ascription, questions of authenticity and the degree of one's Mexicanness arise when someone is not able to claim such a thorough set of visceral connections to a community or identity. As such, Anabel's case demonstrates how important peer constructions of community and the right to 'belong' are to one's own ascription to a group identity and indeed label choice.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how young women linguistically reproduce themselves as coming 'from Mexico' (the country today and a somewhat imagined past) and 'being Mexican', even when the majority were themselves born in the United States. I posit that much of this claiming of 'Mexicanness' occurs as a result of proactive identity work on their part and is also attached to young women by way of parental proxy, that is, it is via their Mexican-born parents that they themselves *become* Mexican. In giving explanations for their choice of label, young women carefully employ a myriad set of specifically Mexican cultural markers that they perceive to be the bedrock of their current life worlds. Most young women simultaneously incorporate elements of Americanness into their identity labels in the recognition that their lives are influenced by both cultures.

By defining labels through a process of othering, they construct Mexican identity in relation to American identity, a power dynamic whose weighting depends on whether cultural competencies or economic resources are in question. I posit therefore that through conscious and proactive identity work, young women make sense of what might appear to be conflicting labels by distinguishing between their national and ethnic identity, thereby acknowledging their natal and legal status as a result of their birth place (most often in the United States), but also being able to promote and prioritise their cultural identity as a Mexican. Furthermore, this chapter has shown that young women's identities are inherently transnational because they are grounded in imagery around bloodlines, border-crossing and shared cultural practices. They are also transnational in their hybridity by way of incorporation of both Mexican and American elements into one lived identity.

As the literature review showed, scholars place importance on identification for assimilation and education but rarely ask young people themselves why a certain identity label is important to them. As such, this chapter has offered a valuable insight into the decisions that young people make when ascribing to an identity label, and enables the rest of the thesis to illustrate how living as 'Mexican' or 'Mexican-American' *matters* – both in how it intersects with their gendered, sexuality, class and age identities, and also how these intersections are manifested across the spaces young women inhabit daily. Furthermore, the school has emerged in this chapter as a key site within which young Mexican women construct their relational identities, and as such, I grant these negotiations particular attention in Chapter Eight. Finally, these identity descriptors indicate the importance of parental migration narratives, constructions of *la familia*, and Mexican 'culture' and 'community', which I explore in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Five – Formations: Memories of Mexico and migration narratives

5.1 Introduction

'Border theorists' portray the U.S.-Mexico borderlands to be a 'third space' of 'hybridity' and 'border-crossing', a place in flux where Mexican-origin border inhabitants can choose to live in decisively mixed ways such that they respond to and contest the discriminatory practices and structures that otherwise may seek to devalue their ethnic bodies (Rosaldo 1989, García Canclini 2005, Anzaldúa 1987). This project has been keen to examine whether or not young women of Mexican descent who live in Southern California are actually able to recognise and operate within these emancipatory border spaces or not, potentialities which have been imagined predominantly in a literary criticism framework, not realised in an ethnographic one (Vila 2003). I contend that the young women in this study do not, contrary to what most border theorists would hope, lead lives wholly characterised by the freedom and empowerment associated with such slippage – for the most part they are acutely aware of the stigma attached to being Mexican in the U.S. and their daily realities are often inflected in some way by racism and social exclusion. For them, being Mexican *matters*, in very real, tangible ways – a position that they cannot escape through fusion, hybridity or crossing.

Having said this, young women do for the most part carve out positive lives for themselves in the border region. I posit that they do this by conscientiously layering, switching, revising and performing *multiple* yet *discrete* identities simultaneously according to the different spaces they pass through and in relation to the different people they encounter on the way. Indeed, broader post-structuralist conceptions of relationality, fluidity, and mobility in the formation of multiple *identities* are more relevant to young Mexican women than are understandings of one hybrid border *identity*. This is because they recognise the tensions *between* and negotiations *of* the different aspects that make up young women and their families' senses of self.

As the previous chapter illustrated, young women attach feelings of great pride, warmth and value to the historicised imagery around bloodlines, connections to the Mexican homeland and parental migratory or 'struggle' narratives that inform their Mexicanness, whether they choose to identify formally as Mexican, Mexican-American, Chicana, Latina or Hispanic. In

addition, in discussions of their contemporary lives in the U.S., young women refer repeatedly to performances of, and expectations that arise out of, Mexican ‘culture’ that they perceive to mark their familial relations, their homes and their everyday spatial practices. However, identifying oneself, and being identified by others, as in some way Mexican is also problematic for young women, due largely to the deficit perspectives of Mexicans, Mexico and Mexican culture that abound in popular, political and academic arenas (Arzubiaga et al. 2009, Alba et al. 2011, Foley 1997) and the associated public and institutional racism that they face, especially at school (Chavez 1998).

This chapter explores how young women are aware of and navigate these tensions by strategically drawing upon multiple frames of reference. They utilise what Vila understands to be a range of ‘hegemonic narrative plots’ present within the region (2003), which enable them to make sense of what it means to be a ‘young’ ‘Mexican’ ‘woman’ in ‘America’. I demonstrate that the narratives that young women mobilise to formulate their identities arise out of two interconnecting groundings that are often but not always rooted in the past; memories of Mexico; and migration to and ‘struggles’ upon arrival in the U.S. These are the physical and social locations that young women perceive themselves to come from. In order to shed some light on the significance of these, what Skeggs terms, *formations*, this chapter examines the ways in which such ‘historical legacies...inform contemporary representations’ of and for young women of Mexican descent today (1997: 1). In doing so it takes a life course perspective, which recognises that every moment or decision in a person’s life is in some way shaped by their past, and equally serves to help shape their future. By attending to such a ‘sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time’ (Giele and Elder 1998: 22), I acknowledge the importance for young women of wider social, historical and spatial contexts as well as personal biography, agency and contingency in the *process* of constructing and layering their identities (Hareven 1996).

The chapter firstly examines young women’s constructions of ‘Mexico’ since imagery of ‘over there’ arose often in narratives about who they are ‘here’, the U.S. The section shows that whilst young women portray their homeland as precious, beautiful, and wonderful to visit, they simultaneously frame Mexico as backward, poor and somewhere they would not want to live. Key to these constructions are notions of rural (Mexico) and urban (U.S.) difference, tied into class (lower/middle) and taste (unsophisticated/sophisticated) connotations, the

placing of themselves in relation to which enable the performance of particular transnational identities. Indeed, young women narrate memories of Mexico in ways that enable both their claiming of an ‘authentic’ Mexicanness vis-à-vis their Mexican peers at school in the U.S., and also their othering of and distancing from those less fortunate Mexicans who remain in Mexico, at once presenting their lives as being characterised by a more sophisticated *Americanness*.

The second section of this chapter listens to the migration and ‘struggle’ narratives that young women understand as important to framing their current lives and familial livelihoods in the U.S. It shows how the *historias* [stories] told to them about their parents’ pasts, such as their childhoods in Mexico, become collective or ‘vicarious’ memories (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004) that young women take on as part of their own narrative identities. I illustrate how young women’s perceptions of their parents’ motivations for migrating from Mexico to the U.S. in search of a ‘better life’ are bound up in the binary Mexico (the hard life) / United States (the land of opportunity). I also show that narratives about the sacrifices that parents have undergone to get into and subsequently survive in the U.S. are used by both young women and their parents to reflect upon the outcome of migration, as justifications for current behaviour, and as fuel for future aspirations. As part of these struggles, I attend to the legacies of parents crossing the border ‘illegally’ or through informal channels, and the implications for young women or their parents of being ‘undocumented’ in the U.S. today.

By looking at some of these formations, this chapter lays the necessary groundwork for thinking about how young women continue to rework these narratives in relation to *la familia* and gender within the home in Chapter Six, and freedoms in Chapter Seven.

5.2 Memories of Mexico

Migrants, perhaps more than many people, are made by their memories of their birthplace, their homeland, those left behind – interruptions in their life narratives that require resequencing, remodelling and reinterpreting as the newcomers incorporate and surpass their pasts.

Young women and their migrant families regularly remember Mexico. Like most migrants, they feel the gap left in their lives of the people and places 'left behind' and the current legacies of the 'interruption' of moving northwards. But Mexican migrant families also experience an exceptional situation compared to many who find themselves in the U.S. – their homeland, their 'past', continues to exist very visibly just across the border, sometimes only a couple of miles away (Vila 1999). The U.S.'s southern neighbour is also firmly placed in the wider American social imaginary – young women are taught in schools about Americans' nineteenth century 'manifest destiny' to civilise and modernise the Mexican and Indian lands to their west and south, they hear contemporary incarnations of Oscar Lewis's 'culture of poverty' treatise still seen to characterise many who live in Mexico, and they see the impassioned debates about the 'waves'¹⁵ of 'illegal' immigration from Mexico that feature regularly in the media (Lewis 1959, Branch 2004, Valencia 2010, Ilha 2009).

In order to take control of how perceptions of them are bound up in such imagery of Mexico, young women, whether they were born in Mexico or to Mexican parents in the U.S., engage with memories of Mexico to construct narratives about themselves, their parents and 'Others' in Mexico. Most young women have some first hand experience of being in Mexico themselves, whether because they have visited, or because they were born and partially raised there¹⁶. Those born in the U.S., the majority in this study, travelled to Mexico for a variety of reasons and as such experience the country in different ways. Young women most commonly said they engaged in return visits to Mexico because their parents wanted to 'connect' them to the homeland and to maintain or reignite contact with their extended family, especially elderly relatives such as grandparents who are less likely to be able to reunite the family by travelling into the U.S. themselves. Others went to have 'traditional' Mexican cultural celebrations such as *quinceañeras* or to buy Mexican goods which are cheaper than in the U.S. Whatever the reason for travelling, to visit Mexico is 'a specific social practice

¹⁵ Although the influx of Mexican migrants has recently lessened such that net migration into the U.S. has levelled out and may be falling (Pew Hispanic Center 2012b).

¹⁶ Some of those born in Mexico may not have legal documentation granting them residency in the U.S. As such, they are unable to travel back into Mexico because they would be denied entry into the U.S. upon return. I discuss the implications of their undocumented status on the relationship they are able to have with Mexico later in this section and also in 5.3.

allowing migrants to maintain multiple, yet socially meaningful, identities in both their current place of residence and their external homeland' (Duval 2004: 51). Young women arrive back in San Diego with a set of images about Mexico that they narrate for various purposes, presented both through 'local' and 'tourist' lenses (Wagner 2008).

When they recall their time in Mexico, young women tend to construct two kinds of images of the country simultaneously. In the first framing, Mexico is perceived positively and somewhat nostalgically, as 'beautiful', 'natural', and 'simple', it is a special place to have a connection to. The second framing articulates a deficit perspective, according to which Mexico is viewed variously as 'poor', 'undeveloped', 'boring' and 'behind', all relational terms that arise at least partially out of an often unspoken comparison with its more sophisticated neighbour to the north, the U.S. As Hyams (2002) also found in her project looking at young Mexican-American women in Los Angeles, these lenses are not mutually exclusive – young women will quite often think Mexico is both poor and beautiful, somewhere that they would not want to live now themselves, but somewhere that they love visiting. I suggest that young women draw strategically upon these constructions of Mexico for two purposes; firstly to mark as Other those that continue to live in Mexico, and to present themselves as Mexicans with a decisively modern *American* life north of the border; and secondly, to claim an 'authentic' Mexican identity vis-à-vis their Mexican peers in the U.S. The following interview extracts will begin to illuminate some of the complexities that viewing Mexico through these framings engenders for young women's senses of self.

5.2.1 Othering

Two days before our interview, Fabiola had returned from a two-week trip to her father's village in Guanajuato state in Central Mexico, where she still has extended family. As she flicked through the photos of the joint *quinceañera* party she had gone to have with two cousins, pausing to gleefully show me the muddy hem of her 'huge puffy' ball gown as she navigated the rural party venue, Fabiola described her experience of returning 'home' to Mexico:

It's a small ranch and it's very rural. There's not potable water and they just got a road, like last year, so it's starting to develop. They have electricity so it's pretty cool, but no internet, no technology...It's just so calm over there,

it's really relaxing. You don't even have a clock. So the first couple of days I was like 'oh what time is it? I need to plan my day out, fifteen minutes for this, or half an hour for that', but there's no clock so you just get to relax up in the mountains. And it's really beautiful, and it's really warm, with storms by night. We went climbing up to one of the mountains, me and my cousins. It wasn't that high but you just stand there, feel the cool breeze and you look around - it's mountains everywhere and it's just *pure* nature, it's pretty cool. Different from here!

Fabiola

In talking about Mexico young women very frequently evoke positive images of profound beauty, exhilarating tropical weather, and unspoilt rural and mountainous landscapes. Fabiola's memories of the breath-taking vistas across the rugged scenery enable her to assert that its '*pure* nature' is 'different from here!', where in more urban Southern California freeways and strip malls are implied to predominate¹⁷.

Mexico is also perceived by young women to be a place of the 'simple life' for those that live there. Whilst she perceives her family's part of Mexico to be 'just' starting to develop, with no internet or 'technology' (those ubiquitous signifiers of modernity and urban life) Fabiola appreciates the calmness that still exists there as a result. For her, Mexico is a place of relaxation and timelessness. Upon arrival, she undergoes a process of adjustment into a way of life where time passes slowly without being marked by the ticking clock, and which stands in contrast to her usual habits of efficiently dividing up her time in a manner reflective of her cosmopolitan and fast-paced life north of the border. Such a sense of timelessness chimes with her descriptions of the landscape, where life is more in tune with the 'natural' rhythms of the day than with a more modern, technological metronome.

Fabiola's case exemplifies the exoticism and primitivism that characterises young women's perceptions of Mexico. Certainly this fits with Duncan's affirmation that '*other* cultures are

¹⁷ Actually, Southern California is perceived by young women to also be very beautiful, although they tend to spend less time than their peers out enjoying or consuming such nature north of the border. As I describe in Chapter Seven, young Mexican women perceive outdoor activities, such as hiking, in Southern California to be what white American families do in their 'free time'. As such, going to Mexico may be the main place that they engage with or get into 'nature'.

often portrayed as occupying remote places that are rare or unique and therefore desirable, places where one can escape the social and psychological pressures of modernity and retreat into a 'simpler', more 'natural' place and time' (1993: 46. *Emphasis added*). The trickiness for young women is that whilst they engage in the othering of Mexico and Mexican culture in this way, they simultaneously seek to claim affinity and insider status, as I will demonstrate momentarily. As such, young women straddle two positionings in relation to Mexico – that of the knowledgeable insider or local, and that of the stranger tourist (Wagner 2008). In Fabiola's case, she has gone to connect with family, to experience an authentic Mexican cultural tradition, consume for a cheaper price than she could have in the U.S., and also to appraise the country's natural beauty as any tourist visitor to the region may do.

Mexico's exotic beauty, purity and simplicity is associated with its perceived underdevelopment, poverty and continued existence as a 'third world country' - an understanding commonly mobilised, both by 'Anglos' and Mexicans in the U.S. borderlands, through the hegemonic narrative plot that states that 'all poverty is Mexican' (Vila 2000: 124). Lidia, who moved from Mexico when she was seven years old and whose family in its majority still lives in Mexico, compares memories of when she lived there as a young girl with the change she witnessed when she last visited:

I went back [to Mexico] but it seems really new and different because I was really small when I came here. They've improved [the town] a lot actually. Everything is really simple and people there are very poor but then went I went back and they've improved a lot of things. Like the roads are very different. And our house has improved.

Lidia

Lidia's descriptions of Mexico as 'simple' and 'poor', terms commonly used by young women, exemplify how Mexico is constructed as a country historically un(der)developed and characterised by hardship. Lidia's pleasant surprise that 'actually' the town's infrastructure has been improved, along with her family's home, indicates that she had not been expecting such changes when she returned. Her words are illustrative of the ways in which migrants store away memories of Mexico based on the last time they were there, a process which renders frozen in time the places they hold important to them (Armstrong 1997). As a result

they are taken aback when they return and see that things have changed, or in Lidia's case 'improved'. Such visits are reminders to migrants and their families that life has continued to develop in their Mexican places of origin without them there, something which they for the most part take pleasure in, although it can also work to distance them from the 'new' and slightly strange place that was a familiar home.

The language of development and betterment, such as Lidia's use of 'improved', 'different', and 'new', also point to the understanding that modernisation in Mexico was, and in some cases still is, something needed and welcomed. Such rhetoric around modernisation is related not only to tangible infrastructure networks, but is also strongly tied into constructions of Mexican society and ways of life as both timeless, and concomitantly as 'living in another [past] time-frame, a different phase of history' (Vila 1999: 82). Allusions to such primitivism from those 'within' the Mexican community were also witnessed by Hyams in her study of young women of Mexican descent in Los Angeles. In order to make sense of their Mexicanness in relation to those who continue to live in Mexico today, young women construct a Mexican Other and place it outside of modern, urban (U.S.) time and space so that it is 'over there' and 'back then', two phrases that young women used commonly throughout my interviews also (Hyams 2002). In doing this, young women convert geographical distance into temporal distance such that 'a journey in space is a journey in time' (Duncan 1993: 40).

Through these processes of othering, young women are able to place themselves in a more modern, sophisticated and ultimately privileged position compared to both those extended family members left behind whom they visit in Mexico, and also to their parents who as youngsters left the country to find better opportunities for themselves and their future families, a practice that I will deal with in depth in the next section. Indeed, young women's 'tourist' stories that highlight contrasts between Mexico and the U.S. illuminate how they would like to perceive their own lives north of the border. As Urry affirms, tourist practices 'involve the notion of "departure", of a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and the mundane. By considering the typical objects of the tourist gaze one can use these to make sense of elements of the wider society with which they are contrasted.' (2002: 2). Here, for example, Fabiola details an exchange that took place in

Mexico that highlighted her status as someone from ‘over there’ (the U.S.), and shows how young women draw upon their experiences in Mexico as a mirror that reflects their own lives in the U.S.:

Fabiola: I didn’t know some of them, but people there were really nice. At first I was a little shy with them, because my aunt taught us the waltz and so my aunts are like ‘oh my gosh, what if she’s the type of girl, she’s from over there, she’s like all fancy and she’s going to come and be like “ooh, I don’t like it over here because it’s so rural!”” and all this. But when I got there they were really cool, it was really nice that everybody just kind of welcomed me in.

Caitlin: Where would the idea of being ‘fancy’ come from?

Fabiola: (She laughs)...I think maybe since I live *here*, they might think like ‘oh, she has a bathroom, she’s totally this, she might have nice clothes, or she might wear a ton of make-up, like her school’s different’ and all this stuff. And ‘have a nice car’. And it’s not always like that, I think they just have this kind of perspective that everybody coming from here they’re just um...because the lifestyle here is just a little more advanced, kind of? In a way. So they might think like ‘oh, she’s like a city girl’, maybe. You know? Going up in to the mountains, and they probably thought I wouldn’t get used to it, or something...but I *love* it there, I didn’t want to come back!

Fabiola

In her apprehension that she ‘might’ be thought of as ‘the type of girl...from over there...all fancy’, Fabiola projects an image of her ‘advanced’, urban self vis-à-vis her female, rural-living family members in Mexico. Although young women appear concerned that being viewed negatively by their Mexican families as a ‘city girl’ might affect the degree to which they are ‘welcomed’ in Mexico, they deliberately present themselves as such in order to contrast to the ‘regressive domestic subjectivity’ commonly attached to Mexican women

(Hyams 2002: 459). Furthermore, since, as I will show in Chapter Seven, young Mexican women in California regularly feel that they are cast in deficit lenses as low class and unable to access the consumerist spoils of urban modernity, associating themselves with symbols of wealth and development such as a 'nice' home, car, clothes and a 'different' education, allows them to claim a privileged and fashionable *American* identity not normally perceived to be available to them. Travelling to and then describing Mexico upon their return to the U.S. therefore enables young women to use their mobility as a protective and distancing buffer that grants protection from them being viewed as poor and unfashionable Mexicans, and instead frames them as sophisticated Mexican-Americans.

5.2.2 Relating

At the same time as they Other and distance themselves from those they go to visit in Mexico, young women are eager to demonstrate how closely they are able to *relate* to them and their ways of life. Fabiola's assertion that she not only got 'used to' but actively embraced the rurality of her family's mountain village proves her Mexican credentials to her aunts who may otherwise have labelled her 'fancy' (read: American and *not* Mexican). Indeed, young women try to avoid appearing judgemental, stuck up or condescending towards Mexico/Mexicans when they visit, even if (or especially when) life in Mexico is very different to what they know in the U.S. Instead they are at pains to verify that they are not 'whitewashed', a derogatory term that implies a young woman has taken on so much white American culture that she has forgotten where she comes from (Mexico/the Mexican *familia* and community), a negotiation that I explore in Chapter Six in relation to young women's constructions of identity alongside their Mexican *familia*.

The following case is a valuable example of the intimacy with which the Othering/relating elements of young women's relationships with Mexico appear to exist alongside each other. In the last five years, Frida has visited both her mother and father's places of origin in Puebla and Nayarit states. She operationalises narratives of exoticism and primitivism to talk about Mexico and offers stark comparisons between Mexico and the U.S., but also asserts her ability to relate and 'not feel like you're outside when you go to Mexico, even though you weren't born there':

Frida: My mum is from Puebla and my dad is from Del Rio, Nayarit. I actually visited [Mexico] and it was nice, I mean, it's pretty different. I went to both [places]. Her pueblo it's like a square, and then there's a bridge and then you go to the mountains. So it's pretty boring there for me, after a week, but it was pretty different from Nayarit. Nayarit is more free, you have places to *go*. Like here, you could go to the library, you could go to places, like to the movies or stuff like that. But over *there* it was like, all there was, was a store inside a *house* if you wanted to buy stuff you know? So it was kinda boring but...it was pretty. And nice to see something different.

Caitlin: Do you like going to Mexico?

Frida: To visit, yeah, but I wouldn't want to *live* there, and I would only want to be there for a certain time because I find it so different. But I mean, I could relate to it and that's nice. I could relate to how they talk, they have these slang things, and we know what they're talking about in a sense so it's not like you feel like you're outside when you go to Mexico, even though you weren't born there. So in that aspect we could relate to that. But the way they *live* is really different. Like the way they have to go to the bathroom, or the way they shower or the food in general. Like we think we're Mexican because we eat burritos and stuff like that but they kill a whole deer right in front of you and you have to eat it. So in that aspect you can't really relate to it because it's so different.

Caitlin: That's really interesting, to think of being Mexican here and then being Mexican there.

Frida: Yeah, it is *really* different. But I mean, your parents kinda show you their ways, so when you go back to Mexico you don't feel *as* different, so it's nice.

Frida

In contrast to Fabiola who thinks positively of the quietness of rural life because it fosters a sense of relaxation, Frida finds the simplicity of her mother's '*pueblo*' (village) and the surrounding landscape pretty yet *boring*. Whilst Frida does recognise the existence of difference between places in Mexico, and that some places like Nayarit have more to offer, she continues to produce a comparison between 'here' (the U.S.) and 'over *there*' (Mexico) which functions to nonetheless place Mexico on the whole as lacking the range of leisure resources that she can consume in the U.S. Furthermore, references to antiquated sanitation and hunting practices evoke a sense of the primeval, which are reminiscent of a neo-colonial tourist lens (Tucker and Hall 2004) and are constructed as wildly different to her own burrito-eating wannabe 'Mexicanness' in the U.S.

However, young women like Frida leverage a set of tools endowed within them by their parents that enable them to overcome such differences in lifestyle and connect with their Mexican family - parents 'show [their children] their ways' so that they do not 'feel *as different*' as they might without such knowledge. Being able to speak Spanish and understand colloquial nuances on return to Mexico, for example, was viewed by some of the young women in this study as a test, not only of their own Mexican cultural competencies but also of their parents' ability to keep their children in touch with their Mexicanness whilst living in the U.S. As the following chapters will show, parents and elder kin continually endeavour to instil in their U.S.-based children specifically Mexican cultural capital precisely because it enables them to pass as Mexican. As such, young women have an important responsibility upon return to the homeland – they must prove that they and their parents, despite physically migrating out of Mexico, have not emotionally and culturally left their pasts, and their families, behind.

In addition, young women deem it necessary to claim an 'authentic' Mexican identity amongst their peers in the U.S. and telling stories about their visits to Mexico is one way that they do this. I suggest that regaling school friends with stories of their visits to the homeland is an important part of *becoming* Mexican in the U.S. By describing what Mexican cultural practices they engaged in when in Mexico - what they ate, how *different* it was, and yet how they could *relate* - young women present themselves as knowledgeable insiders and are able to build a strong co-ethnic affinity with others that 'know' Mexico. Being able to speak with such authority and connectedness enables young women to experience *paisanaje* - 'the feeling

of belonging to a common community of origin' (Massey et al. 1990: 142-3). Certainly, my focus group discussions highlighted how precious young women's associations are with each other when their migrant families come from the same place, town or region in Mexico – the excitement, for example, when two girls realised that 'our families are from the same town!' was palpable. Furthermore, communicative practices such as sharing personal and vicarious memories of Mexico are methods that young women use to construct 'transnational social fields' that encompass practice, beliefs and a sense of unity between their families in Mexico and their migrant communities and peers in the U.S. (Basch et al. 1994). In doing this they reconstruct the Mexican nation outside of Mexico in a way that includes them, even if they were not born there or if they are unable to go back, thereby embodying Anderson 'imagined communities':

Anderson...views nations as 'imagined communities' in the sense that they are systems of cultural representation whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community (Anderson, 1991: 6). As such, nations are not simply phantasmagoria of the mind, but are historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed.

McClintock 1993: 61

This sense of belonging and connectivity through practices such as memory-sharing can be particularly important for those who are unable to travel to Mexico themselves. Young women who were brought to the U.S. as babies or children without legal documentation permitting them to stay, would be able to travel easily back *into* Mexico but they risk being denied entry into the U.S. on their return. As such, 'vicarious' memories as consolidated through listening to their peers and parents' stories of Mexico allow young women to feel in some way connected to the homeland they cannot return to (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004). Lidia, who recognised her family's migration as a positive step but who struggled with having to leave family members behind, is one such young woman who found solace in hearing others' return stories:

[I moved here] when I was seven years old. It was sometime in September, I think. At the time I didn't really understand anything, because I was only six or seven. I just remember the time when we were saying goodbye to everyone and it was really sad.

I didn't understand and everybody was crying, and I didn't know what to do. It was really sad, especially saying goodbye to my grandparents because I didn't know I wasn't going to see them for a long time. And then the saddest thing is I never realised that I would never see my grandpa again. Because he passed away in February two years ago. I just wish I could have seen him again.

Lidia

But the issue of legal status is important for young women's narration of memories of Mexico another way. For those that are able, travelling across the border into Mexico is not only a mark of class that illustrates to a young woman's peers that her family have the financial ability to send her 'over there', but it is also a mark of legality, in that it demonstrates her legal right to re-enter the U.S. on her return - a luxury not afforded to every young woman. The rhetoric in the region around 'illegal immigrants' and 'aliens' has a strong impact on how U.S.-born young women want to distinguish themselves as 'legal' Mexicans (Ibarra 2003). Amongst friendship groups, for example, there are often young women of a mix of legal statuses, and those who are able to go to Mexico engage in a process of Othering themselves from those '*sin papeles*' (without papers) who cannot. In a strange way then, it is those who were born in the U.S. and have citizenship (and therefore a passport) who are *more* able to travel and 'connect' with Mexico – they are more able to claim an 'authentic' Mexicanness in the 'contact with Mexico' stakes than those who were actually born there but who are now unable to go back.

Furthermore, given the proximity of the physical U.S.-Mexico border to where these young women live, the question of who can fully *embody* their transnationalism and pass over the border and back again or not due to financial or legal constraints, is frequently present in their lives. As Sánchez affirms, 'the geopolitical border represents a pivotal aspect of transnational immigrant life' (2007a: 271). Additionally, the distance away from the border young women that young women travel into Mexico can also vary greatly and have important influences on their and their peers' constructions of their Mexicanness. Travelling by plane, for example, not only reflects class differences, but also compounds the time/space differences between the U.S. and Mexico perceived by young women (Duncan 1993, Hyams 2002) since they can travel further (and often quicker) to more quaint, 'traditional' and more 'foreign' places such as rural home villages. Alternatively, others who travelled perhaps more

frequently over via the San Ysidro, U.S./Tijuana, MX. road border, were able to trade stories as authentic ‘experts’ in the crossing – narratives often related to how many hours they had to wait to cross or what strategies they had for dealing with unfriendly border agents. Class factors may also be at play when it comes to young women’s varying border-crossing practices – those who are able to fly, for example, can skip over the chaotic, fractured, messy, and sometimes distressing road-border space. They can leave California from a sanitised ‘American’ airport lounge, and arrive in their safe, known part of Mexico (if this indeed is what it is like in reality for them). Other young women may not have this choice, and have to navigate the difficult border space regularly to pick supplies or visit the dentist, for example – arriving in or passing through the northern Mexican border cities such as Tijuana that may be far from their idealised versions of homeland Mexico. All of these spatialised experiences and their retelling in the U.S. in ways that ‘make’ the border space, have powerful implications for young women’s identities vis-à-vis their other Mexican peers.

This section has shown that young women strategically use their memories of Mexico for two divergent purposes. They engage in a process of Othering to differentiate themselves from retrogressive ways of life in Mexico, and to highlight their more sophisticated Americanness. Yet they also recount stories and descriptions of Mexico in order to demonstrate affinity with and relatedness to Mexicans living in Mexico, and therefore to claim an ‘authentic’ Mexican identity vis-à-vis their Mexican(-American) peers in the U.S. Both of these lenses function to frame Mexico as somewhere to treasure, and yet somewhere to leave *behind*, and descriptions of Mexico as ‘poor’ and ‘simple’ operate as a benchmark to illustrate the distance their family have travelled in their journey towards a ‘better life’ and ‘success’ in the U.S. In the next section I attend to how young women utilise their parents’ decisions to migrate away from Mexico, and the struggles that they have since faced in the U.S., to continue to construct their identities.

5.3 Parental Migration and ‘Struggle’ Narratives

Young women’s constructions of their Mexican(-American) identities are bound up not only in their own experiences of Mexico, but, perhaps even more so, in tales of the past as they relate to Mexico that are conveyed to them by their parents. Indeed, in talking about the

development of their own life trajectories, young women grant considerable weight to their parents' migratory narratives away from Mexico, and their 'struggles' as migrants since arriving in the U.S. Through the retelling of these *historias* [stories], young women reproduce 'collective' (Halbwachs 1980) or 'vicarious' (Chamberlain and Leydesdorff 2004) memories formulated by their families that engender a time and place that young women have not themselves experienced (even if they have visited Mexico in their own lifetime). Young women tend to do this, firstly, to make sense of why their parents moved away from Mexico and as such rendered their (future) family 'migrant'. Secondly, young women perceive their parents to strategically use their 'struggle' narratives to instil in their children an impulse to 'succeed' in the U.S., and make 'worth it' their own sacrifices. This section will examine these two narrative processes and show that whilst young women heed these motivations and feel pride in their parents' efforts, they also experience feelings of discomfort, embarrassment and disillusionment at their parents' 'struggling' 'immigrant' and 'wage labourer' statuses.

5.3.1 Life in Mexico / Leaving Mexico

Life in Mexico for their parents' generation was almost always portrayed as having been very 'hard' and as characterised by poverty, uncertainty and disruption. As LeVine found in her valuable study of women and social change in Mexico between 1920-1990, rural dwelling families often required children to take on labouring and domestic roles whilst parents cultivated their *ejido* plots, or subsistence farms, and rapid rural-urban migration left newly arrived families struggling to secure a foothold in an unfamiliar urban society (LeVine 1993). That parents had to leave school to work from an early age in order to contribute to the household economy led young women to perceive their parents' as not having 'a child's life' or as having been missed out on a childhood altogether. Cecilia and Eva explain their parents' cases:

When my dad was ten he was the oldest of six siblings in his family and they didn't have parents around much, so he had to take care of all of them...he never really had a childhood. His parents always treated him older, and very strictly. He always had to work.

Cecilia

My mom has taught me a lot. How to be a good person, and talk to others, stay out of trouble, and [she taught me] what I could do, or become when I grow up. She showed me how because she went through a lot when she was young. She had to sell stuff and she couldn't keep on going to school because she needed to help my Grandma.

Eva

Without formal schooling, parents would have found it hard to secure employment, especially in upwardly mobile jobs in the growing service and office sectors, during Mexico's economic crises in the 1980's and 1990's when they would have been coming of working and child-bearing age (Cornelius and Myhre 1998). During this period of economic instability and wide-reaching agrarian and industrial reform, as well as the considerable rural-urban migration within Mexico, international migration into the U.S. was also increasing due to the possibility of earning higher wages north of the border (Massey et al. 2003). Young Mexican women and men heard returning migrants' stories about the ease with which one could find a job, and witnessed the impact of remittances sent for house building, for example, in their local neighbourhoods (Ibarra 2003). Whilst drawing on more recent data, the Pew Global Attitudes Project notes the ongoing importance of migrant narratives on Mexicans' perceptions of opportunities in the U.S.:

Most [Mexicans] believe life is better in the United States. Close to six-in-ten (57%) say that people who move from Mexico enjoy a better life in the U.S., up from 51% in 2007. And the vast majority of those who are in regular contact with friends and relatives living in the U.S. say those friends and relatives have largely achieved their goals.

2009: 1

Certainly, young women's parents, many of whom came from central western Mexico's traditional sending states, such as Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán and Nayarit (Massey et al. 1990), were 'immersed in a culture of migration' present in their communities (Ibarra 2003: 269). Migration to the U.S. therefore, was not only a possibility for single labouring men as it had been during the Bracero program (1942-1964), but it was something accessible, and

even a ‘rite of passage’, for any young person or couple who dreamed of something *else* (Chavez 1998). Lola’s mother was one such young Mexican who sought a ‘better life’, for herself and her own future family, a notion well-documented as the key driver behind migration for many groups (Hagelskamp et al. 2010):

Caitlin: When did your mom come here from Mexico?

Lola: I know she came when she was twenty-something. Not when she was young, when she was an adult. She came by herself to come and find a better life here. And then she met my dad.

Caitlin: Has she ever told you anything about her decision to move or what it was like to come here?

Lola: The reason why she left was because over there it was really hard and when she was young it wasn’t a child’s life, she had to work and then she was abused. And so when she came here it was a lot different. Better for her. And then she met some of her family that were born here, and she stayed with them. She thought it would be a better place to start a family and to be here, than Mexico.

Lola

As I illustrated in the previous section, young women use their own experiences in Mexico to frame the country as somewhere poor, underdeveloped and with limited prospects for the future – all relational terms that are formulated through the binary optic of Mexico as ‘the hard life’ and the United States as the ‘land of opportunity’. Mexico becomes somewhere to love but *leave*, and young women narrate a similar logic when presenting their parents’ migratory decisions. Furthermore, that Lola notes her mother’s planning around migration and ‘start[ing] a family’ is important since young women often insert references to themselves into stories about why their parents migrated. This is because parents, in explaining to their children that the reason they moved away from Mexico and into the U.S. was in search of a better life for their children, attempt to strategically instil in their children an impulse to ‘make the most’ of the opportunities they have been granted as a result of their parents’ efforts – opportunities perceived to not be otherwise available in Mexico.

But whilst moving northwards might have been a ‘rational strategy’ within the options available to them (Durand and Massey 2006), the physical act of crossing into the U.S. was often quite complicated for parents since the majority did not have the legal immigration documentation required to do so. As such, some entered the U.S. on a visitor or temporary work visa via an airport or land border, and then overstayed their permitted visa period and began the process of settling. Others crossed the Mexico-U.S. border with the help of *coyotes*, or human traffickers, and were subjected to dangerous, expensive and sometimes life-threatening journeys – a process with the potential to be particularly violent and traumatising for women due to the high incidences of sexual assault and rape by male traffickers (Staudt 2008). Some parents were intercepted by border patrol during their clandestine crossings, detained, and subsequently released back on the Mexican side of the border, only to attempt the crossing again a few days, weeks or months later - eventually with success.

The ordeals that their parents went through to get to the U.S. may be referred to throughout children’s lives, not necessarily in consciously guilt-provoking ways but they are used as part of the story-telling that sets the sacred family history in context. Many young women I spoke to could talk in some detail about the lengths their parents had gone to in order to live and work in the U.S., something that they are repeatedly assured was done with their children’s futures in mind.

5.3.2 ‘Struggles’ and ‘sacrifices’ in the United States

Upon arrival, parents and families face a difficult task of settling into a socio-economic environment that, despite desperately requiring their racialised bodies to fill the many ‘menial’ jobs that sustain the region, is actually rather hostile towards Mexican newcomers (Ibarra 2003). One of the key factors that complicates parents’ settlement trajectories is their often ‘illegal’ status. The passing and subsequent implementation of ‘Proposition 187’ in California in 1994, when many of the parents of the young women in this project were arriving and settling in the U.S., meant that undocumented migrants no longer had the right to access health care and social services, and it criminalised their engagement in paid employment (López and Stanton-Salazar 2001). Since then, other administrative functions such as applying for a driving license, a key document often necessary to open bank accounts and

acquire car, home or health insurance, have also been made virtually impossible for those without papers. Young women are acutely aware of the administrative, logistical and resulting financial difficulties their undocumented parents face in California, even when their daughters might have legal documentation or citizenship, as Frida explains:

[Financial problems], definitely do [occur often in Mexican families]. Just because of the fact that we come from the illegal side so we don't have as much rights as everybody else does. So it's just the kids that have the right, but usually they're minors and even then [children] have to act for their parents [on their behalf]. I think that the financial thing is because of the parents, they have to work and it's hard to find a job if you don't have papers.

Frida

Young women grow up knowing that it is difficult and risky for their undocumented parents to secure and keep jobs. Parents' frequently low levels of economic capital on arrival, low English language proficiency, lack of a Social Security Number, and social stigma in the region that marks Mexicans as 'cheap, flexible, and "illegal" bodies' for informal work act as barriers to their taking up jobs in formal employment sectors that offer more employee rights, responsibilities and indeed remuneration (Ibarra 2003: 263). The kinds of roles available to them in San Diego County's job market are often without any contractual protection, leaving them susceptible to overwork, under pay and financial abuse. Originally made up of small rural communities set amongst vast tracts of agricultural land, the area's land use and local economy have undergone change in the last two decades due to the development of wealthy suburban residential 'ranches' and leisure complexes such as luxury golf courses. In addition to the jobs in the area's traditional agricultural labour sector such as fruit-picking, this kind of gentrification has begun to provide a range of highly gendered employment opportunities for recent and potentially undocumented migrants, particularly in the domestic and hotel service (women) and garden landscaping or construction (men) industries. Many of the young women I spoke to had parents who they said had no other option but to work in these or closely-related service and 'menial' industries, working long hours, sometimes multiple shifts per day, and for minimum or below-minimum wages – and

as such many young women's parents can be seen to embody Rouse's 'proletarian servants in the paragon of 'postindustrial' society' (1991: 12).

Certainly not all young women's parents are undocumented though – some have residency or citizenship - and as a result are able to secure more stable jobs in formal sectors such as administration, engineering or nursing, although in this project these parents were the minority. Along this un/documented divide it is useful to think about young women's families following Howell's differentiation between 'hard-living' working-class families and 'settled-living' working-class families (1973) – the former characterised by 'low-paying, less stable occupations that lack health care benefits and make home ownership impossible...and...lifestyles that are chaotic and unpredictable' and the latter by 'jobs that have relative security, higher pay...and lifestyles that are orderly and predictable' (Bettie 2003: 13). Young women with instability in one area, sometimes caused by 'illegality', did appear to be more likely to experience instability across other areas of life such as residential instability (often in temporary rental and shared properties), family breakdown, substance abuse or domestic violence (Bettie 2003). This is not to say that families with undocumented parents are all unstable – in fact, many of the young women came from families who although subject to some financial instability had parents who were able to mitigate the effects on their children, often through having to work even harder or longer.

Cecilia, a young woman from a relatively settled-living family compared to her peers, explains that even though her undocumented parents both have jobs, the flexibility of her mother's hours can mean that the family struggles at times to meet their costs:

Cecilia: My parents work hard but sometimes it's hard [to pay the bills] if they don't get enough work done. Sometimes in [the superstore my mum works in] they don't give [her] a lot of hours. So she doesn't get a lot of money. But, sometimes it's easy.

Caitlin: So what happens when she doesn't have many hours?

Cecilia: She doesn't get to buy stuff. Like sometimes we need stuff for home or the kitchen, she doesn't really buy stuff for herself, like her clothes or anything, she mostly buys stuff for the family, or the house.

- Caitlin: Ok...and what about your dad? Does he earn a regular amount or does that shift sometimes too?
- Cecilia: He has mostly regular work, he always works the same hours, five days a week, from Monday to Friday. So from his check [my parents] pay the rent, and then the rest of the money they use to get groceries and stuff, and if they have extra, they take us to eat outside or something.
- Caitlin: That's nice, a bit of a treat. And do you think there are other families, who might also sometimes struggle with money or paying bills?
- Cecilia: Yeah. It's quite common I guess...well, my Mom's been telling me that [at her work] they've been getting less hours because [the employer] don't want to pay them. And they want to pay them less...the Mexicans.
- Caitlin: Oh right...and is it mainly Mexicans struggling or do you see other families like this too?
- Cecilia: Not many. Not *as* many.
- Caitlin: Why do you think there's a difference?
- Cecilia: I don't know. Probably more people are racist against Mexicans I guess. If they get Mexicans [to work for them], they probably want to pay them less...They think that [Mexicans] really need the money and they'll do any job for less [money].

Cecilia

Here, Cecilia explicitly addresses the institutional and overt racism that Mexican families face with regard to their livelihoods in Southern California. Young women grow up aware of one of the most powerful 'dominant narratives' about Mexicans in the region, that 'all poverty is Mexican' and are able to apply its logic to how their own families are treated in the U.S. (Vila 2000: 124). The perceived desperation of Mexicans to engage in any kind of work means that employers hold a lot of power over their employees' lives. Here, for example, Lola describes her mother's determination to go to work to provide for her children even when she is unwell, for fear that she might otherwise lose her job:

My dad works in a government office and [my mom] cleans houses. My mom is hard-working. She got sick and she went to the hospital and the next day she was supposed

to stay home and rest and when I woke up she had left for work. And she works hard because she really wants to support us and she loves us. I think she works way too hard but...she wants to support and provide for us...and to make it an easier and a better life for us, she wants to give us something better than what she had when she was a child.

Lola

Lola's mother's strength of character and desire to give her children a 'better' and 'easier' time than herself, even to the detriment of her own health, is an attribute that Lola takes pride in. Whereas tales of hard lives in Mexico and the difficult journeys into the U.S. are family narratives passed on second-hand to young women, those pertaining to 'struggles' do not need to be told - young women like Lola witness their parents' hard work and sacrifices first-hand every day in their homes. It is particularly difficult for young women to see their parents being treated unfairly by their employers, or arriving home after long shifts, only to leave again for another shift a few hours later, because they know it is being done for their benefit. Some may not see their parents for two or three days at a time when the girl is at school, a prolonged parental absence that young women may use to their benefit to acquire freedoms they may otherwise not receive, an issue that I deal with in depth in Chapter Seven.

Furthermore, Mexican post-migrant families, whether or not they are settled or hard-living, are susceptible to wider economic shifts and their impacts on shift work and informal employment such as housekeeping – one young woman's family went within a week from being long-term financially stable to unstable after the father of the family whose house her mother cleaned lost his job and could not afford a cleaner any more. As Nati explains, struggling financially has become normalised amongst her social and neighbourhood networks, particularly since the financial crisis in the U.S. began in 2008:

Most of the people I know *struggle* with money. Now because of the economy especially...yeah. When you ask them to go somewhere, they just say 'I can't, I've got something else to do'. They like limit themselves to what they can do.

Nati

Young women's stories chime with the wider fact that migrants have been disproportionately affected by the financial crisis that hit the U.S. in 2008, and whose rippling effects are still being felt today. As a 2009 report for the International Labour Organisation confirms, migrant workers are frequently: the first to be laid off; affected by reductions in pay, working time, and worsening working conditions when they remain employed; and used as scapegoats during times of economic insecurity when 'xenophobic sentiments and discrimination against migrant workers rise' (Taran 2009: 2). Furthermore, with parents out of work or struggling to be fully employed, young women feel the pressure and often have to take on extra domestic roles in order to help their family cope. As I will detail in Chapter Six, for example, young women take on an increasing amount of cooking, cleaning and caring for their younger siblings, or the children of their extended family or neighbours. In addition, some of the older young women respond to the family's increased financial insecurity by getting jobs too and contributing towards food or clothing for younger children.

Concomitant to parents' hard physical labour that they endure in order to provide for their families, are their emotional and familial sacrifices they have made in order to relocate and then maintain their lives in the U.S.:

I think [legal status and documentation] is important because I have family members that are here to work, and to provide for themselves or for their families, and it's not fair when they don't have papers and they do get deported, because they left everything back in Mexico and they started a new life here, just for them to get caught, and they have to leave everything again and have to start all over. They have to worry about their children, about money, about everything. I don't think it's fair because they just want to work and provide for their children, so their children can have a better life than they did. And it's sad, because I know for my mum, her parents died and she can go back [to Mexico] but she can't come back [to the U.S.], so that was kinda tough, having to see her suffer and go through that. And then the same with my dad, when his dad died it really got to me. I hate how they're here, just trying to provide for us and provide for themselves, and if something bad happens it's all gone, down to trash.

Sofia

Sofia's words above are illustrative of the feelings of sadness and injustice that many young women expressed in relation to understandings of 'legality' and the sacrifices that families will undertake in order to continue living North of the border. To be able to provide opportunities for social mobility for their children, some adults must give up the chance for face-to-face relationships with their own parents or family remaining in Mexico. Because they are unable to travel back into the U.S. with no documentation and may end up staying for decades or life, adults when they say goodbye to parents and elders, know that it may well be the last time they see them. Young women like Sofia 'hate' this state of affairs and think it is 'not fair' given their parents' noble attempts to provide a better life for their family. Furthermore, the emotional stress of having undocumented members among their family is also palpable, and some young women live with a subtle yet constant fear of 'something bad happen[ing]', such as being found working illegally or driving without a license, that could mean an undocumented family member being 'caught', detained and returned to Mexico, as Fabiola explains:

I think it's the stress and worry. For a lot of Mexican kids their parents are here illegally and so they're always worrying 'oh my gosh, is my mom going to make it home today?'

Fabiola

Although some young women did express an overt sense of guilt or indebtedness to towards their parents, others viewed these life course narratives as somewhat ordinary, expected, and very understandable. These young women referred to their parents' past and current struggles as being simply a case of what they had to do to give their family a better life, 'of course' they would do that if they had the option (Frida). As I will show in a moment, young women's own responsibilities in the present become a simple case of repayment, of a natural step in the immigrant family process according to the logic, 'your parents did a lot for you, now you work hard here so you can look after them' (Frida).

As the previous few quotes have shown, young women themselves take on stress when their parents 'struggle', but why is it that 'struggles' come up so much in relation to their identities as young Mexicans? It was no coincidence that the word 'struggle/s' was used commonly - it was not a word that I used in questioning young women but one that repeatedly came up

of its own accord to denote a specially Mexican experience in the borderlands. I suggest that it is not just that parents work hard, but that all of the hard work, the stress, and the discrimination is bound up into a dominant narrative that says that ‘to be Mexican is to struggle’. Young women’s strategic use of struggle narratives indicate their significance not only during their current daily experiences, but also for how they would like their futures to unfold.

Young women regularly refer to their parents’ migration and struggle stories not only to highlight and pay respects to the difficulties that they have gone through and the discrimination they face daily, but because they perceive such efforts to be part of their own narrative identities, and indeed their futures. In fact, young women perceive themselves as being able to make a choice about *how* to utilise their parents’ struggles and investment in them, as Frida explains:

I think it depends how you let [your struggles] affect you? Are you going to take them as a good thing or a bad thing? Are you going to keep representing [your gang] or are you going to take it as ‘ok, because of [these problems] my mum doesn’t want to get out of bed and is drinking all day, but I want to be different’?...And I think a lot of Mexicans always want to take the bad thing, because we’re known for that - ‘if my parents drink I’m going to drink too’, but we don’t see the side of ‘if my mum is working three shifts a day for us’...we don’t take that good thing that she’s doing, we always want to take the bad thing, because we’re known to do that.

Frida

Young women believe that struggles can be utilised by a young woman in two ways – to justify a hopeless, oppositional or dejected stance, or to inspire a more positive reaction to take up the opportunities perceived to be available to young women, particularly in education, as a result of their parents’ sacrifices. Certainly, in relation to the first option, growing up in a hard-living family can be difficult for young women. Witnessing their parents’ relentless and yet financially and socially underappreciated work, as well as some of the other negative aspects of life that can arise out of instability, such as depression, substance abuse and domestic violence (Bettie 2003), can result in some young women feeling a sense

of hopelessness for what their own future holds. Mahler has also noted such ‘narratives of disillusionment’ in post-migratory families when the expected benefits of migration are not realised (1995: 75). These are the youngsters that Portes and Zhou (1993) understand to make up the majority of young Mexicans in California, but in my sample, only a couple of young women indicated that they felt resigned to failure because of their current familial situation and identification as ‘struggling’ Mexicans. Instead, if negative stories arose in interviews, it was more common for young women to speak about ‘friends of friends’, or hypothetical peers, who they perceived to be taking the ‘bad’ way, or to having been through ‘obstacles’ themselves which they have come out the other side of, as Frida went on to explain:

I think that the typical Mexican would have to go through obstacles, and then they want to succeed, they want to do better, they go to college, and their testimony has to come out, like ‘I went through obstacles to get to where I am’, just because they’re Mexican. So I think that is a typical thing for us... There’s a trend, like a repetition. It does affect us, but I see it because I’ve struggled with those things too, but I think it depends who the person is and whether they’re going to accept their lot or if they’re going to leave it [behind] and do better...

Frida

As such, her words are illustrative of the ways in which some young women perceive parental, familial and individual struggles and obstacles as being something of a rite of passage for Mexicans in the U.S. – a journey that may be mobilised through a ‘testimony’, and which may be conducive to ‘success’. But success as a result of one’s family’s struggles is not inevitable; rather, to be inspired is perceived to be a choice available to young women, as Katrina believes:

Even though there’s all those stereotypes [of Mexicans], I think that’s what some Mexicans are inspired by, you know, ‘my family struggled, crossing the border, they paid so much money to get over here, and even when they struggled to come over here there’s still struggling’. I think, if [our parents] fought for us, why not take that and use it.

Young women most commonly said that they would ‘take’ struggles and ‘use them’ particularly through the channelling of their energies into their everyday schooling and long-term education. Their logic is that if they can better themselves, and obtain a good job, they will be able to help their hard-working parents out in the future:

Frida: Since they came to this country they want to succeed so they have to work a lot, two times harder than anybody else.

Caitlin: Is that why you feel like you want to help your mum out in the future?

Frida: Yes, because since she came here all she’s done is work. And all she’s done is struggle. We all know that with our parents, everything they do is for us, because they want us to have a better future, a better childhood, a better everything, since they know we’re here and here is where you can be anything you want. So when we think that we’re going to go to college it’s basically to help our parents, because we want them to have that time to relax, like ‘you’ve done your job, now let me do mine’.

Frida

Since the U.S. is the place where ‘you can be anything you want’, young women feel motivated to do the things their parents could never do, and realise their dreams in a way that their parents could not, thereby rendering their familial sacrifices worth it (Stanton-Salazar 2001). Frida suggests that young women formulate a vision or goal about wanting to go to college that is intimately tied to being able to repay their parents and let them relax.

This project’s aim was not a longitudinal one attempting to examine the educational trajectories of young Mexican women in relation to their aspirations, so I cannot be sure whether young women will fulfil the goals they set themselves. However, I was struck by the force with which young women reproduce discourses of ‘improvement’ and ‘success’. When talking about themselves as Mexicans in the U.S. and what their futures hold, they almost always frames themselves as wishing to, or already be in the process of, harnessing their

parents' struggles for positive means – both to improve their own and their family's prospects, and for some, even the betterment of their wider community. The older young women in the study, for example, who were hoping to or study to be a teacher or counsellor, often said they were doing so in order to be able to 'give back to [their] communities' (Lucila).

Therefore, I suggest that witnessing their parents' daily struggles in the U.S. is a significant contextual factor that informs young women's socioeconomic and educational aspirations and expectations, and can be seen as a form of social capital that young women leverage to better their lives. It is then, not necessarily a bad thing to have migrant parents if there is the presence of such 'immigrant optimism' and ambition regarding education and careers (Kao and Tienda 1998). Part of this optimism is the continually reinforced and repeated belief that post-migratory life in the U.S., however hard, is still better than what could have been possible in Mexico, as I illustrated in this chapter's previous section, and so young women must make the most of their privilege to be 'here'. Furthermore, scholars have shown that the presence of such strong support and optimism from parents can mitigate factors that may otherwise limit young people's educational trajectories, such as their parents not having experience of the intricate academic and administrative workings of the U.S. education system (López and Stanton-Salazar 2001).

5.4 Conclusion

In discussions of who they perceive themselves to be *now*, and *here*, in the U.S., young women frequently refer to their *formations*, that is, the historical legacies which inform the positionality today (Skeggs 1997). As young women who identify as Mexican, most of these formations are rooted in imagery of Mexico. This chapter has shown that young women remember Mexico through two lenses, that of the 'knowledgeable insider', and that of the 'stranger tourist' (Wagner 2008), for two divergent purposes. Firstly, they construct Mexico as 'poor' and 'backward', enabling them through a process of othering to construct themselves as sophisticated Mexican-*American* young women. They do this to be able to take on a classed position of privilege that is not normally thought to be available to them in the U.S. due to

the dominant narrative of ‘all poverty if Mexican’ that abounds in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (Vila 2000: 124). They secondly strive to prove their ability to *relate* to those family members in Mexico that they left behind so that upon their return to the U.S., they may regale their Mexican peers with stories that highlight their ‘authenticity’ as Mexicans. In both framings, young women present Mexico as somewhere to love, and yet leave, an important construction since it helps them make sense of why their parents left and rendered their family ‘migrant’ in the U.S.

The second part of this chapter illustrated that whilst most of the young women in this project have not migrated internationally themselves, the implications of migratory processes on constructions of their Mexican and Mexican-American selfhoods remain highly significant. Young women’s parents strategically mobilise their migration and ‘struggle narratives’ to instil in their children a motivation to ‘succeed’ in the U.S., and render ‘worth it’ their own sacrifices and efforts. The chapter showed that young women heed these messages and take great pride in their parents as ‘hard working’ Mexicans.

This chapter has demonstrated how young women’s return visits are ‘transnational exercises’ (Duval 2004: 51) and that through memory-sharing practices with their peers and parents in the U.S. contribute to the production of ‘transnational social fields’ (Basch et al. 1994). It showed how these trips and border-crossing practices are imbued with connotations of class, taste and degrees of modernity/urbanity which young women employ to socially position themselves in particular ways. Furthermore, through the usage of narratives about the past, parents continue to inflect young women’s U.S.-based lives with practices, traditions and ways of thinking that they root in what young women perceive to be the Mexican *familia*. It is in dialogue with discourses of *la familia*, that young women’s home and outside lives are quite heavily defined, and it is these interactions that I address now in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six – *La familia*: Ideals and reality within the Mexican home

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has so far examined the decisions that young women make around their ethnic identity labelling, their constructions of Mexico to secure for themselves both an ‘authentic’ Mexicanness and to a lesser degree a ‘sophisticated’ Americanness, and their strategic uses of migration and struggle narratives as social capital to achieve future goals. References to a revered ‘*la familia*’ enjoy a prominent role throughout these dialogues in three ways: in terms of how young women understand their genealogical heritage; how they expect rich Mexican ‘culture’ to be passed on through, and performed in, their family homes and extended kin networks; and how their selfless families sacrifice and struggle for their benefit. But how are conceptions of *la familia* actually manifested in young women’s lives in the everyday? How can it be that young women continue to reproduce positive idealisations of the nurturing *familia* when scholars are so adamant about its pathological effect on their social wellbeing and educational trajectories in the U.S. (*cf*Portes and Zhou 1993)?

This chapter exposes and unravels some of these tensions by examining young women’s experiences of family roles in the home, the key site in which performances of, and relations bound up in, *la familia* are located (Chant 1997). It does this because for better or worse, young women’s identities as ‘young’ ‘Mexican’ ‘women’ in everyday practice are formed in dialogue with traditional and imagined doctrines of young womanhood as they are enshrined in notions of *la familia*. It focuses on the interactions between gendered and age-related expectations of power, *respeto* (respect), and the division of labour, to show that whilst the ideological and emotional pull of the *familia* ideal remains strong, it is just that - an ideal – it is not a norm in practice (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Most families, at least those belonging to the young women in this study, do not ever entirely fit either of *la familia*’s compassionate/pathological templates.

Arranged in two parts, this chapter’s first section examines how young women interpret and reproduce notions of the traditional *familia* that centre on familism and patriarchy, particularly as they relate to their parents’ generation. It shows how young women are taught traditional

principles of *la familia* via the pedagogical tools of *dichos* (sayings), *historias* (stories) and *consejos* (advice) rehearsed repeatedly by their communities throughout their lives. The section shows that young women experience and promote *la familia's* potential as a source of comfort, conviviality and cultural capital, at the same time as their families are inflected with some of the more negative aspects associated with the traditional *familia*, such as patriarchy, *machismo* and pathology – expressions of which do not go unchallenged. In addition, I illustrate that as well as articulating images of the traditional *familia* similar to those portrayed in the academic literature, young women are also able to appraise such images critically and highlight the gaps that exist between traditional ideals and the more complicated realities they witness in their homes.

The second part of the chapter then shows how in talking about their experiences of home, young women emphasise and to varying degrees contest, the differences in their domestic responsibilities vis-à-vis other members of the household – disparities that exist particularly along gender lines in comparison to their brothers. In addition, this section illustrates that the salience of *respeto* expressed in terms of young women's observance of respect towards their elders, especially their fathers, and in how they perform 'respectable' girlhoods, cannot be understated. Whilst they acknowledge the influence and pervasiveness of traditional ways of *thinking* about gender, young women also recognise that in *practice*, both 'now' and 'here' in the U.S. but also amongst their elders and those in Mexico, roles within the family and the gendered division of labour are open to contestation and change.

Across both sections I draw attention to the ways in which young women draw upon alternative models of 'home' and 'family' garnered from external sources, notably those associated with their white American school peers, and broader perceptions of 'American family values', to reflect positively and negatively upon feelings about their own *familias* and cultural performances. Through this process of othering, young women construct their family roles and domestic responsibilities as ethnically Mexican compared to their white counterparts.

By examining how young women frame *la familia* through these three axes of generational difference, gender difference, and ethnic difference respectively, I expose some of the

complex negotiations between expectation, practice and desire that young women engage in daily to establish their own identities in and outside of their homes.

6.2 Ideals of the traditional *familia* – myths and realities

Mexican ‘culture’ is traditionally understood to be characterised by a fierce and unwavering attachment to *la familia*, whereby those who identify as Mexican engage strongly with a collective ‘family identity’ (Rothman et al. 1985, John et al. 1997). Such a sense of *familismo*, or familism, is based upon loyalty, interdependency and wariness of outsiders, and holds that the needs of the united family group are prioritised over those of the individuals within it (Madsen 1969, Maldonado 1979). In addition, conceptions of *la familia* centre both on close relationships sustained via cohabitation within *la casa*, the home (Chant 1997), and also the extended Mexican family including fictive kin such as *compadres*, godparents, and also those that continue to live in Mexico (Sena-Rivera 1979).

Scholars, whilst agreeing on the basic foundations of *la familia* as laid out above, tend to take two distinct and opposing views with regard to what they perceive to be its meanings, manifestations and effects in reality for those who live under its influence, particularly for young Mexicans living in the U.S. Over three decades ago, Mirandé held that American social scientists have traditionally tended to frame *la familia* as a ‘rigid, male-dominated, authoritarian structure that breeds passivity and dependence’, whilst Chicana/o scholars have sought to offer a more sympathetic perspective of the family as ‘warm, nurturing, and supportive, giving the individual a strong sense of security’ (Mirandé 1977: 747). Whilst work has since sought to resolve the gap between these two polarities, they remain the predominant of stereotypes of *la familia* in academia, public and policy discourse. They are also still important idealisations for Mexican families living in the U.S.; however, as this section will now show, young women articulate a reality that is much more complicated and contradictory than these templates would allow.

When I asked young women about their families, I rarely got a description of the family members that made up their quotidian households (to hear this I had to ask more explicit questions about who was in the home and what kinds of relationships were sustained –

responses to which appear below as the realities of young women's household dynamics start to unfold), but instead they often chose to tell me about *la familia*, both as it is imagined and how it is manifested for them. *La familia*, was commonly explained as what 'being Mexican is all about' (Katrina) - more so than the exact members that make up the family, *la familia* is a collective institution or sense of 'coming together' that incorporates what young women understand as the celebration and maintenance of rich Mexican 'culture' in the home, of sharing convivially in good times and the responsibility to assist without question during bad ones, and of staying connected with family members near and far.

Firstly then, *la familia* is a space for cultural expression of a specifically Mexican kind. Young women associate *la familia* with taking pride in, promoting and keeping alive expressions of 'rich' Mexican culture that centre on descriptions of food, shared language and celebration. As such, young women present a picture of *la familia* as convivial, warm and welcoming:

Mexican family life is...eating Mexican food! My mom usually makes enchiladas, tamales at home...Or going to those Mexican parties, like cinco de mayo.

Katrina

All our holidays and family gatherings are all the typical Mexican gatherings. Like the food, and the music, and all the *familia* coming together. The way I look at American culture, it's very dry. When I think of an American Christmas, for example, I think about the parents just cooking a dinner for that little family, and eating and going to sleep, and in the morning opening presents. And for us, since I was little family comes from Mexico, we all stay in one house, whoever has the biggest house, even though we're like sardines! In the morning the whole family's together and drinking hot chocolate or coffee, and eating tamales...

Rossi

Young women said that their daily lives at home were characterised by Mexican food, the playing of *banda* or *norteño* music and *telenovelas* (Mexican TV soaps), but it was images of the less common celebrations of holidays such as Christmas that they most commonly mobilised to exemplify the colourful and convivial nature of *la familia*. In doing so, they also tended to

contrast such vitality with perceptions of a somewhat bland American *non-* culture. That is, young women like Rossi view American homes and families as small, orderly and ‘dry’, and nothing really to mark the occasion as specifically culturally ‘American’.

For young women on the other hand, the *familia* is a unit that nurtures them as young *Mexicans*, instilling them knowledge about their heritage and homeland via a set of practices, such as the cooking of traditional regional Mexican dishes. Young women suggested that intimacy between family members is also partially arrived at through the use of Mexican Spanish or indigenous languages in the home, since they are distinct from the dominant American English language outside. Young women become repositories for the cultural capital arising from the richness of Mexican culture performed in the home by their families. These are cultural competencies that they are then able to use as cultural capital outside of the home, such as when they visit Mexico, or when they apply for bilingual jobs in the U.S., a commonly stated advantage of having a second/home language.

In addition to fostering a strong understanding of culture, *familia* is also about ‘sticking together’ and spending time with extended family in the everyday, not just during times of celebration, as Fabiola explains:

Mexican family is like sticking together, ‘*la familia*’, ‘let’s go visit grandma’ and ‘let’s go visit our aunts and uncles’.

Fabiola

La familia is constructed as a compassionate and supportive network made up of members of the nuclear and extended family who see each other regularly. As Francia details below, *familia* is a strongly ‘connected’ and ‘joined’ collective for sharing problems but also for sharing resources:

The Mexican perspective is that we think of American families as yes, they might be pretty well-off, they might have a nice house, go on vacations with their kids, but when it comes to the actual family, they might not be as connected, and as joined as a Mexican family would be. You might know that white families are not that big, because they have one or two kids, [whereas] Mexican families have four, five kids

each. I remember when I was growing up, friends weren't encouraged as much because we had our cousins. And that's basically how we're raised – you have family and that's all you need. If given the choice between a big family and being well-off, I think you're probably better to have the family. Just because you have that unlimited support and resources, rather than being in house, by yourself.

Francia

Young women frequently compare the Mexican family as inherently eclectic, sociable and fun due to its size, with the 'small' and 'less connected' American family. As the previous two chapters have illustrated, young women's formulations of Mexicanness arise partially out of its otherness to Americanness. Describing the characteristics of *la familia* is no different - as Francia and Rossi's words above illustrate, young women are often able to define with most clarity the key positives of their Mexican social institutions in relation to what they are *not*. Francia also acknowledges a commonly insinuated comparison between Mexican and American families based on class – young women promote the view that Mexicans may be financially poor compared to Americans but they are richer in happiness. Within this comparison are the unspoken but alluded to judgements about priorities, that Mexicans prioritise family and collectivity over a more isolated sense of individualism and wealth. In this process, *la familia* is constructed as a buffer to the unhappiness of poverty.

Whereas some scholars have denounced traditional Mexican conceptions of familism because they perceive it to prioritise the collective family good to the detriment of individual success, young women take a different view of familism and highly value it. They perceive *familia* as operating to ensure that each individual member of the household has their needs met by others within the group – as Francia suggests above, young women might not feel that they need much support or help from friends outside of the family because of the significant and sufficient communal caring resources perceived to be held within. This might be particularly the case for financial support when families struggle financially, a situation not uncommon as the previous chapter showed. Young women suggested that by fostering strong familial ties by regularly visiting their uncles or aunts, for example, families could count on being able to call in a financial favour if and when necessary.

In addition, young women frame the protective *familia* as enveloping understanding of who they are and where they come from – it is a treasured and protective space where they can be amongst people who have the same cultural and socio-historical roots as them - a safe haven that contrasts an external environment that devalues and regularly discriminates against their Mexican communities. As such, *familia* can be an emotional and financial safeguard that mitigates the damage inflicted from the outside.

In addition to expression of Mexican culture, celebration and connectivity with extended family, *la familia* is constructed as a safe and stable unit of daily life organised through the framework of a benevolent patriarchy. Centred around the home space, *la familia* is an arrangement to trust, within which everyone knows their appropriate place and gendered and age-related role (Chant 1997). Young women are taught that the safety and sanctity of the Mexican home space, vis-à-vis the danger and immorality of the (more American) outside, is created and maintained when each family member performs the gendered productive and reproductive behaviours assigned to them, as I will detail in the next section.

Whilst their idealisations of the *familia* hold that it is a safe, protective and benevolent unit, young women may not always witness its tenets in reality, and sometimes when it *is* manifested, *la familia* can also operate in decisively more negative ways for young women. At the same time as some young women valued their parents' performance of the traditional masculine and feminine roles within their homes, many young women spoke out against what they perceived to be less positive manifestations of a strict gendered division of labour. A significant number of young women, although not all, if they lived with their fathers, painted a picture of *la familia* as strongly patriarchal whereby their household is controlled by a hyper-masculine and authoritarian father who embodies the *machismo* ideal. Some young women indeed witnessed some of the pathological elements of *la familia*, especially as they arose under the auspices of a destructive *machismo* – namely domestic violence, extra-marital affairs and heavy drinking or substance abuse – frightening and damaging experiences that young women and their mothers, if adhering correctly to *la familia's* traditional *marianismo* ideal, should not fight against, contest, deny or leave.

Certainly, *la familia*, for all of its positives, cannot protect against everything. As the previous chapter illustrated, for example, a significant proportion of young Mexican families in

Southern California struggle financially and discrimination continues nonetheless – these are not necessarily always able to be mitigated or solved by the warm embrace of the *la familia*. In addition, at the same time as a young woman's family may receive much needed financial assistance from a family member, so must her family be ready to offer such support if necessary, something difficult to do if parents are already struggling themselves. Young women themselves are also called upon to help if they are working and earning. One young woman, for example, had been saving diligently for college when her parents' restaurant was fined \$3000 for showing a sports game on TV without a license. Although her parents only asked to 'borrow' her college money, she knew she was unlikely to receive it back due to her parents' stretched financial situation. She certainly was not going to *ask* for it back, as the rules of *familia* are such that debts are waived amongst kin, but the incident left her feeling quietly frustrated and resentful.

The sending of money to extended family members in Mexico is also a way of displaying the migrant family's continued commitment to the values of *la familia* despite having left the homeland. Young women reproduce discourses of responsibility and the need to 'help' those less fortunate in Mexico through the mechanism of *la familia*. They, like Rita 'feel good' and take a sense of self-pride in being able to help and support their family, despite it being financially debilitating for themselves, but they are also frustrated that their hard-earned money is used to help those perceived to be less driven and responsible:

'I have family in Mexico, like my uncles and sometimes they don't have money for their kids' school. It's not my responsibility, but if I know about it, I just feel I have to do something about it, you know? They're just in a bad situation. So I'll be like 'oh ok, well I'll send them money'. Just to help them out...I mean, why not? (she laughs wryly)...I feel good...that I can help, you know, that I'm *able* to help. Because what if I was in their situation? It would be different. Like I have cousins over there who for some reason ended up pregnant, well, obviously you know *why* (sarcastic tone). And they don't have money, they don't go to school...so then they end up pregnant'

Rita

In a similar way to young women's experiences in Mexico that enable them to Other those that live there, so do transnational practices such as financially supporting their distant kin. In cases such as these, I got the sense that young women, whilst enjoying the positive benefits of *la familia*, became increasingly disillusioned with some of the more pathological or responsible elements of it. They spoke about disagreements or arguments they were starting to have with their parents over trying to balance their convivial Mexican cultural collectivism, with a distancing towards a more individual outlook where personal happiness and investment is equally, if not more important.

Indeed, as Griswold del Castillo has shown, Mexican families living in the U.S. borderlands struggle to hold themselves together and maintain their family history, culture and ways of life, including performances of *la familia*, whilst under the pressures of capitalism, manifested most clearly in the tensions between Mexican-born and -educated parents and their American-educated and more 'Americanised' children (2007). Chamberlain also points to the 'jostling' and continuous renegotiations that are always underway in migrant families, an inevitable result of performing parts of two cultures and with senses of self which are rooted in two homes/homelands (1995) – young women suggested that almost inevitably, *la familia*, as the convivial vessel of Mexican culture, would also be under threat when they brought some of their more 'Americanised' and 'individualistic' performances of self home.

6.3 Young women's understandings of gendered roles

[Men] always work, they always take care of their family and they get money to buy food for their family. The man works harder, and the woman either works or stays at the house and does chores.

Eva

When young women talk about the home and family roles within it, references to a traditional Mexican division of labour abound. In our conversation above about how a typical Mexican

family might operate, Eva articulates very succinctly some of the most commonly rehearsed tropes about men and women. Like most other young women, she expects the gendered division of labour to exist across distinct spatial planes, with work and the outside being men's domain, and the home and domestic being women's.

Onto this binary young women also tend to construct a clear hierarchy which valorises what Eva refers to as the 'harder' work that men do as breadwinners, and which functions to, inadvertently perhaps, devalue women's work both inside and outside of the home. Women's work is largely invisible/ignored – it is not counted as work as it is often unwaged.

Such familial arrangements are constructed as ideals to be fulfilled as part of the everyday routine of being Mexican. The normalisation and expected universalism of these gendered roles is alluded to in Eva's use above of 'always' and is also recognised here by Cecilia:

Caitlin: Within your family and among the Mexican community, what expectations do you think there are of how a woman should be?

Cecilia: A Mexican...? It's like taking care of the house and when the men come home dinner should be ready, and they have to do everything at home.

Caitlin: And who says that?

Cecilia: Well, mostly everyone thinks that.

Cecilia

Cecilia not only corroborates Eva's idealisation of Mexican women's roles but grounds this rhetoric in what she states is a common understanding *across* the Mexican transnational community (both Mexican in the U.S. and those in Mexico). '*Mostly everyone thinks that*' is exemplary of the universalising language used by young women to explain accepted, and indeed expected, gender roles for all families that identify as Mexican.

Despite the clarity with which young women are able to define these gender role expectations (in a somewhat hypothetical sense) however, they struggle to reconcile them with their own families' gendered practices. This is because, as the following excerpts will show, whilst they

witness their parents' embodiment of some expected characteristics, they also recognise that firstly, some of these traditional ways have never really been enacted fully, even in Mexico, and that 'change' is underway. In fact, young women are highly aware that these traditional notions of womanhood and family are in flux and being contested in a variety of ways.

One of the strategies young women use to make sense of this complicated dialogue is to hold their parents up to traditional templates of masculinity and femininity and judge to what degree they adhere to or rebuff them. Lucila exemplifies this negotiation well:

When I think of [Mexican gender roles] I think of the very masculine, and the very feminine, nothing really in between. I think my parents define that pretty well. My dad is a very hard worker, he knows how to do or fix everything, he's a total guy, kind of a macho man attitude. And my mum is like the motherly, taking-care of everybody, cooking person. I think of them at their extremes. And that's the way I expect it to be, but I feel like it's changed now. Not so many people hold the same ways, things change. It's not just to date, get married and have kids. There's school now, and I think that's a big part of it. I feel like here, older men say it all the time, 'guys these days don't know how to be men, they don't know how to do anything, how to clean, or fix stuff. They should know', and they say 'girls these days don't know how to cook'.

Lucila

With a tenderness demonstrative of their close relationship, Lucila attributes positive meanings to her parents' performance of 'extreme' masculine and feminine roles. The differentiation between her father being able to 'fix everything' and her mother 'taking care of everybody', operates in conjunction with her acknowledgement that 'it's changed now'. Here, she separates expectations associated with her parents' generation from life choices that do not centre on getting married and having children that her own generation might be more inclined to adopt today, a change that she attributes to education, something which, as Chapter Five showed, young women do not think exists to a high standard in Mexico. Instead education is associated with the U.S. and so enlightenment towards more egalitarian relations and roles is something achieved through migration or geographical change. That she suggests

that gender role expectations are shifting along generational lines as well, is evidenced by her suggestion that older Mexican people living in the U.S. are disappointed that younger folk do not engage in the gendered practices traditionally expected of them.

Lucila is not alone in her belief that traditional gender roles should be becoming less relevant to younger generations now given the rise of more egalitarian ways of thinking about them/family roles. Cecilia, who as it will become clear shortly actually witnesses the very opposite in her own household, explains how she thinks women and men *should* now be able to operate in the home:

Cecilia: That's how it *used* to be, and for [Mexicans], women doing everything at home is like a tradition...

Caitlin: Ok, and do you think it's still the case now?

Cecilia: Hmm...no. I think women can also do their own jobs, and they don't necessarily have to be waiting on the men, and giving them everything they need. They don't have to have dinner ready or anything. If women can cook, so can men (she laughs) - they can also learn how to cook if they want to eat! They don't necessarily have to be waiting for the woman to do the food and everything.

Cecilia

Cecilia suggests that Mexican gender roles have moved away from tradition where women's main purpose was to serve men and satiate their needs. Instead, women can focus on having their own jobs and meaningful lives, without being validated only by the work they do for men. There are higher expectations that men can equally learn to do the tasks traditionally only done by women, such as to cook for and serve themselves.

This last principle was voiced by a small group of young women and it is important to pay attention to the language they use. Cecilia's emphasis is on men doing more for *themselves*, not necessarily on them taking on more shared responsibilities for the good of the family as a whole. I observed this amongst other young women too – although they believe that women should be relieved of the burden of serving men, only a very small minority of them said they

thought that men should help with domestic tasks around the house more generally (see Martina in the next section, for example). This would suggest that many of them still view the majority of domestic tasks such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children as being women's work, even if the expectation of them to serve men is waning.

As I have shown so far, young women perceive gender role ideology as changing, and as I will show in the following section, indeed they instigate change in relation to their own roles. For many of them however, traditional patriarchal norms nonetheless continue to have a large impact on their family's daily lives, particularly when it comes to parental practice. Angela explains how wider understandings of gender roles are 'continued' in the case of her own family:

Mexican society is very male dominated. I think it's changing a little bit now, in the modern world, but I think in general I think there's a lot of *machismo*. At least in my family I think there is, even if it's internalised now...sometimes we don't realise that...there's a double standard for men and women. People don't see it as such, but it's always there...women continue it, or *we* continue it, I should say (she laughs).

Angela

Angela is a young woman whose introduction to gender studies at university enabled her to articulate what some of the younger women alluded to but struggled to explain – the ways in which the differentiation of male and female roles and their power within the home, or what she refers explicitly to as the 'double standard' of *machismo*, might be normalised as so natural that it is rendered invisible. She acknowledges an 'internalised' framework of norms, expectations and values that function to reconstitute some young women's homes as places of patriarchal dominance and female subjugation. She perceives both men and women as being responsible for, albeit at times unconsciously, perpetuating this system.

Angela's words are also important because she generalises that 'Mexican society is very male dominated' and contrasts it to the changes happening now in the 'modern world'. This functions to create Mexico as behind and from the past, thereby fusing the spatial difference

of Mexico-based society with a temporal shift backwards, in the same way that young women do this regarding their visits to Mexico itself.

If Angela's case exemplifies young women's discomfort that arises out of the communal maintenance of gender inequality in the Mexican home, then Cecilia's shows how some are emboldened by experiences, such as witnessing an unequal parental division of labour, to take assertive steps towards the contestation or outright rejection of these belief systems:

Caitlin: In your family, what would you say the deal is?

Cecilia: Oh, it's the same. I fight with my dad a little because he also wants my mom to do everything, and if she doesn't do the food, he doesn't really eat, or she has to serve it to him. It's like...he doesn't really tell her to do it, but he just quietly does that (makes a mock disappointed face), he's like 'oh'...so I fight with him a little because I tell him he has hands, he can get the food! (she laughs), I'm like 'it's there, it's ready, you can just get a plate' and serve it himself. He doesn't need to be waiting on my mom.

Caitlin: And what does he say when you say that?

Cecilia: He gets mad, he's like 'oh, well you're not doing it either!' Like, I'm not serving him, and it's 'well, yeah, I don't want to serve you, you can do it yourself' (she laughs).

Caitlin: Right. And why do you not want to do it?

Cecilia: Well, he doesn't serve me stuff, I don't have to serve him.

Caitlin: Ok, kind of give-and-take then?

Cecilia: Yeah.

Cecilia

In contrast to the egalitarian beliefs she articulated earlier, Cecilia admits that in her household the performance of traditional gender roles has stayed 'the same' –that is, patriarchal norms of women's servitude towards men remain engrained in her parents' practice. Cecilia's case illustrates the discrepancies that often exist between ideology and

practice that young women have to contend with in their homes. That is, a husband and wife might maintain a certain degree of agreement in terms of their own gendered roles within the house, but their behaviour may well be at odds with what their children's generation learn to be acceptable.

Indeed, as a result of her understanding that women do *not* have to do everything for men, Cecilia finds it difficult to witness her father's demands on her mother to serve him still. She says that she voices her disapproval in the household and this leads her into regular verbal conflict with her father. That she speaks up and rouses a reaction in him is evidence that young women not only develop their own viewpoints on issues of gender equality, but that they are willing to challenge normative expectations and unequal practice in their own homes and towards their own parents. That her father reacts so strongly and negatively to her challenges is also evidence of how deeply set these views are, and how controversial it is for young women to contest them.

Openly disputing traditional norms might be difficult for young women, but they nonetheless find more subtle ways of exposing the weaknesses of these ideals. For example, it was common for young women to draw upon examples of their older female family members' contestation of unequal practices within the home. Here, Mariana tells me about her grandmother's experience:

...My grandma let herself go, she let my grandpa hit her, but there came to a point where my grandma actually fought back and once she fought back my grandpa left her alone. She's not with him anymore but he learned that he couldn't do whatever he wanted to my grandma.

Mariana

Young women's choice to relay such stories can be seen as a way of reproducing narratives that counter patriarchy - they are aware that older women have contested, in this case violent, patriarchy in the home before and enhanced their own lives as a result. Such precedents act as evidence that older women who may have lived in a damaging relationship for years may

decide to extricate themselves from such a situation. This is an important lesson for young women who may be witnessing similar relations in their own homes now.

Mariana's example above also shows that women have stood up to men previously, and in Mexico where Mariana's grandmother lives, disproving the assumptions that women challenging patriarchal norms only happens 'now' and in the U.S. In fact, her elaboration below goes on to show that young women are able to explore very critically some of the stereotypical ways that Mexican gender relations are assumed to operate. :

Before, around my grandma's age, women were supposed to do everything, and there was a machismo like 'the guys are really macho'. I can't say it's a lie, because there has been, but I think it's everywhere, it's not just in Mexico. Right here [in the U.S.] maybe it's because women have learned to fight more for what they should do. In Mexico, women didn't know that before, women weren't shown that, they were supposed to do everything...

So, basic stereotypes yeah, men were machista, they are still, but not all of them, not as big a macho as they are labelled to be. They're not crazily like 'I'm the man', stuff like that. It's just like here in America, you don't hear it, but some men are abusive and stuff too...

Mariana

Whilst she acknowledges the existence of machismo, she thinks that it is not as pervasive a problem as stereotypes suggest and men are '*not as big a macho as they are labelled to be*'. She also thinks that where unequal or abusive practice does exist, Mexican men are not alone in perpetuating it, but some white American men do so too. Young women therefore not only counter patriarchy but they reject notions of patriarchy as an inherently Mexican condition and also assumptions of white American society as being conversely egalitarian and enlightening.

Young women at times made direct links between gendered roles within the home and instances of emotional abuse and domestic violence. Here Adriana explains how her step-

father's interpretation of domestic roles had negative effects on how he treated his family when expectations were not met:

Caitlin: I don't know about your group that you're in but in our group there's quite a few things of like domestic violence, that seems to come up with a lot of families (yeah), and things like substance abuse, like drugs and alcohol (yeah), and separation between parents (yeah). Why do you think those things might be common amongst people here?

Adriana: I think with the domestic violence I think because in most Mexican families, the man really has to be in charge, he has to know. For me, with my step dad, he *needed* to know exactly what each of us were doing at every point of the day and he wanted everything prepared for him to come home, he didn't want to really handle anything, he would always tell us, 'I go to work and that's it'. He didn't really talk to us, he didn't talk to me. And so with that it was just harder on my mom to do everything, like dinner, it *had* to be made, right when he came home, it had better be on the table otherwise there was a big old conflict. And I think with him he just needed to be involved in everything that was going on.

Adriana

Issues of control such as knowing and approving family members' whereabouts, and also being served and looked after were raised as the key areas around which tension may lie. If these terms are not met then young women said that their fathers feel like their authority as the head of the household is being undermined and this can have negative repercussions for women. They need to reassert their dominance in physical or violent ways.

This section has shown that traditional gender relations continue to be important both ideologically and in practice. The next section examines how some of these ways of thinking and doing, in their parents' cases, impact upon the work that young women themselves do within the home and the domestic division of labour as it relates to them.

I think Mexican girls...need to do the things that their parents tell them to do. They can't just be out, they have to be with the family. 'Do this and do that'.

Marta

Young women frequently said that a point of affiliation between young people was the fact that they could 'understand' where each other was coming from because of their parents and Mexican familial background. Rossi for example, explained that shared family rules and 'morals' were key aspects of commonality between herself and other young Mexicans:

Most of our mothers have the same rules, like be home by a specific time, 'you can't do this, you can't do that'. Since most of us have siblings, one of our things is you take care of the younger siblings, and we're all older so we have to be responsible. And then always be respectful, no matter who you're talking to.

Rossi

Within this commonality, as Rossi suggests, one of the key ways that young women are expected to exist with the framework of *familia* is through *respeto*, or respect, the performance of which can often define the day-to-day verbal and behavioural interactions young women have with their parents and elders.

Caitlin: With being respectful, how does that work? What would be classed as being disrespectful for example?

Rossi: Um, disrespectful would be...to *tutiar* of an older person, and what that means is to speak to them as your equal. From a young age we're taught that you don't speak to anyone older than you without being polite. We would say '*usted*', we wouldn't say '*tu*' like we would say to our friends. That's being respectful. Even if they're just a year older than us, it's that thing that's installed [in us].

Caitlin: And what are the repercussions if you don't show that kind of respect?

Rossi: Well, for me, my parents don't hit me, but they'll ground me, they won't let me go out. And that goes for a lot of my friends too. [Our parents] will ground us, that's the big one. Or another one, would be not letting them drive or hang out with friends.

Rossi

And still within the framework of *familia*, Anabel leverages her transnational awareness, directly relating her choice of identifications as both Mexican and American (actually Chicana) to her understandings of cultural roles that are expected of Mexican men and women in the domestic sphere:

I lean more towards Mexican heritage but I'm also a strong American. Like it can be *both*. I guess I have a good balance, but certain qualities I've got from being the way a Mexican would be...like being very determined, and persevering for what I want to do, and working hard. But some things...like in the Mexican culture it's very machista, which means the women stay at home and the men do everything. But I don't really agree with that so I think I take on more of the American aspect that there are no limitations on you, you can do and be who you want to be. I'm more independent and I don't accept that *cultural* thing from the Mexican [side], so I take up more the American, more like getting an education and doing things for *myself* and then not, what's the word, not playing the *role*, just being a housewife, or something like that...I guess [I learnt those attitudes] just from observing other people. We live in a complex where it's predominantly Mexican heritage or Latin or South American people, so I see a lot of the time the men are the ones that get to make the decisions on certain things like 'oh, you can go out and you can't go out', and the women just stay at home with the kids, and the man works. I guess it's *okey* but sometimes I feel like it's abused too much. I never really liked to be controlled by anyone. I'm *not* going to be someone's puppet, so I guess that's where I learn, just from observing other people.

Anabel

She makes domestic work and the gendered division of labour more about attitudes. In her home, she decides to draw upon two ways of thinking and being, making a stark contrast between Mexican and white American ways of life, and forming a hybrid way of life of her own.

Whilst a small group of young women report taking stances against what they perceive to be gender inequality between their parents, the degree to which most other young women would feel able to raise such an issue or challenge the status quo remains questionable. Cecilia explains why she thinks her choice to speak out might make her an anomaly amongst other young Mexican women:

Caitlin: Do you think other people like your friends or people in your community would also challenge [inequality] or not?

Cecilia: Hmm...probably not. No.

Caitlin: Why not?

Cecilia: Like I said, it's sort of tradition. Whatever the man says, that's how it is. That's what he also tells us, he gets mad, and he tells us 'I'm your father, I can tell you what to do', and I'm like 'no, you can't'...I always end up in fights with him.

Cecilia

She suggests that most others would not challenge these inequalities outright because of how normalised and engrained they are in family life – these traditions are rules to be obeyed by all parties because 'that's how it is'. Contesting the roles their parents take on is especially problematic for young women because it goes against the strongly instilled necessity for them to display *respeto* towards their parents at all times. It also functions to dispute their fathers' authority within the home. Cecilia's father's understanding that 'I'm your father, I can tell you what to do' is indicative of the power relations that tend to operate on both gender and generational levels in young women's homes. Being young and female means that their opinions and experiences of the household are doubly lacking in value compared to their older, male family members.

Paola articulates the consequences of young women's challenging assumed notions of respect:

Caitlin: What's a 'proper' Mexican girl supposed to be like?

Paola: Well depends if you're old school or not. Because like my dad's like 'oh you have to respect me because I'm your father', and I'm like 'well you have to gain respect, you just can't have it', so that's always an argument.

Paola

Patriarchal norms continue to hold much sway in post-migratory Mexican households in the U.S.; not only do young women perceive their parents to often perform these ideals, but they also perceive themselves to be expected to do so. Almost all of the young women interviewed reported having significant domestic responsibilities, most of which revolve around cleaning the home, cooking for the family and caring for siblings.

Young women view their particular workload as arising out of the interaction of four key variables; their gender; their Mexicanness; their age; and family necessity. The relative balance and importance of these variables for the domestic work they perform depends for the most part on who young women live with. When men are in the home young women tend to *do more than* men, and in some cases, young women are also expected to *do things for* men, to serve them. When young women live only with women, most often their single mothers, they also have many responsibilities but these tend to arise more out of socio-economic need than gendered expectations.

Young women's experiences of home are also subject to their playing the role of a good Mexican 'girl', an accolade achieved by performing distinct domestic responsibilities, as Rossi describes:

When I get home, it's Spanish [language spoken] and then we'll have music, and we cook, I help [my mom] cook. We've always been taught that the girl helps out in the kitchen and with the cleaning.

Rossi

Rossi understands her home as a space of Mexicanness due to the quotidian presence of Spanish language, music and food. Along with these cultural identifiers, she also associates the Mexican home with the teaching and performance of gender appropriate behaviours. The expectations around Rossi's cooking and cleaning responsibilities arise out of her ethnic, gender and age locations because she is a Mexican 'girl' – indeed many other young women associated such a set of domestic competencies as being tied into their female Mexican cultural identity. Other young women suggested that learning to cook, for example, is part of the rite of passage to proper Mexican womanhood, and being unable to master such a cultural competency amounts to *failure*:

We have to cook, we need to learn - if we don't know how to cook by like the age of ten, then that's like a *failure* (she laughs).

Frida

Young women frequently link their work around the house to the processes of knowing and learning Mexican culture at home. This is in part due to the cultural importance and value that is attributed to the idealised *sacrificada* image of woman in the home, and especially in the kitchen, creating traditional Mexican dishes to foster within her family a connection to Mexico. To contribute to the creation of Mexican food is to become Mexican and maintain a Mexican identity. As I showed in the previous chapter, mothers, aunts and grandmothers are expected to teach their younger female kin how to make Mexican food such as *tortillas* with *arroz* (rice) and *frijoles* (beans), to ensure the transfer of culinary knowledge amongst members of the diaspora.

Whilst young women take pride and pleasure in embracing many of these 'Mexican' behaviours, they also understand that to acquire and enact these gendered knowledges may function to reproduce heavily differentiated roles within the home today. When talking about Mexican 'culture', Francia, for example, explains the gap between how young women and men are treated within the home and what they are expected to *know* and be able to do:

I definitely do see boys having it a lot easier in our culture. They're not being demanded as much, rather than the girls that have to fight to get some kind of equality

within the house, within the home. And boys, they tend to be given everything. They tend to be taken care of because they are the boys. And the girls should know how to cook and how to clean, when the boy might not even clean up after himself.

Francia

Indeed, expectations around young women's work are not constructed in isolation. For the most part they experience the gendered division of labour in unique ways compared to their other family members within the home, particularly compared to their brothers. Although a couple of young women said that they had similar amounts of work/expectations to their brothers regarding housework, the large majority said that they did much more than their brothers who have it 'a lot easier'. Julia's explanation for the heightened 'care' for boys in the household *because* they are boys also alludes to the underlying traditional value systems that necessitate men's comfort in the home over women's.

Despite being able to explain the roots of the gendered expectations upon them, the majority of young women think that the imbalance of chores between themselves and their brothers is unfair. Cecilia, for example, is frustrated that her mother tells her to wash dishes but does not tell her brother, whilst Martina thinks all men in the house need to do more:

Sometimes I don't really think that's fair. I shouldn't be doing all of it. He should be doing some...I know he's older and everything, but he still lives there.

Cecilia

I think girls are more hard workers [than men] because they do a lot of jobs. They have to do the cleaning of the house, they have to do the cooking, the laundry, taking care of the kids, plus they have to go to work. And guys just go to work and their food is ready, everything is clean.

No, [it's not fair]. I think more guys should start to think about us too, not only of them. They should think of helping out the family, or take care of the kids, or take them out, and wash the clothes. They should help out at the house.

Martina

Cecilia applies a logic of fairness to the division of labour such that all those who live in the house ‘*should be doing some [work]*’ regardless of their age or gender, and it should not be down to one person to do ‘*all of it*’. Martina feels the same and acknowledges an unfair balance if a man does not help at home, because it results in a double day for women – they engage in paid work outside of the home and then arrive back to a household to upkeep.

Cecilia went on to explain in the interview that she thinks her brother is a ‘layabout’ and that their parents do not get on well with him, whilst she has a closer and more ‘respectful’ relationship with them. She also indicated that it is partly *because of* her performance of a respectful ‘good’ Mexican girlhood, a conscientious student who also works hard in the home, that grants her a positive relationship with her parents. Whereas Francia above indicated that boys are favoured and cared for more in the home, and young women have to relieve them of chores because of that, Cecilia’s case shows that even when boys do not get on with their parents very well, they are still protected by their gender from contributing to the upkeep of the home.

Rossi has a similar experience in her home, and although she says that her parents try to ask her brother to help with the housework, it is to no avail. Her case, like Cecilia’s is useful because she talks not about the imagined expectations of her per se, but instead is able to document the tangible daily chores that she does, and also the discrepancies between what she *does* and what her brother *does not*. In this extended quote she describes the reaction his non-work ignites in her, and the family member whom she thinks inspires her brother’s machista perspectives:

Rossi: My brother’s just *really* lazy. It disturbs me because we share a room, and I’ll clean it, and I’ll clean the bathroom, and I’ll clean my mom’s bathroom, and I’ll help her downstairs in the living room, and the only thing we ask him to do is vacuum, and to take out the trash, and he can’t seem to do that until we’re about to explode on him! So that pisses me off. Because he feels like he’s the *guy* so all he has to do is watch TV. And both my parents have tried to tell him that that’s not the way that everybody shares the chores and their responsibilities.

But he's just *stuck* in that mentality. And that's from, I can say, an influence from my grandfather, my mom's dad.

Caitlin: Oh right?

Rossi: Yeah, because he's fifty-something, and he won't take his medication unless my grandmother gives it to him, hands it to him. And so he's in that mentality where he's the king, and the girl, the women do everything – they clean, they cook, they're there to serve *you*. So [my brother] gets it from him. And that's why I don't have a good relationship with my grandfather. I'm respectful, but I won't always speak to him. I'll just nod and walk away. My mother's noticed that, and she's called me out on it too.

Caitlin: Really?

Rossi: Yeah. And it just makes me mad how they don't see it. Nobody *sees* it. I would speak to my grandmother and be like 'why do you do it?! He's fifty-something, he has two hands, ten fingers! He can do it himself!' and she's just starting to get into the feeling of um, defending herself, and saying 'you know what? Get it yourself, you're on my nerves'. I admire that of her, because even though it's taken this long, she's finally had the courage to stand up to him.

Caitlin: Wow, that's really interesting. And I've heard a couple of girls say before that they're not really sure that they think it's particularly fair, them and their brother...

Rossi: Oh it's not! (she laughs) it's *not!*

Rossi

According to Rossi, her brother's understanding of his role as a 'guy' is to watch TV and relax, an occupation she thinks is so different from her own efforts to keep their shared space

clean, that it induces her to ‘explode on him’. Her case shows that young women contest inequality through open confrontation with their brothers, and much more often than they might do so towards their fathers as we saw in the previous section.

As the last section showed, Rossi’s parents operate a relatively egalitarian partnership, with her father contributing significantly to the cooking and cleaning. However, despite her parents’ attempts to instil in her brother their more egalitarian ways of operating in the home, her brother’s rationale bypasses their lessons. Instead, he draws upon his grandfather’s traditional conceptions of home where ‘man is king’ and ‘woman is there to serve’ because it justifies his comfort and non-work. This is clear evidence that grandparents and elder kin can be equally as powerful as parents in the promotion and enforcement of young people’s gendered work within the home. It also confirms that traditional gender roles directly impact upon young women’s experiences of the home today due to their reproduction by other members of the family. In a similar way to Angela, Rossi attests to the invisibility of this normalised gender inequality and is frustrated that ‘nobody *sees* it’, or acts to galvanise her brother or grandfather into action, particularly because of the distinct effect it has on her life.

The cases in this section so far have shown that for the most part young women do indeed *do* more work than their brothers in the home. That there are less expectations on men to cook and clean, results regularly in young women’s frustration. However, in some cases, in addition to *doing more than* men, young women are also expected to *do things for* men, to serve them. Adriana exposes the difficult reality of trying to manage the high pressure expectations that she feels young women like herself are under:

Expectations, especially within our families, [are that] we have to be that number one girl, we can’t mess up. How I see it is we have to make sure our family is taken care of before we’re taken care of ourselves. We have to make sure that everybody is happy, before we really sit back to look to see if we’re happy. I’ve seen it like that all my life, especially the men, if they’re not happy, we cannot be happy. At dinner for instance, I can’t sit down and eat if all the guys in my family aren’t sitting down and eating yet. And after the men it’s the kids, and *then* it’s all the girls, they can sit down and eat, and sometimes you don’t even get to [eat], because you have to get up and

clean and make sure that the guys have something to drink and that they're comfortable before anyone else. It's kind of sad to say.

Adriana

Adriana's situation illustrates that the requirement for young women to live up to traditional expectations of them not only relates to what they do, but it also has a significant impact on their mental and social wellbeing. Whilst some of the young women above are frustrated by the unfair balance of chores between them and their brothers, young women like Adriana experience an even more acute sense of sadness and discomfort as a result of the unequal power relations operating in their homes. Again, the notion of *care* stands out – women have to ensure the men and children of the family are taken care of before themselves. Feelings of happiness and contentment in men's life are also prioritised over women's, and indeed women's un/happiness is by default attached to their male family members'. She draws upon the example of dinner to further illustrate that men's domestic comfort, and right to eat, comes above women's.

Whilst I am not suggesting that every Mexican family operates in this way, indeed this chapter has so far shown this is not the case, it is important to acknowledge that expectations relating to domestic Mexicanness can manifest themselves as drudgery and unhappiness for young women. Some young women who themselves expressed egalitarian viewpoints in their interviews came from homes where patriarchal norms continued to the detriment of their emotional wellbeing.

This chapter has so far shown that young women are expected to engage in differentiated household tasks compared to their male family members, if they share the home with them. However, for a significant minority (approximately one third) of young women who do not live with the traditional head of the family, their father, the division of labour tends to operate in a slightly different way. These families represent to some degree a rejection of the stereotypical ideals of Mexican families which centre on images of macho male dominance and female servitude – the absence of fathers results in household compositions that do not fit within the bounds of these expectations. Having said that, young women and their brothers, if they have them, may continue to be subject to gender role expectations because

whilst they are all expected to contribute more to the household, activities tend to be allocated according to gender (as well as age). In these homes, young women are relied upon heavily by their mothers to upkeep the household. This is most often due to financial necessity and parental time availability - in working up to two shifts per day, mothers simply do not have the time to engage in much domestic work once they arrive back home. Children therefore have to take on more responsibility in terms of cooking, cleaning, and for young women especially, caring for their younger siblings, and/or cousins.

Nati's mother, for example, is a lone parent and has to work long shifts to be able to provide financially for Nati and her baby brother. The three of them live in one rented room in an apartment they share with other non-related renters. Nati is the primary care-taker within the home because her mother has little time outside of her paid work to cook and clean. Here Nati talks about the impact of her household chores on her experience of the home space in general:

At times, [being at home] is alright. There are sometimes that I wish I just...was somewhere else. Yeah, I wish I was somewhere quiet. Somewhere I can just think. Because my mom says the house isn't clean and I guess she wants it clean and that's when she starts yelling 'get this clean!', and I don't like that...but I'm the only one able to do it.

Nati

Nati has ambivalent feelings towards being at home, somewhere that she does not find particularly relaxing or quiet due to having to take on a strong domestic role in place of other adults in the house. In other parts of the interview Nati indicated that she was feeling the pressure of supporting her family whilst her mother worked many hours and she struggled to reconcile her domestic demands with finding time for herself or to do her homework.

I suggest that in female-headed households, the division of labour may be drawn less along gender lines and more as a response to financial necessity. That is, everyone in the household who can, must contribute towards the household economy by working inside or outside of

the home. Lorena explains the hard work that both her female and male cousins have to engage in to support their family and younger sibling:

I have an aunt who cleans houses during the day and works at [a superstore] at night. She has a daughter and two sons, and my uncle isn't here anymore. My older cousin acts like [the younger cousin's] dad, he [buys] his shoes and stuff like that, and he's the one that gives my aunt money to help her out. My [female] cousin who is about my age, she is the one who is actually cooking, because my aunt doesn't have time to cook.

Lorena

In Lorena's cousins' case, the elder boy engages in paid work in order to relieve his mother of some of the family's financial burden. Because of her younger age, the girl, who is about fifteen, contributes to the household by cooking for the family. Examples such as these show that young women themselves move beyond essentialist constructions of the woman/man binary as the grounding upon which the gendered division of labour is built, and instead present alternative standpoints for why things are why they are – most commonly they refer to economic realities due in part to wider structural inequalities in the region as reasons for their family's way of life.

In addition to contributing towards the expected/traditional reproductive side of the household division of labour, a significant number of older young women (aged over sixteen) have to support the household economy financially also. These young women have paid jobs outside of the home and give up part or all of their wages each month to make up any shortfall of parental income. Rossi explains this in her family's case:

Now that I'm almost an adult I have a job and I use my money to put into the bank and then I give my brother money too, because that way I take care of my brother, and my parents don't have to worry about it.

Rossi

As young women grew older, and if they had a social security number enabling them to do so, they were more likely to engage in paid employment with the full or partial purpose to support the parental household income. One young woman (Frida) works to provide for her younger siblings' food and expenses like clothing and school trips as her single mother works flat out to pay the rent and utility bills. She is concerned about what will happen if she moves away to college and is unable to support her family financially for that period - although she does rationalise it by saying that in the future she would be able to get a better job to support her family.

6.4 Conclusion

Young women reproduce a common set of tropes that characterise *la familia*, notably its communal nature, its benevolence, its care for its members, and its colourful, convivial embrace during times of both celebration and sadness. This chapter has shown however, that the Mexican families to which young women belong are far from static and in most realities do not adhere to the neat template of *familia* which young women were commonly able to define. This chimes with scholarship that has shown that *la familia* encompasses a set of *ideals* to be emulated, not norms of actual behaviour (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Barajas and Ramirez 2007). Instead, a process is always underway where constructions of *familia* are being developed and reworked daily within young women's homes. The chapter has shown that when family roles associated with *familia* are manifested in practice, they are rarely enacted fully and rigidly according to tradition, and are subject to both temporal or generational evolution, and geographical change, for example, through migration to a place where other sets of cultural ideals predominate. Whilst in many cases, *familia* is experienced positively, and young women benefit greatly from what they witness as the strength of shared cultural ties and blood lines, in others, *familia* can operate in decisively more negative ways for young women, most especially when they are expected to contribute heavily towards the collective good under the auspices of *la familia*.

A significant element of young women's experience of *la familia* centres on the performance of gendered roles, particularly as they pertain to domestic chores within the home space. As this chapter has shown, young women articulate a complicated set of gendered expectations that they perceived to be embody *la familia*. For families with two parents, gendered relations operate in the household on three levels – laterally between parents, between male and female members of the household (diagonally between parents and children – i.e. daughter serving father), and laterally between siblings – although this is often thrown into flux amongst female-headed households. This chapter has also shown that young women acknowledge that these roles are susceptible to innovative forms of interpretation, adaptation and contestation from all parties involved in their reproduction.

Gendered roles within the home as influenced by *la familia* encompass not only those associated with appropriate domesticity, but also appropriate sexuality as manifested in the degrees of freedom young women are granted. It is this latter aspect of young womanhood that the next chapter will now attend to.

Chapter Seven: Gendered freedoms

7.1 Introduction

In addition to performing their identities in relation to spatialised discourses of *familia* and domesticity inside the home as the previous chapter illustrated, young Mexican women simultaneously formulate them in dialogue with discourses of gender and ethnicity outside of the home. In this chapter I examine young women's processes of identity construction in relation to their degrees of 'freedom' to leave the home and socialise in or move through public space as they are inflected by gendered discourses of sexual safety. Whilst this section is about young women's negotiations of their identities outside, references to the home were almost always present in their discussions of freedoms and access to public space. This is because for young women and their parents, the home/outside binary appears to be one of the key relational structures through which they organise and think about their socio-cultural and spatial practices. Rules and behaviours, for example, are rarely enacted without some element of comparison between the so-called 'safe' home space and the 'unsafe' or 'dangerous' outside. Having said this, in addition to their construction in opposition to one another, the home and the outside are also inextricably tied together - a young woman's behaviour inside the home, for example, can have a large impact on the degree of freedom she might be granted outside of the home, and vice versa.

The young women in this study each played by a carefully and individually negotiated set of rules when it came to their abilities to leave their homes, socialise in public space and engage in romantic dating practices. All of them however, were formulated in some way according to three dominant narratives along gender, ethnicity and class lines respectively; that Mexican boys have more freedom than Mexican girls; that American girls have more freedom than Mexican girls; and that how much freedom one is granted depends on 'what kind of family they are from' or '*how* they are raised' – understandings bound up in constructions of class and respectability.

7.2 'Homegirls' with 'homebodies'

When I asked young women about where they liked to hang out during their spare time there was a common tendency to talk less about the places they go to and the things they do, and more about the limitations they have placed on their ability to be outside in the first place. I found that the majority of young women were expected to spend most of their free time at home and not outside *because* they are young women, and as such were constructed as 'homegirls' with 'homebodies' (Hyams 2003).

As the previous chapter demonstrated, during the process of growing up in a Mexican household, young women may often be constructed and raised as 'good Mexican girls' who are supposed to fulfil a set of gendered expectations that tend to be bound up in notions of domesticity and respectfulness towards elders, especially their fathers. Alongside being maintained and served by women, and in accordance with traditionalist notions of the Mexican *familia*, the Mexican home was commonly constructed as the space where women *belong*. Meanwhile, men's identities were seen to be less invested in the home space and as such they were freer to cross the private/public threshold to work and socialise outside. I was surprised, though, to see that even when young women came from relatively non-traditional families, for example, where the gendered division of labour within the home was more equal than others, young women continued to be subject to strict rules about spending time outside. I began to understand from the young women that such a desire to restrict their freedom is because however good, respectable or controllable a young woman is within the home, her inescapable sexuality has the potential to result in consensual or non-consensual sexual activity outside of the home that parents are unable to control – engagement in which I suggest can result in 'gendered future-fixing' – or pregnancy.

Parents' verbal justifications for restricting their daughters' freedom are hazy, but tend to be rooted in what young women perceive to be a parental *fear* of 'something bad happening'. Sabrina, for example, is unsure about why her father so strictly limits the time she spends outside, since her past behaviour gives no grounds for concern, but has an inkling it has to do with her being a girl and the possibility that she might choose to interact with boys:

I'm not really sure [what my father is worried about] because I feel like I haven't done anything wrong. I don't get in trouble. It's just maybe...I don't want to say it's

because I'm a *girl*...but...he doesn't let me out because maybe I'm going to be talking to guys or something like that.

Sabrina

Young women struggled to articulate the details around their parents' fear or hesitation because their parents themselves tend to talk in metaphors of 'getting into trouble' and meaning-laden phrases or *dichos* like 'men are only after one thing' (Laura). Allusions to gendered safety centre on two common tropes – that young women will themselves instigate and take part in 'bad [sexual] things' which could get them 'into trouble' [become pregnant] with a known male Other (a boyfriend), or that young women are 'at risk' of 'being taken advantage of' and falling prey to an unknown male Other's (a rapist) sexual advances – both of which are possible (or indeed constructed as likely) if young women spend too much time away from the safety and surveillance of the home. As Cecilia and Dani's quotes show, young women are constructed as having 'fragile', passive bodies that 'can't do stuff', that are weaker than men, and that are at risk of having 'bad things' happen to them:

They probably think that women are more fragile or something. They think that men are probably stronger, and that women can't do something. Or can't do the stuff that men can. Which, isn't really true.

Cecilia

[My parents] say 'you're a girl, things can happen to you'. So they're always worried. They think that bad things can happen and stuff. One time I went to a party, they didn't know (she laughs), and then the police came (she laughs) and they called my parents and...I got caught...there were drugs and stuff, they thought that I could have gotten like raped or something.

Dani

Bodily discourses of fragility and relative weakness are mobilised alongside those of rape and sexual abuse by 'stronger' men to instil fear in young women about what might happen to them if they venture outside unsupervised. As Dani's quote also indicates, and as I will detail

in more depth shortly, parents are adverse to their daughters ‘hanging out’ because other dangerous elements may be present, such as alcohol or drugs – which they perceive to heighten the risk of sexual assault.

Whilst most young women say that they ‘understand’ the broader bodily logic behind the restriction of their freedoms, they also say that in their own cases, their parents should extend a degree of trust their way. That is, parents should put aside their wider fears and base their policing on a young woman’s personal record of trustworthiness, honesty and respectfulness – characteristics partially arrived at through the fulfilment of appropriate gendered roles *within* the home. Dani and Lorena’s quotes illustrate the sense of frustration that builds when young women feel their own responsibility is overlooked:

I mean, I understand *why* [we’re treated differently] because it’s true, girls are more delicate I guess? Than guys. But they should trust *me*.

Dani

I barely got a phone and after school they’re calling me and they’re like ‘where are you, why didn’t you come home?’, ‘I’m staying after school!’, ‘Oh, what time do we pick you up?’, ‘around four’, and they’ll be there at four, and call again ‘we’re waiting for you’, I’m like, ‘I’m coming!’ (she laughs). One time I asked them ‘do you not trust me? That’s why you’re there?’, and [my mom’s] just like ‘oh, it’s just cause you’re a girl’, and I’m like (she grits her teeth in mock frustration) ‘ohhh my god’.

Lorena

Despite being frustrated and knowing, like Cecilia above, that it is not necessarily true that women are more fragile and ‘can’t do what men can’, young women are affected by these discourses because of how they are normalised through repetition during their adolescent lives. Young women may internalise their parents’ limiting approaches to them on the basis that they are not to be trusted, even though most young women believe themselves to have done nothing wrong as of yet. As a result, some young women articulated that feelings of confusion and guilt could arise before having even stepped out of the house. Parents’ fear then, is anticipatory or based on expectation that for in the case of the majority of young

women, is unlikely to be realised. Sabrina was another young woman frustrated by the pre-emptive nature of her parents' rules:

Sabrina: My dad gives us a time limit and he asks us with who we are [going with], and he needs permission days before. My mom, she just needs to know who I am with, and what I'm going to be doing, and she's ok with it.

Caitlin: Do you feel comfortable with your amount of freedom and permission you're given at home?

Sabrina: Yeah, from my mom's side. But from my dad's side, he needs to know everything and it's just like he doesn't trust me for some reason.

Caitlin: Do you have any ideas why he might not?

Sabrina: No, not really. I haven't really done anything to make him not trust me. It's just that he hasn't been there with me a whole bunch, my mom has. And my mom trusts me so much more than my dad. So he's not there for me, or he doesn't really know me as well. So, he doesn't know what I'm capable of doing. And my mom is, like she knows me and she knows that I won't be doing crazy things.

Sabrina

Sabrina's words indicate that young women understand that trust between parents and children is built upon through spending time together and getting to 'know' someone. The majority of young women in this study, like Sabrina, also find that their fathers were stricter towards them than their mothers. Young women tended to report that their fathers were more likely to be frequently absent from the home or emotionally 'distant', and as such did not have particularly close relationships with their daughters. Sabrina's case suggests that because of this lack of knowledge about what their daughters are capable or likely of doing or not, fathers can only implement a set of rules based on their own knowledge of youthful freedoms and sexualities – dominant discourses of *machismo* and male sexual predatory were commonly cited by young women as how they understood their fathers to think about sexuality, one young woman even suggesting that 'men protect their daughters so strongly

because they know first-hand what Mexican men are like' (Joanna). Young women recognise flaws or weaknesses in such rules because of their gendered hypocrisy and this affects the degree to which young women will grant rules validity during their parents' attempts to enforce them. As such, young women may be more likely to undermine or contest such rules as a result.

However, when young women do break the rules and rupture their parents' trust, the indiscretion is seen as a significant betrayal and used to justify stricter rules regarding freedoms, as Marta explains:

I wouldn't say I'm like a bad kid but I'm not a good kid either (laughs). They don't let me go out right now, or have a boyfriend. They say I'm not even fifteen yet, like to be having a boyfriend, and well, I *had* [a boyfriend], and then my parents found out, and they were really mad. And they were upset because I lied to them.

Marta

As I will show shortly, young women do engage in dating practices, but because of the hidden nature of much young Mexican women's socialisation of this kind, when they are 'found out' by their parents, there exists not only tension over the fact that a young woman has had a relationship with a young man, but that it was done covertly, and involved lying. This results in parental 'disappointment' with many young women reporting that their parents were upset not only at their daughter's dating practices, but her breaking what one young woman semi-jokingly called 'the circle of trust' that *familia* is supposed to be (Inez). Young women felt they were chastised for the potential shame they could have brought upon the family had she 'got into trouble'.

But where does this fear of rape and sexual abuse come from? Young women perceive their parents to engage deliberately gendered historicised discursive methods to instil in young women a sense of responsibility and manifest in the present "appropriate" feminised behaviour for their daughters specifically. Cautionary tales related to their female family members' negative experiences of early motherhood of absent and unreliable husbands and fathers - 'so wait to settle down and have children with a good man!' (Marta) – were

mentioned, but most commonly referred to were stories of sexual violence, such as rape and sexual abuse, as Dina indicates:

Dina: I think it's just the fear of me getting...kidnapped, raped, or like, you know, being 'sexually active' (she indicates quotation marks with her hands). And they don't want me to get pregnant (She laughs).

Caitlin: Where do you think parents might get these ideas or fears from?

Dina: Um...I just think they've probably *lived* through the same things? Or they've seen other people, and they probably don't want the same thing happening to me, as them?

Dina

Young women, in the same way as migratory and 'struggle' narratives, also hear parents' lessons on sexual safety through the telling of *historias* rooted in Mexican precedent. Mothers in particular, pass on discreet *consejos* (advice) to young women such as, 'as a *mujercita* [young woman] you must keep yourself safe, a man is only after one thing' (Lucila). Mothers rarely went into detail about what the 'one thing' was, although young women knew it was sex-related. They also said that mothers and other female elders were party to this information because they had 'gone through' or experienced male advances in Mexico, or had known other women who had. Young women like Dina learn through such stories and allusions that Mexican women should fear the sexual threat of Mexican men, who in embodying their *machista* roles perceive themselves to have the right and arrogance to take sexual pleasure from the abuse of young women whenever they want. As a result, some of the young women in the study indicated that they viewed 'Mexico' as somewhere sexually dangerous, and their community members' social history as being marked by a male threat to women's sexual security. Furthermore, it is also quite possible that the mothers of the young women in this study had been sexually assaulted or raped during their journeys northwards or as part of the violence of the U.S.-Mexico border (Staudt 2008).

Alongside the fear that a young woman will be sexually assaulted by an unknown male Other is the perhaps more likely possibility that a young woman will want to have a boyfriend.

Parental justifications for this aversion to dating varied, although the opportunity for pregnancy and its impact upon a young woman's future was always present in the background. Rhetoric, like that from Dani's parents, tends to centre around parents being concerned that a young woman will become so involved with her boyfriend that she will forget to grant sufficient time and attention to her (home-based) *familia*, or that she would 'grow up too soon' - a direct reference to desires to hold back a girl's transition into womanhood, acknowledging herself as a sexual being part of this:

I'm the youngest one and for [my parents] I'm still their little baby. So my dad doesn't want me to have a boyfriend yet...he just gets sad...he thinks that I'm just going to focus on [my boyfriend] and not my family. Maybe he doesn't want me to grow up too soon.

Dani

The most common reasoning behind young women not being allowed to have a boyfriend was because of its potential impact on her ability to concentrate on her current schooling and her future educational trajectories. Nati, Marta and Frida's quotes all indicate this prioritisation:

I think no matter what age I am, [my mom] be like 'you're too young to be having a boyfriend, when you don't have responsibilities'...like having a job, and doing things for yourself...Parents would [accept dating] in the future but not in high school, I think, in high school they'd be like 'pay attention to your school work'.

Nati

[My parents] think I'm too young right now [for a boyfriend] and like, 'why have one if I don't need one?' They say I don't need one, that education comes first.

Marta

Mexican dating ways...it's a shock if you come out and say, 'mum, I'm going to date this guy', it's like no! It goes chaotic...'cause now mum knows and she's like 'where

you gonna be at? Are you really going to go to school? I'm going to check on your grades, I'm going to check on your attendance, you have like a B, you're not allowed to date anymore'.

Frida

Young women regularly enter into negotiations with their parents about doing well at school, including getting good grades, in return for social freedoms. Studiousness is valued by parents, partly because it grants young women the resources that they need to succeed in the future, thereby validating their parents' migrations and hard-working efforts, but also because when one is at school, in the library, or doing homework at home, young women are 'not out'. Studiousness, and being a 'good girl' is therefore constructed as the antithesis of being a *callejera* (street girl) and 'hanging out' in sexually risky places - and to study is to not get pregnant.

Despite their parents' objections, young women do desire, instigate and maintain romantic and sexual relationships. Lorena's words would indicate that some young women will choose to have relationships as they grow older, whether or not they have their parents' consent - and whilst their parents might appear to be 'in denial' on the surface, young women think it is likely that their parents know what their daughters will attempt to get up to:

But I think that [my parents] are in denial, so that they don't think that I'm growing up, or have a boyfriend. But they know it will happen sooner or later, either behind their back, or letting them know.

Lorena

In fact, contrary to all of the 'no-boyfriends' rhetoric, I was surprised by the number of (older) girls who had actually had boyfriends and who had done so with their parents' consent, albeit it under very strict conditions like Sofia and Rossi's fathers set out:

My dad's really strict but [had] said, 'I want to meet him, I want you to bring him here and introduce us'. And I was really nervous, but I did it - I got the hard part

over with! (She laughs) My dad he's all like 'just because you have a boyfriend, I don't want to see a drop in your grades, I still want you to be focused in school'.

Sofia

Especially once you have a boyfriend - [parents still ask] the usual stuff, 'who's going to be there, where's it going to be, what time to what time?' but then now they go even further... 'you're going to be home at this time, if you come home after you can't go out the next time you want to go out' and 'you have to call me when you get there, and call me when you're coming home' and... it's a lot more!

Rossi

Although being allowed to have a boyfriend is a gesture indicating increased freedom and responsibility for young women, some find that the degree to which their whereabouts are monitored actually increases. In Rossi's case, her parents' heightened their demands for her to check in on the telephone once she had a boyfriend. Young women said that this was because parents recognised the increased 'risk' of romantic intimacy and possible pregnancy, so carefully bounded the time and space available for young women to socialise with their boyfriends. In addition, as noted earlier, freedom to have a boyfriend is coupled with higher expectations in school – both Sofia and Rossi had to prove that having a boyfriend is not a distraction from being a good studious girl.

But appearing the 'good student' by spending lots of time at school can also be an image deliberately manipulated by young women. School is the key site through which young women meet young men and then conduct their dating practices, not least because it is where they are furthest from their parents' gaze. Young women said they tend to date Mexican guys both because their friendships networks are primarily Mexican, but also because other Mexicans 'understand' parental rules about dating. Mexican friends who attend the same school can be counted on keep relationships quiet because they know how strict a girl's parents might be. Frida explains in how this process works:

I think dating for us is *so* hard (laughs), how should I say it, just because of the whole security thing with our parents. It's like if you date someone it *has* to be in school

[Mexicans] are known to be really in to ourselves, and our limit is our friends, we don't go beyond that, we don't tell like cousins. We don't go beyond the boundaries of friends or school, so if you're dating someone it's within that. That's the part where...I think all Mexicans have done it, where we *lie*...Americans do like 'oh, [a boy] was from this other place, or I met him at this party', it really can't be like that [for Mexicans] because of the whole parent thing.

Frida

Young women then negotiate as agents a nuanced set of covert arrangements in order to date men whilst keeping the fact hidden from their parents. The notoriety of Mexican parental strictness around dating can be seen to be causal of these underground dating practices.

7.2.1 Pregnancy as gendered future-fixing

As I have so far indicated, Mexican girls have their official freedoms curtailed as a result of dominant narratives about them that hold that without such policing, they are likely to become another Latina teenage pregnancy statistic and be stereotyped as 'barefoot and pregnant' (Bettie 2003). Frida and Lola explain the impact of incidences of Mexican teenage pregnancy upon other young women in the local vicinity, even when they intend to wait to have a relationship, or have protected sex, because they would rather prioritise their education:

All the pregnancy thing comes in to play with dating too. And I think that's why our parents are like really protective, because they know as soon, like this is what they say all the time, that 'guys just want one thing with us', so I think that's why they just keep us really secure. When one person does it, it represents a lot of people, even though we don't think that way, we know better. But our cousin got pregnant, and that means automatically for our mums and our parents that they think that we're going to do that too. It's kinda unfair in a way, because I know some of my friends, they like people and they know they're going to do things right [have safe sex], but just because of the fact that it's the Mexican way to not do that or whatever [wear condoms].

Frida

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[My mom is] worried we're going to do something. I guess now she's more worried because I have four friends that are pregnant. And they're all Mexican. So my mom always thinks the worse. But I'm not like that, and she already knows that I'm waiting. I've never been in a relationship because it's not that I don't want to, but how people don't take it serious and I'd rather go to college and just wait for it, not find it like other people.

Lola

Parents fear pregnancy because, as Chapter Five illustrated, they moved to the U.S. to give their children a 'better life' and a prosperous, educated future. By becoming pregnant, a young woman is perceived to be unable to fulfil those dreams since she will become a young mother and have to leave school to support her child, thereby rendering worthless her parents' efforts and sacrifices to give her something 'more'. In addition, it was twice alluded to me that because of the social stigma surrounding Mexican teenage pregnancy, parents, especially fathers, were not as worried about their daughters' sexual safety in public for her own sake, but for reputation of the family they preside over should they become pregnant and bring shame upon them for not raising their daughters correctly.

Furthermore, whether or not young women are practising Catholic or not, the Mexican communities in the U.S. to which they belong hold as important Catholic beliefs to preserve foetal life. Young women understand their parents and elders to agree neither with the prevention nor termination of pregnancy. Only two young women in the study said that their parents had talked openly to them about sex or contraception, and many more said that it was a subject that never arose other than in through the veiled warnings against 'getting into trouble'. As such, young women are unlikely to have much knowledge about or feel empowered to acquire and use contraception during their sexual relations. If young women become pregnant, they said they are very likely to be encouraged to keep the baby, give birth and become a mother. One young woman suggested that the very aversion to abortion is why young women's whereabouts are so heavily policed - the opportunities for sexual activities must be reduced so the risk of pregnancy is as smallest as possible because 'fixing the mistake' is almost never an option in Mexican families (Lisa – student counsellor).

7.3 Boys with ‘more freedom’

Young women who had brothers seemed particularly frustrated by their lack of freedom because of the way it was accentuated by the comparison to their male counterparts’ ability to go out whenever, and hang out with whomever, they should wish. In a similar way to young women’s bodies are viewed as fragile, weak, under threat and in need of protection, young men’s bodies are repeatedly constructed as ‘strong’ and ‘able to fight back’ should ‘something happen’, as Dina and Juliana’s quotes illustrate:

I don’t really see the difference [between being male and female], but my brother’s two years younger than me and he gets to go out, but [I don’t]...I just think that they think that I’m not as *strong*? As a guy, like to fight back, just in case something happens.

Dina

I guess they’re more concerned about me going out a lot and doing bad things, and because he’s older and he’s a man, I guess (she says questioningly), he can do more things. But, I...they’re usually trying to be equal. And I feel like I’m equal. But sometimes I don’t. Because I guess he’s *stronger* than me...

Juliana

Both young women initially perceived their parents to treat them and their male siblings equally, but when asked about degrees of freedom they perceived girls to not be granted the same freedom-related opportunities as boys. Their cases show just how complexly degrees of freedom and equality are comparatively experienced by young women and men. Although Juliana initially says that she feels equal, and I would posit this being ‘in theory’, the description of her family’s actual practice when it comes to opportunities indicates that she has a lesser degree of freedom to go out than her brother - because ‘he’s a man’. Young women fervently believe that having fewer freedoms than boys is ‘unfair’, particularly when such an imbalance is openly promoted, sometimes in a humorous way by family members (most often fathers), as in Marta’s case:

Caitlin: Would you say boys and girls have the same amount of freedom?

Marta: Err...no! I think boys have more freedom...Because, they're *guys*, they're more...like my dad with my little brother, he's like 'yeah, when he's older he's going to do whatever he wants, he's a guy, he can have all the girlfriends he wants' (she laughs).

Caitlin: And what do you think about that?

Marta: Well I think it's not fair, because [my dad] is saying [my brother] is going to get more freedoms and he's going to let him go wherever he wants, and it's like sometimes *I* want to go out with friends, and [my parents] don't let me, they *have* to know if there's going to be parents there, they want to talk to that parent, and for guys, they just let them whatever...

Caitlin: Would you ever say to your parents that you don't think it's fair?

Marta: No (she laughs)...Well, maybe I would, but they would say 'oh, because you're a girl you have to take care, take more care of yourself'.

Caitlin: Why do girls need to take more care of themselves?

Marta: I don't know, because they're *girls*.

Caitlin: What do you think makes a girl more vulnerable than a boy though?

Marta: Well most of the guys think that the girls can't do anything, they're just supposed to be there just to clean, and do everything, cook.

Caitlin: So girls are just supposed to be there?

Marta: Yeah.

Marta

Boys having more freedom frustrates young women because they perceive themselves to be at times more responsible than young men, and as the previous chapter showed, they often have to do much more domestic work around the house than boys, sometimes even having to serve and clean for the boys.

A number of girls who indicated that their parents were quite open, egalitarian and ‘forward-thinking’ in some aspects of family life, still experienced a difference in the degrees of permission granted to them because they were girls, compared to their brothers. At the end of our interview when I asked Rossi if she had anything else she wanted to add or ask, she chose to highlight once again how she thought the difference in gendered freedoms between her and her brother ‘sucks’, indicating that this is an important issue for her:

Going back to the whole the guys have it easier thing... *They do*. I feel that since I’m a girl, and I’m the only girl, I have more overprotection, because I have to do a *lot* more to be able to go out....And if my brother, he’ll just ask, and he’ll be granted permission, and I’ll have to *clean* and ask at least a week before it happens. And if it’s that day, a spontaneous thing? I can’t go. So, it kinda sucks.

Rossi

We do get in arguments about him being a guy and me being a girl. Sometimes he comes home at two a.m. and I’m like ‘how can you not tell him anything?’ And then I get home at ten p.m. and it’s like (she does a mock stern parental voice) ‘why did you get home so late?’ and I’m like ‘I was with my [older] sister!’ I’m like, ‘oh my god’ (she laughs).

Lorena

Young women like Lorena resent showing themselves as responsible (in her case by arriving home earlier than her brother) and a good Mexican girl but are not rewarded, whilst boys are able to relax both in the home and outside of it as they wish. Some young women suggested that boys’ increased freedom was tied not only into sexual safety but into boys being more valued within the family on the whole, as Sofia’s words indicate:

I see lots [of differences] with my cousin. I see that my for uncle, if my little boy cousin wants something, he gets it, like that! And my cousin that’s the same age as me, if she asks for it, it’s a ‘no, it’s too much, why do you need it?’ I mean, they put

a lot of limits and a lot of boundaries on her, and when it's my little cousin, the boy one, it's like 'ok, you can get it'.

Sofia

In some families, girls are framed as being less valued than boys through the language of limitation – both in terms of freedom granted but also in relation to having other wishes fulfilled such as wanting for something like a toy. Boys are seen to be *given more*. As such, young women are left wanting when it comes to both freedom *and* material goods when compared to their male counterparts.

Young women also felt annoyed that their brothers were allowed so much more freedom than them, one young woman even suggesting that if Mexican parents more widely had a stricter approach to their sons' freedoms then there would not be so many young men trying to lure young women into trouble when they were outside the home (Lucia). She thought that parents should deal with the threat itself (men), and not just penalise young women for men's predatory behaviour. Indeed, young women did at times perceive their brothers as being nurtured as men-in-waiting whereby their fathers taught them, through the kind of joking seen above, their Mexican macho ways. As noted earlier, some young women like Sabrina express a sense of resentment towards their fathers when they implement gendered policies of freedoms. This is because they perceive their fathers to not be 'around', or present in the family home very much, and as such are less able than their mothers to be able to pass judgement on whether or not a young woman is to be trusted and is of a 'good' and respectable character. Furthermore, some young women suggested that they thought it was hypocritical for their fathers to try and police their female family members' whereabouts when they themselves were known to have sexual relations with other women or not emotionally invest very much in their own family.

Whilst both young men and women may engage in covert dating practices, boys are perceived to be much more likely to be 'allowed' to date openly compared to young women from a younger age, as Lorena explained:

I know that for girls [Mexican] parents are more strict than with the guys. The girl/guy thing in my family is pretty hard. For example, whenever [my brother] has a girlfriend he'll tell them straight out and they'll be like 'ok, well watch out, don't do this...' Then with me I'm afraid to tell them because I know that they won't allow me to have a boyfriend yet, until I'm seventeen or eighteen.

Lorena

Parents are seen to engage in more open discussion with their sons about dating, where such a practice may even be encouraged because it validates his identity as a young Mexican *man*. Young women, on the other hand, have to wait until they are much older to be granted such freedom, and then as the previous section showed, the time spent with their boyfriend is likely to continue to be closely monitored. Having said this, young women like Sofia who recognise that parental views about their sons and daughters having partners are flexible and subject to change:

I used to think that [there are differences between girls and boys], because one time my little brother talked about having a girlfriend, and [my parents] were all happy for him. And then I remember when I was younger hearing my mum talking 'she can't have a boyfriend until she's eighteen'. But sometime this year I overheard her talking to one of my aunts and she's like 'she can have a boyfriend as long as she tells us, I don't want her to hide it from us'. So my parents are really understanding, all they want is for me to talk to them about anything that's going on. I guess they just realised that I'm getting older and the point is going to come to where I *am* going to have a boyfriend, and they just need to accept it. So...differences with boys and girls...I don't really feel that with my parents.

Sofia

In fact, Sofia's parents met her boyfriend for the first time the weekend before our interview. She explains that her and her parents have come to an arrangement where they are happy for her to have a boyfriend as long as they are informed. She also said that part of the 'deal' was that she formally introduced her boyfriend to her parents, a commonly cited practice

that is viewed as a demonstration of **respect** towards a girl's parents. Therefore, some young women, when they do date and socialise with members of the opposite gender, they do so along carefully defined parameters, indicating their ability to negotiate between their own romantic desires with the degrees of freedom their parents are willing to grant them.

7.4 White girls – ‘hanging out’, dating and ‘sleepovers’

In addition to constructing their degrees of freedom in relation to Mexican men, young women also do so vis-à-vis young white American women and as such construct their non-freedoms as ethnically Mexican. As we were talking about being a young woman from a Mexican family, I asked Frida if she thought there are similarities or differences between Mexican young women and then white American young women and she immediately focused on freedoms:

There are a *lot* [of differences] between us (she laughs). When I go to school I see a lot of American girls and they *have* more. And then they have so much *freedom*. And by freedom I mean they can hang out with people, they're going to go to the movies, they decide like 'oh, we're going to go after school here and there', and it's so amazing, for us it's astonishing to hear that, because it's like 'wow, you're not even going to tell your parents you going to this, there?' For us it's a shock because our parents will pick us up right after school, or we will go straight to the house, but every single moment where we're supposed to go, they're supposed to know.

Frida

I see a lot of white kids, and their parents, like some of my white friends, they always tell me 'oh yeah, I went out with my boyfriend', or something like that. And like it seems like they get more freedom. They let them go out more, like wherever they want.

Marta

Young Mexican women believe that white girls have the agency to make decisions about their social lives on a whim, without having to inform their parents, and also having boyfriends, as Marta points out. This is compared to young Mexican women's lives that are heavily prescribed by their parents, where, for example, there is the expectation that young women will return to the house immediately after school ending. This is because parents are adverse to the concept of 'hanging out', how young women most commonly say they like to spend their free time, since its undefined nature, its aimlessness, is understood as a setting ripe for bad behaviour:

[Mexican parents] have rules where when you go out with friends, like 'hang out' is not like hang out for them. [They think] it's that time where it's about drugs and sex and stuff like that. So for them, the 'hanging out' thing is not allowed. They need to know where you are and parents like to be more involved than American parents I guess?

Frida

As such, when young women are allowed to be outside, their parents often attempt to police their whereabouts and company quite strictly – ensuring that for the period that a young woman is outside her movement and activities are defined and not just 'hanging out'. They want to know who they are with, what time they will be home, and they may call them regularly to check in if the young woman has a mobile phone. Young women have strategies for maximising their windows of free and unsupervised time, such as on their walk home or by having their Mexican friends cover for them, but they continue to feel less 'free' than young Americans and more bound to the home.

Initially Sabrina says that she stays home a lot because she's a 'boring person like that'. But then she elaborates to suggest that there is an ethnically specific aspect of her staying home – she compares herself to specifically American girls who are able to go out regularly, something which she cannot do because her parents would not allow it. But whereas some young women frame their non-freedoms through frustration, Sabrina and Lola's words here indicate that other young women attach meaning about levels of care and closeness of

Mexican and American families to the differences in freedom that they each grant their daughters:

[After school] I go home and I just relax. I'll do my homework, and I'll take a shower, and eat. But that's it. I don't really hang out with friends after school or anything. I go straight home because I'm a boring person like that (she laughs lightly). I know some *American* girls, they go out on Friday and Saturday and Sunday, and for me I don't really do that. Because also, Mexican parents are used to having their children not going out, and having them here, close to them. What I see with the American kids is that they can go out if they want to, and their moms, their parents, don't really...care? They do, but they let them have a little bit more freedom I think.

Sabrina

I bond a lot with my Mexican friends [over] family. If we're going out, [our moms are] always afraid that a guy's going to go with us, and they always think the worst. Or when we are sleeping over, they're afraid like, 'oh, is a brother going to be there?' My mom and my other friends' moms...they're really protective of us when we're around guys. And my other [American] friends, their parents don't really care. Like they do but, yeah, they're not as protective. That's how our moms are.

Lola

This in turn functions to construct Mexican families as exhibiting their care and a benevolent protectiveness for their daughters by restricting their freedoms and ability to hang outside. Americans, by contrast are presented as parents who do not care about their children's wellbeing because they are willing to let them go out whenever they want. This can be seen to be part of the wider project as detailed in Chapter Six, to valorise the close-knit, caring, albeit restrictive Mexican *familia* over the careless, overly liberal and individualist American family.

But times and attitudes are also changing. As I explained in both Chapters Five and Six, traditional 'Mexican' ideals and practices are undergoing change both due to movement into a new cultural landscape, but also due to generational change, with an evolution of ideas that

may well have occurred in Mexico also. Young women recognise both of these processes – they suggest that their parents are becoming more lenient or relaxed with them regarding rules now that they ‘are here’ in the U.S., but also because they realise their daughters are growing up. Furthermore, Young women believe that despite the strength of some of their ‘Mexican’ rules, the U.S. is somewhere that liberalises parents when it comes to their attitudes towards gendered freedoms:

I often hear that my friends have to hide their boyfriends, or they can’t tell their parents about it because they’re going to get mad. But everybody’s different in their own way, I thought my parents were going to be mad but they weren’t. And I thought my mum was going to give me the speech about ‘oh, when I was a young girl living over there in Mexico, we weren’t even allowed to have a boyfriend’, but she didn’t, so that was kinda weird. So little by little they’re just adapting to the fact that we’re growing up, here in America, so they need to get used to what’s going on around us too. [Our parents] have been here so long, they can see what’s going on with teenagers on TV or on the internet. I think they’re just adapting. I don’t know if it’s just them trying to open up their minds to different ideas or if it really is just because we’re here in America, that they should be more understanding, or listen to us.

Sofia

Using the example of having boyfriends, Sofia illustrates young women’s sense that parents are undergoing an inevitable albeit gradual acceptance that ways of life in the U.S. are different and changing, and that they need to adapt their beliefs and permissions accordingly for their growing daughters.

7.5 Dimensions of class - the parental policing/absence paradox

The degrees of freedom that young women are granted are perceived at times to be a result of family class and education, which are articulated through veiled allusions to parental levels of 'care' and choice in how they raise their children. Rossi, from a settled-living, relatively financially comfortable household, for example, values a 'mentality' like her own family's that prioritises education and strict permissions over socialising. She compares this to her cousins' parents who do not 'care' if their children are 'out and about':

I have cousins, who their parents don't care, at the age of thirteen they were out and about. And at that age I would have to ask for permission every single time I would go out somewhere. And most of the time I would get denied (she laughs). And so I think it's just a family thing, and how you're raised and that mentality that your parents give you. [My friends] their parents are always like 'oh, go to school, do good, if you don't give me the grades you don't go anywhere else', that's how [my] parents are too.

Rossi

Often though, parents inability to keep track of their children's whereabouts is due to their heightened need to engage in paid employment as much as possible, *outside* of the home. The rules that parents impress on their children may only be enforced when parents are actually able to supervise young women or on the basis of trust if they are not physically present. Almost every young woman was aware of this paradox when they were telling me about their strict gendered policing – parents' strong desire to be 'involved' in their children's lives, is coupled with their frequent absence from the home. Frida explains her family's case:

Frida: Mexican parents like to be more involved...But it depends on the family because at the same time, they're really *away* and that's where the whole Mexican gang thing comes in, and it depends on *what* your parents came from.

Caitlin: What do you mean, 'really away'?

Frida: Away as in, since they came to this country they want to succeed, so they have to work *a lot* and they have to work *two* times harder than anybody else. So they have to essentially leave their children. I know for me, for my mum, she has to work extra hard and most of the time we'll see her like every *other* day, just because she needs to be working. So in that sense, [our day] is very open to us. When she's not there, I can essentially leave the house, she won't know, and I can come back before she comes. We're really free and I think that's where our Mexicans take advantage of that, and that's where the whole gang or partying thing comes in.

Frida

Young women like Frida have the opportunity in these instances of not being supervised to go out against their parents wishes, however, they do not necessarily act upon such opportunities. She frames young women as having a choice, between staying in and honourable, or going out in a more clandestine manner and potentially getting involved with other dangerous practices such as 'gangs' or 'partying'. In hard-living families then, when parents are financially coerced into leaving their children unsupervised, Mexican children are perceived conversely to have the same if not more unbounded freedoms than American youth. Lorena, who grew up in a predominantly American neighbourhood, is surprised by the degrees of freedom that young Mexicans are able to acquire, in contrast to her more regulated, and yet more 'American' local life.

I've never been raised in a Mexican neighbourhood, I've always been around Anglos. I think it reflects upon our actions, because I know a lot of people who do live in Mexican neighbourhoods and they're usually never home, they go out with their friends because their parents aren't home, they're working. I'm home, doing homework, watching TV, just home overall. My aunt lives in a Mexican neighbourhood, and I'll go there. It's weird. One time, we had to sleep over at their house for two days. It's so noisy at nights and at six in the mornings the little kids are already playing around...as their parents aren't home so they have to stay awake to go to school. I was like 'wow', it was interesting to see the way that they've been growing up compared to the way that I have...And [my parents have] never really

liked living in...well, it's not like they haven't liked living in a Mexican neighbourhood but it's just they wanted something different for us. I know sometimes the budget does get tight on where we live, but they still manage to pay, because they want us to not take a wrong step I guess?

Lorena

The reality is that many parents, as good as their intentions may be to keep a close eye on their daughters and as strong as their rhetoric may be about not being out on the street, they simply may not be able to enact such rules because they are not at home very much themselves. As the literature detailed and as this thesis has shown is the case for many of the families to which young women belong, many Mexican parents living in the border region have to work long hours in order to be able to manage financially. Young women compare their own degrees of freedom they are allowed by their parents to other young Mexican women, sometimes friends or cousins, and suggest that it is class-based differences that are most marked when it comes to how much time young women are able to be out unsupervised.

It is as a result of their restricted freedoms and also their often-limited financial means, that young women tend to operate within a small local geography. Use of public space is strongly related to class in that young women with some pocket money or those who perceived themselves to be slightly more 'Americanised', met up with friends to wander and window-shop in the mall, or went to the cinema – 'regular' teen activities that they witnessed their white American peers engaging. Hanging out in this way was characterised by defined and organised periods of time during which parents had allowed and enabled a certain activity to take place (they were dropped to the mall, or picked up from the cinema). Others whose families struggled financially and whose parents tended not to be able to regularly supervise their children because of work commitments outside of the house, were more likely to have to carve out more fluidly their own hang-out time in a set of spaces that are in 'between' parent or adult-sanctioned spaces, most often, between school and their homes. These in-between hang-out spaces tended to be parks or open spaces in their local area, benches or areas of congregation in a neighbourhood shopping precinct, or the gardens or communal spaces of their houses or low-rise apartment blocks (the latter being more commonly allowed

since parents and neighbours can keep an eye on such social interactions). By using strategies such as walking slowly home together as a group, stopping en-route home in the park, or taking detours via their friends' houses to help them run errands, young women are able to manipulate the day's necessary time in public space (such as needing to get home from school), to suit their socialisation purposes. They attempt to stretch out these in-between times as much as possible without getting into trouble because they know that once they are indoors for the evening and their parents or siblings are home, they are unlikely to be allowed out again to socialise. Because of these short after-school windows for hanging-out, and the common expectation that young women should spend weekends with their families, young women's primary opportunity to socialise and construct their identities in relation to their friends, and other Mexican and American peers is during the school day.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has detailed how young Mexican women construct their identities in relation to gendered discourses of sexual safety that have an impact on the degree of freedom that they are granted. By framing their bodies through narratives of relative weakness and susceptibility to sexual assault by predatory men, young women are constructed as ‘homegirls’ with ‘homebodies’ (Hyams 2003). This is as a result of their parents’ fears of their daughters being subject to gendered future-fixing by falling pregnant, thereby rendering worthless their migratory efforts and struggles within the U.S. to provide their children with a ‘better life’ achieved through education, not young motherhood. I have shown that young women perceive themselves to have not only less freedom than Mexican men, who are constructed as Mexican *macho* men-in-waiting, but also American young women, whose freedoms, whilst envied, are seen to be evidence of overly liberal parents who do not ‘care’. When young women feel that their freedom is unfairly curtailed, they contest their allowances in various ways or push their parents for a change in approach. In the face of continued surveillance, young women also have innovative strategies to subtly manipulate the boundaries set upon their movements. Young Mexicans then, like most teenagers, push the boundaries of permitted freedom as set out by their parents, however, they have the added element of a set of policing narratives that exist under the auspices of fulfilling their role of the ‘good Mexican girl’.

Chapter Eight – School, Education and Identity

[My family] are really proud of me, they're really happy [with me going to university]. I'm the first one to go to university in the United States. It's like 43 total, in my family, like from my aunts, cousins, nephews, my grandparents, and out of all of them, I'm the first one to come here to the U.S. and finish high school *and* enter a college. I have another cousin in Mexico and he's doing college in Mexico so it's not the same.

Mariana

8.1 Introduction

As the previous chapters have so far illustrated in relation to family and home, young women's performances of their gendered, racialised and classed identities are fluidly enacted across the various spaces they inhabit. The school is also a key site for them, not only because young people typically spend a considerable part of their everyday lives there (Evans 2008), but because it is a crucial space within which they construct their identities and futures. It is a space where they explore who they perceive themselves to be, how they are viewed by Others, and whether or not they *belong* – in school, in their borderland communities, and in the United States more broadly. Indeed, scholars have evidenced the role schools play as important spaces for the reproduction of social difference (Thomas 2005b, Holloway et al. 2010, Holt 2007, Rassool 1999), both in terms of the structures that attempt to impart particular narratives and knowledges upon young people, and also in relation to students' agency in resisting and reworking these (Davidson 2008, Hollingworth and Archer 2010, Hyams 2000, Thomas 2009).

Detailed attendance to the school space when thinking about the lives of young Mexican women is crucial, since the range of identities and norms that young Mexican women learn and perform there inevitably spill over into the rest of their Southern Californian lives and vice versa. Young women's discussions of the home, gender and spatial freedoms in the previous chapters, for example, have often directly and indirectly referred to the school. Indeed, the school space, far from existing in isolation, is intertwined with, and constructed

relative to, the home space and the myriad spaces in between the two – especially when it comes to gendered identity construction, as Hubbard explains:

School practices, peer interactions and students' lived familial and community experiences are crucial factors in shaping educational outcomes. The intertwining of school, family and community cultures constructs gendered attitudes and beliefs. Even when students share a racial and class identity, gender may strongly mediate their perceptions and behavior, in and out of school.

2005: 605

Not only that, but since experiences of young personhood and education vary spatially and temporally (Evans 2008), young Mexican women's negotiations of their schooling, whilst perhaps emblematic of broader processes, should be seen as taking place within specific social contexts. In the U.S. educational hierarchy (as in most Western societies), the institution of the school tends to be prioritised as the primary site of formal, rigorous, and most valuable learning (in a neoliberal marketplace) – where the language and culture of instruction is of the mainstream, in this case American English. In contrast, the home is positioned a site of informal, cultural, pastoral and less valuable learning – for working-class Mexicans living in the borderland, it tends to be a Spanish-language space. Whilst the U.S. school is framed as a springboard into a wealth of opportunity for those who *value* education, the Mexican home and family are commonly framed as pathological, insular, and detrimental to the upward mobility of their individual members (Ibarra 2003, Mirandé 1977, Valencia and Black 2002). On a more local level, looking at young women's experiences of their U.S.-Mexico *borderland* schools enables an examination of the 'geographical specificity of "race" and its durability' (Peake and Kobayashi 2002: 52)¹⁸. As the Literature Review detailed, the salience of race is heightened in the region due to factors such as immigrant replenishment, growing anti-Mexican and anti-immigration sentiment, and the dismantling of bilingual education – as well the forms of resistance these shifts engender (Jiménez 2008, López 2008). In this context, young women's embodied and relational experiences of their Mexicanness

¹⁸ And at an even more micro-level, it is important to note that since the school student bodies I conducted research in were majority White American and the main minority group of students were Mexicans (reflecting the demography of Encinitas, as described in the Methodology), the dominant racial negotiations underway in young women's minds were between themselves and their White counterparts (less so in relation to Black and Asian students).

and Americanness are made visible in and through the school – it is the main site where educational policy makers, the media, and researchers such as myself, interact with them, view them, and report upon them. It is where young Mexicans’ post-migratory integration trajectories are examined, lamented, and (hopefully increasingly) celebrated.

As the literature review detailed, ‘pseudoscientific’ ‘deficit perspectives’ have tended to dominate the academic, political, social, and educational discourses around young Mexicans and their post-migratory trajectories (Valencia and Black 2002). It is positive that scholars have more recently begun to show that Mexican young people do not all necessarily ‘downwardly assimilate’, and that on the whole they are faring much better in terms of socio-economic integration and educational ‘success’ than their parents’ generation (Kasinitz et al. 2008, Rothon et al. 2009). Neither of these bodies of work, however, has attended in much depth to the intersecting gendered, raced and classed experiences of school and education for young Mexicans living in the U.S., and how these might impact upon their processes of identity construction (despite broad acknowledgement of the importance and mutuality of the relationship between education and identity). This broader omission of an intersectional approach is particularly concerning since the few more attentive studies that have taken place have shown gender, race and class to be key differentiators in both the stereotypes and realities of minority experiences of school spaces (Hyams 2000, Thomas 2004, Twine 1996). With regard to young Mexican women in particular, two very polarised images of their educational experiences remain dominant. Firstly, a few lucky ‘exceptions to the norm’ thrive at school, draw upon their immigrant optimism, determination and entrepreneurial spirit to take advantage of the opportunities available to them in the U.S. (read: *not* available in Mexico), and go on to be both ethnicised and Americanised role models who achieve great things at college, university, and beyond (Bettie 2003). The remaining majority, if they do not ‘drop-out’ of school altogether due to teenage motherhood or gang involvement, are seen likely to stagnate at school both in terms of their English language capabilities, and their subject-based knowledge, and to be discouraged by their ‘downtrodden’ communities to strive to better themselves (Hyams 2000, Ovink 2014) – the so-called ‘crabs-in-a-bucket’ mentality (del Olmo 1989, Rivera-Mills 2000). As such, they are perceived likely to remain part of the educational, financial, social and racial underclasses (López and Stanton-Salazar 2001). Whilst some young women’s experiences might on the surface appear to correlate with either of these two stereotypes, it should be unsurprising that actually, like all other

children regardless of background, young Mexican women's educational and social lives vary greatly along the spectrum of so-called success and failure.

Following Hanson Thiem (2009) and Holloway et al. (2010) then, this chapter understands and explores the role of the school for young Mexican women in two ways; firstly, in relation to how schools are shaped by broader processes relating to social relations, power dynamics and inequalities, and can be seen as more localised environments where these are played out; and secondly in how school, or more specifically, the education it provides, 'makes space' (Hanson Thiem, 2009: 157) and is constitutive of these broader social processes. This chapter is concerned therefore with both listening to young women's everyday experiences of school space, and also engaging in a deeper examination of how school is a space that makes them as citizens (or not) in particular ways, and according to broader socio-political doctrines about what it means to be Mexican and American in the borderland and in the U.S. more widely.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first section explores how young women understand the school to be constructed as a White American space, and as somewhere they are made Mexican through formal educational pathways, including; teaching practices, language of instruction, citizen-making, tracking and classroom segregation, and targeted support services. It shows how they simultaneously embrace, reject and rework these categorisations and positionings vis-à-vis their peers and teachers. The second section examines how young women experience the school as reproducing social difference and hierarchies between themselves and their White peers, particularly in racialised and gendered ways. It listens to young women's logics around friendship groups and (the lack of) social mixing in more informal school spaces, such as playgrounds, cafeterias, and libraries. It ends by exploring young women's voices and critical appraisals of particular classed, raced and gendered confrontations they engage in with their White American peers. Throughout the chapter, I demonstrate how young women experience potentially constraining and enabling structural or social factors relating to their education, and the ways in which they display agency through the decisions and actions they take in their own lives.

Because I did not conduct a longitudinal study, the purpose of this chapter is not to establish the degree to which young women's aspirations correlate with what they actually end up

achieving, but instead it focuses on listening to what young women say in the present regarding their spatialised experiences of education, and how these feelings inform and are informed by other aspects of their young lives and identities. Furthermore, although some young women shared some of their academic grades in their interviews, I did not examine young women's grades across the board, and so cannot speak for how 'well' or not they are getting on academically – any discussions around these themes are based entirely on young women's own perceptions of their progress. Speaking to counsellors and teachers however, enabled me to frame these individual voices within a broader local context of discourses and realities of attainment, future-planning and race and class relations.

8.2 Navigating formal education: Constraints, conflicting expectations and agency

8.2.1 School as a White space

In our initial discussions about their education, most young women said that, in general, they enjoyed going to school, felt comfortable in relation to their peers and teachers there, and felt that they were performing well or 'ok' in their studies. However, with some more detailed probing it soon emerged that young women tended to experience the school space in more ambivalent and complicated ways. In particular, they often felt themselves to be perceived within school structures not purely as 'students', but as *Mexican* students, and Mexican young *women*. These framings impacted upon their learning, identification processes and experiences of the school space in a variety of both positive and negative ways.

Part of the tendency for the ethnicisation of young Mexican women's perceived scholarly and behavioural trajectories revolves around a comparative Mexican-American binary that centres on judgements around student attitude and aptitude. Reflecting some of the same tropes noted in the literature, Jocelyn explains how young Mexicans and Americans are positioned in relation to each other:

I think depending whether you grow up in gangs, or you grew up like me where I'm not involved and I want to get somewhere. There's like two different aspects, for me, I think that plans for the future is the whole 'go to college, graduate, help out my family'. But if you were in a gang or you were in that – what everybody *thinks* Mexicans are like – 'they just wanna be into all this drug thing', I think that plans for the future wouldn't really come to *mind*. 'Cause you're living day-by-day, you really don't have plans for the future because doesn't matter what happens tomorrow...so I think that the two aspects of it are really different, 'cause Americans...depending on what it is they're coming from, I know some Americans that are essentially, like not *nerds* but they really want to get somewhere, they wanna go to Harvard or they really wanna do this, or that, but I think there are also Americans who are like, 'I don't know what I'm going to do later' too...

Jocelyn

Many young women in the study like Jocelyn suggested that Mexicans are broadly perceived as not ‘valuing’ education (Valencia and Black 2002). Instead, they are expected to be involved in gang-culture, live a nihilistic ‘day-by-day’ lifestyle and not think about or plan for the future. As a result, they are frequently framed as likely to ‘drop-out’ of school (not graduate)¹⁹. Their deviant, risk-taking and antisocial behaviours are commonly positioned as being performed outside of school, in street spaces, and as diametrically opposed to school attendance, engagement or a focus on one’s studies. Those who thrive in the school space, both academically and socially, are the ‘exceptions to the rule’ (Bettie 2003).

White American students, in contrast, are commonly described as ‘geeks’ or ‘nerds’. White students are idealised as being focused on their education, driven to achieve their goals, confident in their abilities, and entitled to take advantage of the myriad educational and extracurricular opportunities available to them. They are seen to aspire to do and be great things in the future, fuelled by self-belief and an ability to effectively market themselves and their skills (Davidson 2008). If they do not live up to these high expectations, they become their group’s own exceptions.

Apart from the distinctly racialised and classed stereotyping underway within this binary, two other themes emerge. Firstly, that discourses of education, attitude and behaviour are not only tied into assumptions about current attainment, but also how students envision their future and how much credence they give to planning ahead or laying the foundations of an upwardly mobile life. And secondly, that the ordered, safe, and enriching school space is formulated in direct opposition to the street space, one of disorder and danger. The implication of the school space being ‘strongly classified’ (Sibley 1995) in such a way, is that particular groups are deemed welcome (or not):

¹⁹ Whilst it is certainly concerning that young Mexicans and Latinos are more likely than their other ethnic counterparts to ‘drop out’, the fact remains that those Mexicans and Latinos students who actually do drop out are in the minority (Bradley and Renzulli 2011, Flores-González 2002). In 2009, for example, national dropout rates were as follows – Latino students (17%), Black students (9%) and White students (6%) (Pew Hispanic Center 2009). Unfortunately these facts are often conflated to read ‘most Mexicans drop out’.

A *strongly* classified space, says Sibley, has *strongly* defined boundaries, its internal homogeneity and order are valued and there is a concern with boundary maintenance to keep out objects or people who don't fit into the shared classification (or culture) constructed by the dominant group (the insiders). The regularity of design and the high visibility of internal boundaries...make what is culturally different appear disruptive and deviant. Examples of strongly classified spaces include...schools, spaces where only those who belong and behave are welcome. Difference is not encouraged or tolerated.'

Malone 2002: 158 (Emphasis in original)

Through this binary then, and as this chapter will continue to demonstrate, school is constructed and racialised as a White space that tends to foster White education, success and *belonging*, perhaps over Mexican experiences of the same. This finding chimes with what Barajas and Ronnkvist found in their study of Latino university students, that:

Racialization occurred in school organizational spaces that invested in whiteness as a purportedly neutral category. In actuality, relationships and practices often delineated along racialized lines, distinguishing what it means to be white in such a space, and what it means not to be white in that space.

2007: 1517

This is not to say that all young women who took part in the study felt excluded or distinctly *out of place* at school (at least, not all the time), but that the majority commonly remarked upon their racialised difference in and through that particular space – a process of Othering that they experienced in both positive and negative ways.

Jocelyn, above, whilst acknowledging the prevalence of this Mexican/American binary in broader discourses of success and failure, complicated it by suggesting that in reality, young people of both backgrounds have the ability to *choose* how to approach their educations and futures – and indeed, the spaces they manifest these in – and in doing so enact agency in response to otherwise potentially constraining typologies. However, whilst both Mexican and American youngsters may display varying degrees of confidence or hopelessness about their futures, racialised norms remain at play – given that whereas Americans might simply be

unsure about their path, Mexicans are seen to be exposed to strongly negative and ‘risky’ subcultural influences, such as drugs and gangs, which may dictate their outlook. At the same time, class complicates this binary since students’ future prospects may be inflected by ‘what it is they’re coming from’. Indeed, Jocelyn is careful to acknowledge that White privilege may go only so far in securing the educationally rich lives of her working-class White peers who may have come from similarly humble home situations that Mexicans in the area are often characterised as having. Finally, she is emblematic of the many Mexican young people who are ‘not [gang-]involved and...want to get somewhere’. On the whole though, it is Americans, and not Mexicans, who are seen to be particularly driven and goal-oriented, and those who will probably ‘succeed’ in the educational and career marketplace.

Indeed, many young women, including those who thought they were doing ‘well’ at school, admitted that throughout their educational careers they faced a host of competing expectations projected onto them by both broader – what they class as ‘White’ – American society, and their own Mexican families. Dani, for example, who was ahead of her class credits and was due to graduate early from high school, said that it could be difficult navigating a path through young womanhood and education due to the stereotypes and idealisations young women encounter along the way:

Dani: [Stereotypes of Mexicans are]...that they’re troublemakers, or like *Cholas* [derogatory term for gang-related Mexican and Latino women] (she laughs). But I don’t think that’s true...Like it’s hard I guess, being a Mexican...here. Because you’re surrounded by a bunch of like, *White* people, and...I don’t know...

Caitlin: Why is it hard?

Dani: I don’t know! Like they *expect* you to do bad, I guess. I don’t know, and you just have to work hard. You have to work *really* hard. And I think your parents are the problem too because they expect you to get like perfect grades and everything, so it’s hard (she sighs).

Dani

As Dani's words show, even when displaying tangible evidence to the contrary, their race, class and gender positions as working-class Mexicans can render young women unexpected by the White majority to succeed educationally. Instead, they may perceive themselves to be envisioned more commonly as trouble-makers, 'teen moms' and/or school 'drop-outs', caricatures that Bettie also acknowledges (2003). At the same time, and as touched on in Chapter Five in relation to migration narratives, many young women say they are subject to intense rhetoric from their parents around working as hard as possible at school in order to lay the foundations for their own educational achievement and ultimately their family's socio-economic upward mobility. Parents may simultaneously exert pressure on young women to present themselves as studious, obedient and *present* at school, to avoid being viewed as *callejeras* ('street girls' or runabouts), given the spatialised and gendered norms also at work around good Mexican girlhood that were explored in Chapter Seven. Students like Dani therefore feel pressure to succeed at school, not only for their own development and satisfaction, but to prove unfounded their detractors' expectations, and to fulfil their parents' aspirations.

The degree to which young women are able and *enabled* to fulfil these goals at school varies significantly due to a number of factors. These include language practices, educational in/equalities and the presence of targeted support services, the implications of which this chapter will now explore.

8.2.2 Language – English vs. Spanish

A significant aspect of the construction of the school as a predominantly White American cultural and educational space, is its formulation as an English-speaking space. Young women commonly suggested that to fit in and excel, both socially and academically, was to speak and learn in English, and to discard or subsume Spanish (at least when outside of the home space²⁰). This emphasis reflects shifts relating to the ongoing dismantling of the bilingual education system in California in the last two decades or so, which has resulted in the reification of English as the formal language of instruction for all children regardless of English aptitude. Rather than teaching bilingually, so that children can learn subject matter

²⁰ Although the chapter details shortly how discourses around the value of English and Spanish languages can also function to influence youth and family linguistic practices in the home too.

and English simultaneously, the focus has shifted to providing separate English language classes for those who need them. Streamed subject classes then teach students of varying 'abilities', although this often means that those who do not speak much English are placed in lower-ability classes, regardless of their actual intellectual or academic capabilities. Alternatively, some young people are placed in mixed ability classes appropriate to their age, but struggle to understand the subject matter due to linguistic barriers.

The social and spatial implications of language prioritisation and such 'subtractive schooling' are significant for young women (Valenzuela 1999). Streaming along language-based ability lines results in young people of Mexican descent being over-represented in lower academic ability classes. Higher ability classes then, become coded as White spaces, and further entrench notions of school success as a White domain. To speak English also becomes associated with higher levels of intelligence, and conversely, not being able to speak good English, or *choosing* to speak more commonly in Spanish, for example, is conflated with lower intelligence. Scholars have evidenced the ways in which such language/ability organisation effectively results in the racialised and classed segregation of classrooms and broader school spaces (Thomas 2005b). Furthermore, semi-formal bilingual spaces, such as English as a Second Language classrooms, and Spanish-speaking counsellors' and Migrant Education offices, are in turn marked as Other in their physical separation from mainstream teaching spaces, thereby further imbuing Spanish language speakers with notions of difference, as will shortly be dealt with in more depth.

Young women experience and negotiate these spatial dynamics in complicated ways, and as such, the topics of language and educational access came up in almost every interview. Diana's case, for example, illustrates the ways in which limited English proficiency can operate to isolate young Mexican women in the classroom, affect their self-esteem in relation to perceptions of their intelligence and subject-based aptitude, and potentially result in a gradual disengagement from formal education, including their English language tuition:

Caitlin: How do you find school?

Diana: Hard. I think it's hard... 'cause, I'm not good at English, I can't understand the big words. When I just don't understand the teacher

when he's talking...I just get over it, I'm like 'ok, I'm not even gonna pass this class'...I think I'm the only one (she laughs).

Caitlin: Really?

Diana: Or I think so. *Everyone* knows better than me. I'm really dumb.

Caitlin: Oh, I don't think so. I think there's a difference between maybe not fully understanding the language, and then being dumb. I think if you understood all the words, I'm sure you would be able to understand what they're teaching you?

Diana: Yeah. I just don't understand the words, some words...I'm taking English 10, and I'm taking Academic Literacy. English that helps you.

Caitlin: And do they help?

Diana: Not really. I think it's just like a waste of time. Supposedly the class helps you do homework, but it gives you *more* homework...so it does help us, but...

Diana

Diana's experience reflects broader ones created by an environment that promotes English language ability as necessary conduit for knowledge – to not speak good enough English means that young women are unable to access particular funds of knowledge being distributed in the classroom. Young women like Diana are made to feel 'dumb' and are excluded in ways that may cause them to feel shame in their – useless for school learning, and as such devalued – Spanish language, and related Mexican cultural identity.

Diana was one of a small group of U.S.-born, predominantly Spanish-speaking girls in the study who came from 'hard-living' families (Howell 1973), who were not performing very well in school, who were peripherally involved in 'gang'-related activities, and whose outlook for the future seemed generally quite disillusioned. Part of their feelings of despondency

appeared to be rooted in their anxieties around whether they could master a high enough level of English in time for them to acquire the right subject-based knowledge to graduate from high school and obtain a skilled job. In fact, some of them admitted that their dreams, such as Diana's of working in forensics like her favourite TV characters from 'CSI', were unlikely to come to fruition, and working in a local restaurant or continuing to help their mothers clean houses was a more likely route for them. As such, some of these aspects of these young women's lives could be seen to chime with Portes et al.'s theorisations of the struggling and disenfranchised second generation – although this chapter illustrates that Diana's story is certainly not necessarily emblematic of every Mexican young woman in San Diego County.

The higher valuing of English over Spanish was also reiterated to the whole family at parents' evenings, which will be discussed shortly. The public presentation of awards for the reclassification of students' English competency, for example, can be understood as subtly conveying to parents that they should foster their children's educational mobility by encouraging their children to speak more English, and possibly facilitating this by not distracting them at home with Spanish. Scholars have long explored the affective impacts for families of socio-political attempts to pressure parents into not burdening or delaying their children's educational development with a limiting home language (Cummins 1981, Hinton 2001). They have evidenced what can be lost, both culturally, and also in terms of parent-child relationships when having divergent primary languages mean families cannot communicate in the deeper ways that a shared language offers (Phinney et al. 2001, Qin 2006). The risk of such cultural dissonance – the gaps that emerge between the generations – leaves young women feeling conflicted and with lots of work to do. It is them and their siblings who have to navigate the linguistic and cultural differences between home and school space in ways that cause the least disruption and cultural dissonance in their families. Some of them struggle with this negotiation, and take the school/public shame attached to their Spanish home with them, refusing to talk to their parents in Spanish and responding to questions in English. Jocelyn, who seemed more comfortable with managing this process, explained how such a 'transition' between the different linguistic spaces of the school and the home can take place, especially with the help of their similarly bilingual siblings:

With languages... You go home and you have to speak *that*, but you go to school and you have to speak *that*. So... you come home and it's Mexican, and Mexican ways (she laughs) and then when you go to school it's American ways and you need to adjust. I think for *me* I kind of mix it in by my brothers and sisters, because we all grew up here, we're from *here*, so it's like we can keep the American ways when we come home cause we all speak English or we all make jokes and we all talk about Lady Gaga and stuff like that, you know. When we're at home we speak like that [American English] but when we know that our parents are around or like the family is together then we have to kind of just **transition** into Mexican ways.

Jocelyn (bold emphasis added)

As Chapter Five showed, the children of Mexican migrants often believe it important to remember their cultural heritage, including maintaining some degree of home 'language loyalty' (Rivera-Mills 2000). At the same time, it is important to note that young women's ambivalence towards processes that devalue their Spanish often operates in conjunction with their desire to learn English. Scholars have demonstrated that post-migrant preference for speaking the dominant language (English) as their primary language increases with each generation, and decreases for the home language (Spanish). Young women are becoming increasingly 'captured' by the 'national social fields' in which they live (Soehl and Waldinger 2010: 1492). Many of them understand that speaking English can be a positive and empowering skill, especially alongside their growing up learning and performing increasingly 'American ways', as Jocelyn describes. What emerges then, seems to be a preference for bilingualism, where both their home languages and the host society language are valued and respected. The fluid ways in which young women linguistically negotiate the different spaces they inhabit suggests that, ideally, they should not have to prioritise one language over the other, but converse in both. Their transnational identities are most comfortably reflected or reproduced in and through transnational or bilingual language practices.

Expressions of bilingualism in the school space may then be seen as a form of resistance to dominant practices and structures that attempt to construct the school space, and notions of success, as English or American (López 2008). Young women enact agency when they speak Spanish at school, because it disrupts notions of the school as an English space. Code-

switching – moving fluidly in and out of English and Spanish in the same sentence, for example – was commonly practiced in social school spaces, as well as in spaces semi-formally marked as Spanish or Bilingual spaces. Indeed, counsellors and Migrant Aides code-switched with young people as a way of building trust and instilling pride in a shared cultural heritage that may have been ignored or devalued in other school spaces (Adair et al. 2012, Gibson and Hidalgo 2009, Ibarra 2003).

Another act of linguistic resistance employed by staff to help young women positively harness their Mexicanness and Spanish-language proficiency in school spaces and beyond was to encourage them to market themselves as bilingual (or trilingual in the case of those who also spoke indigenous languages), and draw upon this cultural capital for future career prospects (Davidson 2008). Young women like Catalina, stressed the utility of speaking both English and Spanish in the future:

...’cause they could hire you for any job if you’re bilingual or trilingual. You can work like a better job. It helps you a lot...you can do different things with two languages.

Catalina

Supported by teachers with perhaps a more holistic picture of their lives, young women like Catalina may then proactively employ specifically Mexican attributes, such as their bilingualism, in a local context such as in the border region where there is such linguistic diversity and potential opportunity – a skill which may otherwise be ignored or passed over by an educational institution focused on teaching English and Americanness.

8.2.3 Spaces of educational inequality

Indeed, the construction of the school as a White, English-speaking space, and somewhere deficit thinking about young Mexicans is present and perpetuated, arguably results in the school being a space of educational inequality. Young women’s direct, everyday experiences of the school space as predominantly White and English-speaking were not necessarily felt by them all as wholly or explicitly negative – especially if they felt comfortable performing transnational bilingual identities within it. However, many young women did frame these processes in relation to their awareness or *anticipation* of ongoing discrimination against

Mexicans (and other less privileged students), and the prioritisation of White Americans' (and more privileged students') educations throughout the school spaces they engage with. Furthermore, some young women saw their trajectories as unfolding within a broader context of their marginalisation in the United States (Menchaca 1995, Sánchez 2007b), as Diana explains:

My mom thinks that America has more bad influences, 'cause I guess they give more education to their own children, they have more opportunity than us Hispanic or Mexican. They treat them more right, 'cause I guess they're like American, and most people say that *they have all the rights, not us*.

Montse (Emphasis added)

Sentiments such as these around educational inequality mirror the evidence that has repeatedly shown the ways in which 'many students from low-income families and minority ethnicities get a poor deal from state education' in terms of educational access and the quality of instruction (Holloway et al. 2010: 585. See also Johnston et al. 2007, Valencia 2002). This is not to say that all young working-class Mexican women directly experience educational inequalities or feel disadvantaged – in fact many in this study believed they were getting on well and found their Mexicanness could work positively for them, as explained shortly – but rather that because of the ways in which they are racialised as not valuing education, they may be more likely to be treated differently to their White and more middle-class peers (Valencia and Black 2002).

One way inequalities or differential access may manifest themselves is through the process of 'tracking' (or streaming) into particular curriculum pathways. As Mickelson and Everett have shown, tracking 'tends to reproduce race and social class stratification of opportunities to learn' (2008: 535). One counsellor suggested that Mexican students were more likely than White students to be tracked into vocational avenues rather than university or professional ones – a trend acknowledged for other working-class minority and post-migrant children (Alba and Silberman 2009, Crul and Schneider 2009, Mickelson and Everett 2008, Oakes and Saunders 2008). She said Mexican students were commonly encouraged (to aim '*high*') into fields such as social care, nursing or administration via local community college routes, whilst White middle-class young people were more like to be prepared for four-year university

courses to be doctors or lawyers, for example. These college-bound discourses also often make inherently socio-spatial assumptions about young women's lives, degrees of freedoms and future trajectories. Narratives about Mexicans' community college options centre on these (less esteemed) institutions being local, close to home, comfortable, and known – safe spaces for young women who are expected to stay close to their families due to financial and gendered limitations (as explored in Chapters Six and Seven). Those around White American four-year university options focus on the open possibilities of travelling far away, leaving home and gaining independence, unencumbered by financial or gendered limitations.

Whilst these pathways potentially train young Mexicans to be the next generation of proletarian servants after their parents (Rouse 1991), we should be careful not to employ middle-class biases to suggest that these are wholly devalued career trajectories for them. In fact, many young women indicated that they would be pleased to complete community college and become a nurse, for example, since this would mark them as relatively upwardly mobile when compared to their parents' low financial and employment statuses in the U.S. (Alba et al. 2011). However, the presence of unequal opportunities in the school space is problematic overall, as Jeffrey et al. explain,

Education in such [unequal] settings emerges as a contradictory resource for children and youth: providing certain social opportunities while also drawing young people more tightly into systems of inequality'.

2008 cited in Jeffrey 2010: 500

The different qualifications and educational capital young people are able to and permitted to acquire at school have a direct effect on the kinds of post-school career opportunities available to them, especially in an economic climate of increasingly difficult school-work transitions for young people generally (McDowell 2003). Within such a system, young Mexican students may gain higher achievements and relative success when compared to their families, but not necessarily achieve parity with native White American students. It may be the case that they are allowed to progress to a certain level, but then find their progress bounded or limited, keeping them educationally subjugated and in lower socio-economic positionings compared to White Americans.

Young women's concerns about the potential to experience discrimination at school have deeper reverberations relating to the spatialities of their pre- and post-migrant family lives. As Dani indicated above, many of them feel a significant sense of responsibility and expectation from their parents to make the most of the opportunities available to them in the U.S., perhaps not across the border in Mexico. Since prospects for upward mobility are key drivers of migration (Jeffrey 2010, Waters 2006), as explored in Chapter Five, the potential barriers that young women face in achieving such mobility stand in direct contrast to their parents' migratory aspirations and sacrifices they have made for their daughters – or for their 'investments' (Ovink 2014).

Scholars have debated the outcomes of educational inequalities and 'blocked opportunities' for students' identities and attitudes towards their educations and futures (Kao and Tienda 1998, Syed et al. 2011). Whilst some work (focusing predominantly on Black young people) has argued that the prospect of barriers to their educational and career mobility results in minority youth disengaging from school out of either hopelessness, despondency or refusal to 'act white' in order to improve their academic achievements (Fordham and Ogbu 1986, Ogbu 1987 and 1991), others have critiqued such a view as racially and culturally deterministic, and because it does not allow for sufficient attendance to the role of young people's agency and their abilities to overcome or destabilise such barriers (Cokley 2013, Gibson 2005). Indeed, I met many young women who through their grades and school engagement were proactively destabilising educational barriers and disproving the myth that only White young people have viable and valuable career prospects. I was especially interested to see that many of these young women positively experienced tracking or targeted support for *Mexicans*, and therefore drew upon their Mexicanness as socio-cultural capital, a process I explore in more depth momentarily.

But first, inequalities relating to upward mobility have potentially even greater ramifications for post-migratory integration and senses of belonging. Diana's words above illustrate that some young women understand the relationality of their race and class positions vis-à-vis young White Americans in terms of their access to, and exercising of, *rights*, or their fair treatment as a citizen in society. Diana suggests that not only may there be a hierarchy in terms of Mexican and American young people's perceived educational outlooks and motivations for upward mobility (their choice, their drive, their agency), but also that there

are over-arching systems of inequality at play (and operating in and through their schools) that favour White American children's rights and future lives.

The issue of citizenship and investment in ways that develop students' sense of belonging and ownership within a school or local community arose on a number of occasions. Indeed, it is well documented in the literature that schools are key spaces for citizen-making and nation-building, both as sites of control (dealt with momentarily in relation to undocumented youth), but also in relation to their role as purveyors of cultural knowledge via the curricula they teach (Weller 2006). As Holloway et al. explain,

Interest in geographical imaginaries has highlighted the importance of the curriculum in shaping different scales of identity and citizenship, whether regional, national or transnational, and their links with state and broader economic formations.

2010: 587-8

Young women experience these processes in terms of how Mexican-American, Native American or Black histories, for example, are narrated vis-à-vis White European American Settler history. Particular state-sanctioned versions of history may operate to in/validate particular students' community or ancestral histories – and in this process children learn that certain histories are prioritised or given currency when others are not (Chang 2002, Romero 2002). It can also relate to whether or not bilingual resources are made available to teachers and students, and how competency in the language of instruction is managed by school structures, dealt with above. More explicitly, Civic Education classes aim to induct young people into a United States-centric national and global citizenry – a complicated process for the children of immigrants who may have different socio-cultural or political outlooks about their rights, responsibilities and their place or role in the world, due to their histories of mobility and their ongoing transnational connections and positionings (Myers and Zaman 2009).

Furthermore, when school plays such a role in fostering citizenship, how do undocumented children, those citizens of Mexico without stable legal status or U.S. citizenship, experience the school space? Students' 'legality' determines not only their current experiences of the school space and abilities to access funds of capital for upward mobility (such as earning high

school credits or securing college scholarships), but it also has longer-term impacts for the kinds of careers they can aspire to once school has finished and post-eighteen ‘adult’ life begins²¹. For undocumented young women, school is a crucial place for the acquisition of a stable legal status in the United States. Recent immigration policy developments around the DREAM²² act and DACA memorandum, which grant certain types of undocumented students a degree of reprieve from the threat of deportation and the opportunity to stabilise their status, have deepened the school’s role in making citizens.

Since these motions entitle only young people of committed studentship and sound behaviour to apply for them, teachers, guidance counsellors and school administrators are required to report on, and provide references for, their applicable students. Not only then are teachers an extension of state control in terms of teaching and disciplining (Malone 2002), but they are also required to observe and police undocumented students’ school spatial practices to understand who deserves to be put forward for these schemes or not. Whilst the street space may be dangerous for young undocumented people (being perceived as ‘out of place’ or ‘troublesome’ risks arrest and possible deportation), the school operates as both a haven (all children regardless of legal status have a right to education) and a space of surveillance. Therein lies a critical contradiction – young undocumented people are encouraged to aspire and are invested in as students, but if when school ends they have not stabilised their status, their career mobilities are capped since they are limited to informal occupations that will employ ‘illegal’ post-migrants, and their post-school life can become increasingly precarious.

School then may be a difficult space for young women from post-migratory families who have more specific needs – around discrimination, legal status, language difficulties, or poverty and the necessity to engage in paid work to support their families, for example – that may not be experienced to the same degree by more middle-class American students. The next section explores how these specificities relate to young women’s experiences of targeted support serviced for Mexicans.

²¹ It is important to note that due to necessity, some young women already work and contribute to household economies in ways that are traditionally ascribed ‘adult’ status in middle-class Western mind-sets.

²² Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors act and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals memorandum.

8.2.4 Targeted support services for Mexican student empowerment

As this chapter has so far shown, school is an enabling or disabling space for different students. Whilst some students like Diana felt that their educational needs may have been neglected or that they struggled to stay engaged on their own part, other young Mexicans appeared more positive, often partly because they had received extra educational investment through their involvement in Mexican or Hispanic-specific assistance programs. This section will now explore how being constructed as ‘Mexican’ at school can also operate positively, and may be something that young people embrace or strategically manipulate to better themselves and take advantage of three types of targeted support services; English language tuition and Spanish-speaking parents’ meetings; the Migrant Education program; and tracking into AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination). This section takes care to demonstrate how accessing such resources may also engender more complicated or problematic experiences of labelling as well.

English language tuition and Spanish-speaking parents’ meetings

Recognising some of the specific difficulties that young Mexicans may face, such as language fluency and having parents who may not have direct experience of navigating the U.S. education system, for example, some (often but not always Hispanic) staff in the high schools I visited in North County San Diego appeared to take care to provide extra support for them. Olympia, for example, a high school freshman who arrived from Mexico three years before our interview, felt extremely proud of the progress she had made in her English and subject-based knowledge with the help of targeted assistance:

When I first came to [middle school] in seventh grade I didn’t speak any English, so I started to learn English and then I started to hang out with Miss Cruz and she became my friend and then she started to tell me to come to the [Spanish-speaking parents’] meetings...And so I started to come with my mum, or sometimes with my dad, either one of them. So I started to learn and I started to tell her I could be volunteering, helping like the parents when they come [to the meeting] they don’t know anything, so I tell them...‘we’re gonna talk about this...and we have this information if you want it’...I feel like, real good helping people, because my teachers

really appreciate what I do, so they do help me, and they say I'm really nice, so I keep on doing it.

I feel good at school...I do like it, my teachers are nice to me, my grades are now...like I have a GPA of 3.80 or 3.88, or something. And now I have 8 As and a B+.

Olympia

Olympia's case demonstrates the constructive effects on self-esteem, inclusion and scholarly progress that personalised English language tuition, positive teacher-pupil relationships and targeted Spanish-speaking parental outreach can have for some young women. Parents' meetings of the kind mentioned here are especially useful to examine because of how they illustrate both the positive and negative aspects of being labelled 'Mexican' or 'Spanish-speaking' in an educational setting. Here, Olympia explains in more depth what the parents' evening – that she then volunteered at – aimed to do or provide:

[Teachers] talk with the parents about what's going on in schools, and they're giving awards to the students [for the reclassification of students' English proficiency]. I'm usually helping there...it's really informative, you learn about drugs and everything...like why do kids take drugs, or they talk about the way to go to university. Like there's many scholarships to apply to. And they help us, they give us information so we can use it. [Meetings are important] because there's many parents that don't know about this and this is a meeting which is you know, *Hispanic*, and they talk in Spanish, so parents that don't speak English can be informed of what happens in the schools...they have a translator 'cause the principals don't speak Spanish (she smiles).

Olympia

First and foremost, Spanish-speaking events attempt to provide parents with practical information that they might not otherwise have access to, such as: advice on how to help their children with homework; how to complete administrative aspects related to their children's ongoing enrolment and future applications; what curricular, extra-curricular and

scholarship options are available; and what other external services might be useful to families (such as housing, financial or legal advice). Such a proactive approach to informing parents who themselves may not have much experience of the U.S. education system arguably responds to a key barrier to upward mobility – I heard many times that participants’ families did not have a lack of *desire* for education and mobility for their children, but at times felt they had a lack of information on *how* to go about achieving such goals (Valencia and Black 2002). Events such as these may also offer parents and the school the opportunity to come together in one space to provide pastoral care for children, such as around health and behavioural issues. From talking to parents at these events, I learnt that these moments also offer parents a way of feeling included and respected in the school environment, since these might be one of the few interactions they are able to have with the school due to language barriers. Finally, some young women said that having their educational and linguistic progress acknowledged publically by teachers and parents – and being presented with awards, for example – was empowering and resulted in their having renewed drive to keep up the good work.

Such events may also operate in less positive ways however, most especially because they are rooted in and perpetuate the Othering of specifically *Mexican* and *Spanish-speaking* children and families. Being marked as different in this way, parents may be less likely to be integrated into the broader school community because they are somewhat segregated from other ‘mainstream’ parents’ events where they could meet and interact with non-Mexican or English-speaking Mexican parents. Furthermore, one guidance counsellor suggested to me that the content emphases (not just the language) shifted across events, such that drugs, gangs and avoiding educational ‘failure’ were themes or messages reiterated more with Mexican students and families than with White American ones – the repetition of which could function to construct these as specifically Mexican ‘problems’ in the minds of children, parents and teachers alike.

Acknowledging the limitations of this kind of targeted support, I was, overall, struck by how much value seemed to be attached to events and outreach by most actors involved. In contrast to the ‘crabs in a bucket’ analogy that makes up part of the racist discourses around the Mexican family and community – that members discourage their children and peers from bettering themselves, and if they appear to be succeeding they ‘pull them back down’ so that

they stagnate for generations to come (del Olmo 1989, Rivera-Mills 2000) – most young women said their families were very supportive of, and involved with, their education. If parents did not possess the knowledge themselves of how to navigate the education system, or assist with subject matter of homework, many of them seemed proactive in seeking information about how they could better assist their children via ‘parental involvement activities’ (Valencia and Black 2002) – changing working shifts or bringing younger children with them, for example, so they would not miss meetings.

Migrant Education

Another form of specific assistance was Migrant Education, a federal program that supports the children of migrant agricultural workers, since they are more likely to experience unstable living and care arrangements which are likely to affect their schooling. As Gibson and Hidalgo explain,

These children face many of the same obstacles as children of immigrants whose families must cope with severe economic hardships, but they also must deal with additional challenges associated with their families’ migratory lifestyles and living situations.

2009: 683

Similarly to the limitations noted above, using services such as Migrant Education that are aimed specifically at Mexican or ‘Migrants’ may be problematic for some young women. They may find that because they ‘appear’ Mexican, teachers or peers assume that they ‘should’ go to the Migrant Education office for assistance, for example. However, as noted above, some young women find that being Othered as Mexican can be a negative process, and believe that race, class, ‘taste’ or in/ability connotations exist in relation to getting such assistance. As such, some young women attempt to avoid stigmatisation by being careful to disassociate themselves from, or steer clear of, such support – in particular, young women who saw themselves as more culturally middle-class and ‘Americanised’ in terms of their

language, consumer sensibilities and friendship groups appeared much less likely to want to access such services because they were at pains to resist such Othering²³.

Having said this, scholarship has also evidenced the profoundly positive effect it can have on young people's school success:

Study findings suggest that...migrant students' school persistence and academic success were due at least in part to the supplemental services they received from the Migrant Education Program and, in particular, to the support provided to them by the migrant resource teachers. A key to the teachers' effectiveness was the holistic nature of their relationships with students and their ability to connect students with the resources and networks needed for school success. In addition, the migrant teachers' own identities as academically successful Mexican Americans, many of them the children of migrant farmworkers themselves, increased their ability to serve as role models and to help students build bridges between their multiple worlds.

Gibson and Hidalgo 2009: 683

Certainly, the young women I met appeared to truly value the service. In addition to the practical advice they receive, young women said that what they found most meaningful were the relationships they were able to build with their counsellors. Migrant Education offices seemed to be constructed as spaces of safety, empathy and trust, where counsellors understood their problems, validated the difficulties they face, and helped them find holistic solutions (Gibson and Bejinez 2002, Rodriguez 2012). One young woman felt so empowered by this kind of targeted service that she planned to go to college and become a Migrant Aide herself – she wanted to 'give something back' and help future generations of Mexican children.

AVID and positive tracking

In addition to language or pastoral support, some young women – often those fluent in English and making steady progress in school – could positively experience specific

²³ I discuss the possible implications of this reluctance to associate with Migrant Education on my research sampling strategy in the Methodology.

educational support or ‘tracking’ (setting/streaming) into pathways geared towards Mexican students. ‘Advancement via Individual Determination’ (AVID)²⁴, for example, was a high school program for medium to strongly performing young people that helped them prepare academically and administratively for college and university routes. Because AVID supports minority and low-income students and because of the demography of the schools I worked in, the program tended to be viewed predominantly as being for ‘Mexican’ or ‘Hispanic’ young people. Adriana, who moved to San Diego County from Los Angeles two years before our interview due to her increasing involvement in gang culture, explains how positive reinforcement at school and AVID helped her refocus on her education and see alternative future pathways available to her:

I’ve just seen a lot of open doors and all the open doors that *are* there, like at school, I’ve seen if I actually try and do the things that I want to do, like I’ve never tried in school, that was something I didn’t do. And going to school you meet people, and I was never used to that. So when I’ve seen people actually, I was happy, and I was thinking ‘well, I must be doing *something* right!’ So I kind of noticed that what I was doing (before), I wasn’t going down the right path, and I knew I had to change it...

...I was in the AVID program. Yeah, so that kind of opened my eyes to see how many people were actually *thinking* about their future, because I came from a school where nobody was even *in* school so it was kinda like, I actually noticed that education *is* important, it’s the top priority. So like being in AVID [helped]...

Adriana

Adriana’s words are important since they are evidence that young women’s experiences of gangs, drugs or poverty do not necessarily render them subject to an ‘inevitable’ downward spiral in life like some deficit perspectives would predict. Interventions such as AVID that

²⁴ ‘The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program targets students in the academic middle–B, C, and even D students—who have the desire to go to college and the willingness to work hard. AVID places academically average students in advanced classes and provides them with an elective class that prepares them to succeed in rigorous curricula, enter mainstream activities in school, and increase their opportunities to enroll in four-year colleges...AVID’s mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. The AVID program levels the playing field for minority, rural, low-income, and other students without a college-going tradition in their families.’ (California Department for Education, 2014)

recognise some of the specific difficulties faced by less-privileged young people enable young women like Adriana to have a more realistic chance achieving their college-bound goals than perhaps they would without such assistance.

However, because programs like AVID may be constructed in the minds of young Mexicans as being a stepping-stone or launch pad onto 'better things', *not* to be selected to be in AVID can feel exclusionary, and as if those future options are further cut off from students' possibilities. Students, such as Diana, who have so far not achieved the grades necessary to get into AVID, might then contest its value and frame it as a waste of time to minimise their outward disappointment that they have not been chosen to receive tailored investment:

Diana: AVID helps you [with career and education advice]. I think it helps you catching up with all your grades. You have to have higher than a 3.0 [GPA] to be in AVID. And yeah, it takes you to field trips to colleges. Like Santa Barbara College, so many places.

Caitlin: that's cool, so you can get an idea of the colleges before you apply?

Diana: yeah, but I'm not in it! (She laughs). I just hear about it.

Caitlin: oh you're not in it?

Diana: no I don't have good grades to say I could be in it, 'cause I *think* it has to be like 3.0. You have to pass classes with a C to be in it.

Caitlin: ok, and would you like to be in it?

Diana: *no*. because people say that it's just a waste of time. Or I don't know, I don't think it gives you credit...people say it doesn't. Or something like that.

Diana

Programs like AVID then, risk producing new boundaries, or reifying existing ones, between groups of Mexicans along class, language and achievement-based lines. Hierarchies of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ students may be re-inscribed in ways that lead to resentment from other Mexicans, alongside physical segregation of classroom space. A guidance counsellor explained that resentment can also build amongst disenfranchised White American children and their families who may feel that being marked as Mexican or as a minority provides students with benefits, special attention, and unique access to scholarships and other tools for upward mobility not available to them.

Furthermore, young women who are academic high-achievers and are taking part in AP or AVID programs also often appeared to experience complicated feelings around their relative (and ‘exceptional’) success and inclusion in more upwardly mobile educational circles. They often said they were proud of themselves, and were honoured to be amongst the first in their families to achieve their level of education and future prospects. But they also often acknowledged their feelings of (Mexican) uniqueness, Otherness and at times, exclusion, vis-à-vis the other, mostly White, students in their advanced classrooms. As explored in more depth in the next section on peer relationships, for example, many of these young women suggested that they found it difficult to develop meaningful friendships with these ‘Other’ classmates – whilst they might chat and work together in the classroom space, or said ‘hi!’ to them in passing on campus, this was mostly experienced on a superficial level and that their ‘real’ friends were people more ‘like them’ – Mexican(-American)s – with whom they believed they shared more class and ‘culture’ based commonalities.

Part of the discomfort felt by some Mexican girls taking AP courses also appeared to be rooted in pressures (which they suggest are exerted by their non-AP/AVID Mexican peers) for them to ‘not forget where they came from’, or not to act ‘white-washed’ – where a girl may be seen to take on markers of ‘Americanness’ such as becoming a ‘nerd’, having White American friends, or developing a more middle-class American accent – to the detriment or rejection of their Mexican culture and friends. Whilst it is important not to grant these kinds of ‘selling out’ accusations, and related ‘crabs-in-a-bucket’ analogy or Ogbu’s ‘acting white’ thesis, too much currency given the role of agency, a number of young women did quietly express concerns that they were at times under pressure not to appear *too* geeky, or too focused on their education, because they were seen to be ‘American’ traits. Some young

women seemed to feel therefore, both pride and awkwardness at their educational progress or growing friendships with White classmates and feel pressure to either minimise the performance of these in more publically visible spaces around campus, or concomitantly display or prove stronger attachment to their Mexicanness (through say, language, music or pop-cultural references). A couple of girls said this could result in their feeling somewhat ‘in-between’ friendship groups – they did not necessarily fully belong amongst their White class peers, and they were simultaneously alienated by their non-AP class Mexican peers.

Migrant Education aides and guidance counsellors commonly spoke about these kinds of peer dynamics at work between and within Mexican and White American groups – as well as the role of these in young women’s decisions about what classes to take, for example, or the degree to which they could/should visibly or publically perform particular ethnic and educational positionings. Adults working with young women often said they felt it was therefore important to try to manage some of these social expectations and pressures within the school context. Some of them tried, for example, to re-appropriate notions of success and hard work in specifically ‘Mexican’ ways, and encourage students to display pride, and not shame, in striving for good grades and positively engaging with school.

‘Struggle narratives’ for positive ends

Whilst some young women avoid being Othered as Mexican because of the pejorative stereotypes attached to some aspects of Mexicanness, other young women choose to highlight or amplify particularly ‘Mexican’ attributes and employ them as cultural capital. In this vein, the utilisation of ‘struggle narratives’ is especially interesting because of how it both perpetuates, reclaims and manipulates dominant narratives of Mexicanness – ones that can be simultaneously pejorative and empowering. In articulating spatialised struggle narratives, young women bring their family’s perhaps difficult or frightening migration journeys into the sanitised school space – an important part of constructing one’s personal and community history which may otherwise be silenced in a strongly White American school and U.S. education system.

As I discussed in Chapter Five, in framing who they are as young women today, they often spoke about the ‘struggles’ that they and their families had experienced during migration and settlement in the U.S. Whilst much of this was rooted in parental sacrifice, some young

women also developed their own struggle narratives that focused on personal experiences of 'hard living'. These could include (near or distant) memories of living in poverty, domestic violence, parental separation or death, drug or alcohol abuse, incarceration or involvement with gangs, for example. For their young age, some of these young women had experienced great suffering or the sheer everyday difficulty at times of being a new migrant family in a hostile region. Whilst the degree to which young women articulate such stories in the everyday (and outside an interview) is unknown, at times in their education young women may have found that they can strategically harness them to fit particular 'deserving poor/immigrant' idealisations that value 'striving to overcome adversity'. As I witnessed in a couple of cases, guidance counsellors may even encourage young women to highlight their past personal or familial difficulties in applications for funding or scholarships aimed at 'disadvantaged' groups, because of how these stories have previously been silenced or ignored. Such a validation of Mexican migration narratives at school in this way can have restorative effects in the present, but also enable future pathways to open up to young women. In the pastoral, 'safe' Mexican spaces such as counsellors' or Migrant Education offices, young women can be seen to be remade as Mexican survivors.

Whilst most young women who narrated these kinds of stories did so in relation to their *own* cases, often appearing very sincere and proud in the way they carried and conveyed such histories, I was struck by how commonly similar tropes arose in interviews. Although it is very likely given the research context that many of the young women will have experienced poverty and disadvantage of this kind, there is also the possibility that being encouraged to seek out, amplify and retell one's story of overcoming suffering, itself becomes a personalised version of the 'dominant narrative' around Mexicanness and hardship - one that young women may then choose to strategically perform as part of their public, educational identity in the school space and throughout their educational trajectories. Jocelyn, who understands herself to be someone who has experienced 'struggles' but embraced and built successfully upon them, explains how this process may work:

they want to succeed, they want to do better, they go to college, and you see them, and their testimony has to come out, like 'I went through obstacles to get to where I am', just because they're Mexican, kind thing. So I think that is a typical thing for us...there's like a *trend*, like a repetition...

Jocelyn (Emphasis in original)

Jocelyn's words are important because of how they demonstrate the ways in which individual young women's identities may be constructed in conjunction with broader community or dominant discourses around Mexican identity, pre- and post-migratory life, and educational futures. They can also be seen as emblematic of the ways in which narratives of Mexicanness can be constructed in both empowering and disempowering ways in the school space. In addition to their performing of academic and formal aspects of school, young women's identification processes are also tied heavily into how they relate (or not) to their peers, which the final section of this chapter will now explore.

8.3 Peer relationships and processes of Othering

As this chapter has already touched upon, constructions of identity and processes of Othering happen not only in relation to teachers and formal school apparatus such as the curriculum, but also through young women's interactions with their peers. Chapter Six and Seven explored how young women framed their gendered roles and degrees of spatial and sexualised freedoms, often in relation to their White American counterparts. This section aims not to revisit these differentiations per se, but instead to explore how young women's relationships with, and learning about, their fellow White American students, especially young women, take place in (and are somewhat manufactured by) the racialised and classed spaces of the school. It does this by first examining young women's experiences of social mixing across group boundaries, and then looks at how gendered and classed positionings may be reconstituted and contested through processes of viewing and being viewed in the school space.

8.3.1 Social mixing – '*friend*' friends and American friends

School is a place of socio-cultural meeting, inside classrooms themselves, and also during break-times across campus social spaces, such as playgrounds, cafeterias and libraries. Racialised class differences, as well as racialised gender assumptions, in the schools I conducted research in appeared to often operate in ways that suggested that most young women could articulate similar imagery around a social group hierarchy and the positioning they may be expected to occupy within it. Whether they necessarily occupied that position was another matter. Whilst visible and meaningful social mixing was difficult for some young

women, it was not impossible and many participants said (or ‘admitted’, in some cases), that they had friendships that crossed social group boundaries.

Classrooms segregation along attainment and linguistic lines, as explored above, seemed to re-inscribe racial and class boundaries between students, and yet could also force social interactions that may not usually happen of young women’s own volition. This was particularly the case for young Mexicans who were in higher-streamed, high achieving Advanced Placement (AP classes) – classes commonly perceived as being dominated by White students. When asked about who she ‘hung out with’, Jocelyn described her degrees of friendship with her White American AP classmates in comparison to her Mexican friends:

Jocelyn: For me...it’s basically more Mexicans. We do have American friends but they’re not like, how should I say, ‘*friend*’ friends? It’s kind of just like ‘hey, what’s up?’, and we usually meet them in like a period (class) and we only specifically talk to them *there*, in that period, if we do get along with them. But um, other than that, like if we see them around campus we’ll be like ‘hey, what’s up?’ and that’s about it. But yeah, basically my friends are mostly Mexican. We do have a couple of American friends that are here and there, but we don’t really consider them like *close* friends.

Caitlin: ok, how come, like why do you think most of your friends are Mexican?

Jocelyn: I think it’s because, most of my friends, we grew up together, we started off from when we were in diapers and so from there our family was kinda with their family and then they enrolled us in kindergarten, and then sometimes my mum would talk to another person’s mum and we’d have to stay a while and we’d have to learn to kind of adapt to each other and so that’s kinda how we had this bond growing up, so we just always just had this little ball of Mexicans, so that’s kinda, it’s mostly because we just *know* each other...

As Jocelyn illustrates, young women often said that they had different groups of classroom and closer *'friend'* friends, groups they tended to keep quite separate. Social meeting then, even amongst students who 'get along', does not necessarily equate to broader or deeper friendships that transcend the walls of the classroom. It was very rare for students to immediately offer explicitly racialised reasoning for their friendship networks, but when probed a bit more, they suggested that they were due more to commonalities with their Mexican friends, than to differences between them and White American girls. Young women commonly said that they chose to stick with Mexicans because they could connect over notions of shared culture, narratives of which were explored in Chapters Four and Five, and because they came from a tightknit ethnic community – 'a little ball of Mexicans' – who had been raised in the same spaces and in the same ways as them. In a school environment predominantly seen as belonging to an Other group, White American young people, young women indicated that they felt safe and comfortable with the girls they had grown up alongside, and perhaps those that they may perceive themselves to have similar future trajectories to.

Some girls were bolder in interviews and said that the perceived social and class differences between themselves and their White American peers were so great that friendships were unlikely to be able to bridge such gaps. Some suggested that they did not tend to have middle-class White American friends because they were assumed to be 'stuck-up', materialistic, and 'ungrateful' for their privileged socio-economic positionings compared with the post-migrant families that many Mexican girls came from. Furthermore, as was discussed in relation to gender and freedom norms in previous chapters, young women often articulated understandings of strong behavioural differences between themselves and young White women – expressions of which they witnessed, heard of, or were confronted about directly in the school space (elaborated on momentarily). Finally, because of potency of racialised and classed differences at work throughout the school space, I was assured by a number of counsellors that the policing of normative social groupings was mutually reinforced – they suggested that it was uncommon for middle-class White Americans to proactively include working-class Mexicans very much in their own groups.

Visible racial cues such as phenotype, as well as class-based signifiers such as styles of dress, appeared to be important factors in circumscribing friendship groups and degrees of social mixing. This follows Fergus, who found strong links between processes of identification, the salience of racial constructs, interaction or social mixing, and skin colour, amongst Latino students vis-à-vis other ‘White-looking, Hispanic/Mexican-looking, or Black/biracial-looking’ students (Fergus 2009: 339). This is a two-way process – at the same time as they are subject to racialising processes at school, young Mexican women themselves actively ‘reinstat[e] racial difference through their everyday spatial practices’ (Thomas 2005b: 1233). Therefore, whilst schools and policy makers may espouse notions of the success of multiculturalism, ‘super-diversity’ (Vertovec 2007) and social mixing, the realities of school spaces can be of segregated racialised and classed social groups (although there are certainly people who successfully manage the move between groups) (Hollingworth and Williams 2010, Hollingworth and Mansaray 2012).

Indeed, at the same time, individual young people resist social conventions and have friendships that transcend race and class boundaries. Juliana, for example, explained that she had friends from across her different classes, and socialised with them in their respective social spaces:

Caitlin: at school, who do you hang around with?

Juliana: um, mostly I hang out with...Latinos.

Caitlin: why do you think that is?

Juliana: maybe because...I usually was grown, by being with Mexicans...with Latinos people. In school. And we grow up together. So maybe that’s why. But when I’m in classes, I hang out with different people.

Caitlin: So are there different groups as well?

Juliana: yeah, like you see other groups and they have a mix. They have different people of different cultures...like coloured people, white people, Latins, yeah.

Caitlin: and do those groups ever mix together or overlap? Like will someone be part of two groups at the same time?

Juliana: yeah, like I sometimes do that. I'll be with my (mixed, classroom) friends for like twenty minutes, ten minutes and then I'll just leave and just go with other Mexicans, to Mexicans, yeah.

Caitlin: At school, are things like identity and group quite important? Like what group would you say you associate with more?

Juliana: I mostly associate with Mexicans. Because like my mom wants me to learn more like, big words in Spanish. Yeah. So I usually hang out with Mexicans. I'm like 'ok!!' (She laughs)

Juliana

Juliana's words demonstrate the spatial separation or distinctiveness of racialised and classed social groups on campus – in particular, how areas tend to be variously occupied by the 'nice White girls', the 'gangbangers', the 'smokers', the 'quiet Mexicans', and so on – and the visible physical movement that young women must employ to socially mix between their different friendship groups. Her case also illustrates that even when young women move between these various friends, it is often their Mexican friends that they feel the most in common with, and who they return to. As noted earlier in the chapter, a couple of young women said they felt under pressure at times to not be *seen* to be too friendly with White American girls because they might be accused by their Mexican peers of being 'White-washed' or having forgotten where/who they have come from – how much credence girls gave to these pressures varied across individuals. Furthermore, second generation young women like Juliana, who had grown up speaking predominantly English and some Spanish, often said that their parents encouraged them to socialise with other children of Mexican descent in order to deepen their knowledge of Spanish and in doing so, 'reconnect' with their Mexicanness – something their parents were at times concerned may be waning. As Chapter Five explored, and as noted in the section on language above, linguistic disparity between parents and children can result in tensions or concerns about loss of cultural or ethnic heritage, and affect their ability to communicate with each other. Both parents and young

women may realise, then, that through peer networks at school, young women can surround themselves with other Mexicans, and continue to develop a shared (albeit revised for the next generation) form of belonging rooted in a transnational social space like the borderland. In this way, the White American school space may be reformulated as somewhere to learn Spanish, and *become* (more) Mexican.

Therefore, both students *and* their parents can be seen to engage in racialising practices around Mexicanness, Americanness, belonging and social mixing – also demonstrating the ways in which beliefs and identities are constructed across different but intertwined home and school spaces. Adriana’s case similarly illustrates the ways in which racial Othering and distancing occurs in conjunction with parents, and not only in relation to White/Mexican relationships, but also along other race lines, in this case, in relation to a Black friend of hers:

...typical other Mexican families, you’re only allowed to be with Mexicans. Like you know, with me, I have African-American friends, I have Asian friends, and if I bring up [at home] such as an African-American friend, which I do have, she’s like one of my bestest friends, [my family] don’t like her, just because who, what she is. And...it kind of gets me mad, because they don’t know her. And they always tell me ‘oh, you can’t be with her, that African-American’. So it’s like, it hurts because they don’t know.

Adriana

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, Encinitas has a very small Black population, so the main racialising binary is between Mexicans and White Americans. However, intra-minority group Othering also takes place. Adriana said that her family’s rejection of her friendship with a Black young woman was down to her friend being perceived as ‘loud’ and ‘rude’, pejorative behavioural stereotypes that are commonly ascribed to Black women who are perceived to have too much ‘attitude’ (Blake et al. 2011, Evans-Winters and Esposito 2010, Townsend et al. 2010). Therefore, young women experience the school space not only as somewhere *they* undergo and enact racialising processes, but where essentialising discourses of *other* Others may be projected on to and through them by their families and friends.

Alongside the more subtle, covert and somewhat everyday processes of Othering that were at work, as this section has so far described, key aspects that informed young women's conceptions around social difference were defined moments of explicit confrontation around particular stereotypes of young Mexicans. The final section of this chapter now explores the impact of these on young women's senses of self.

8.3.2 Being viewed – Confrontations and challenging stereotypes

School space is somewhere where young women view Others and are viewed. As the beginning of this chapter detailed, young women tended to be profoundly aware of the stereotypes that abound about them, as well as about their families' post-migratory lives. These stereotypes often centre on notions of Mexicans not valuing education and living in poverty, or young women becoming pregnant and dropping out of school, for example. Many of them acknowledged that whilst some young women's lives did develop along these trajectories, they did not reflect everyone's case. However young women often felt that they were perceived in the same light, despite evidence suggesting the opposite, and at times they were subject to overt confrontations about these stereotypes. Stereotypes potentially impinge on all young Mexican women's lives since teachers may also treat them as 'at risk' of becoming pregnant, resulting in discriminatory teaching practices and heightened policing of young women's behaviours (Hyams 2000). These moments then, such as explicit conversations where White American young people might ask them if such imagery around Mexicans was actually *true*, forced young women to confront and often contest such narratives publicly. In the process they reaffirm and rework their own identities in relation to these narratives, as Dani's case exemplifies:

Dani: I remember one time when we were in the library and this [White] guy was sitting with a bunch of me and my friends, we're all Mexicans...I thought it was kind of rude for him to say this, but he's like 'oh, is it *tradition* for Mexicans to get pregnant at like fifteen?' And we're like '*nooo*', we got like *really* mad. And we're like 'nooo!' It's just some of them... it happens to white people, but...they don't *handle* it like we do. You know?

Caitlin: how would they handle it?

Dani: I don't know, I guess abortion. Cause, I've *never* seen white...actually! Yeah, I do, one white girl got pregnant but...

Caitlin: and what do Mexicans do, in difference?

Dani: well *I* think, I don't know if it's for a fact but most of them don't do that and they have the baby.

Caitlin: why do you think there's that difference? In how it's dealt with?

Dani: uh, I don't know... (pauses, then she seems to hit on an idea)... maybe because their parents are more... like, *liberal* I guess? And they let them? Get the abortions. But, I know my parents would *never* let me get an abortion (she laughs lightly)... they wouldn't. And I think it's worse for us to get an abortion, rather than to have a baby... it's just the way we think, I guess.

Caitlin: ok, and so when, for example, that guy said, 'is it tradition that Mexican girls get pregnant at fifteen?', why did it make you [angry]...

Dani: because it's not everyone... well... *not* everyone does that. It makes me *mad* when people just think that about girls. You know, that they're just going to get pregnant, and not finish high school and stuff...

Caitlin: it sounds like you and your friends all stand up for yourselves and say 'no, that isn't true', but do you think ideas like that are common? About Mexican girls? And do you think Mexican girls generally have the confidence to say 'no! That's not true'?

Dani: oh, well not all of them. Because, I don't know, well, because it *is* kind of true because there's like a *bunch* of girls that I know that got pregnant at an early age. And, I don't know (she sounds sad), some

of them don't care if [other people] say [negative] things [about them], but others do, I guess.

Dani

These moments can be unexpected and disconcerting for young women to experience when they least expect it. Places of social meeting such as the library were commonly where these conversations between White and Mexican young people played out, and some young women such as Dani commented on the irony of having pejorative stereotypes projected onto their bodies when there were present in a space of study and educational empowerment – thereby immediately disproving such generalisations about Mexicans. Young women are often affronted and offended by such interactions, but respond in different ways. People like Dani and her friends ‘get really mad’ and use opportunities like these to destabilise these views by presenting evidence to the contrary. At the same time as they acknowledge that a minority of Mexican young women may get pregnant for example, not *all* do, and furthermore, some American young women do, thereby challenging both sides of the binary.

Conversations such as these should be understood in a school context of power inequalities that operate on race, class and gender levels. Their more privileged social positionings mean that young White American men (or women) may feel confident or powerful enough to openly articulate their assumptions, perhaps in a passive aggressive, joking or teasing, but nonetheless offensive, way. This may particularly be the case in relation to stereotypes around dimensions of class and signifiers of wealth or poverty, given that Encinitas is a very socio-economically polarised city, as noted in the Methodology. I was aware of a number of cases where the parents of White students employed the parents of Mexican young women as house cleaners or gardeners. These external classed connections resulted in unequal power relations spilling over into young women's interactions (or lack of) with their parent's employer's children in the school space. In a context of broader socio-economic inequality, some young women struggled with managing these power dynamics, especially regarding how they and their parents were viewed by the middle-classes in the school space, as Laura, a Guidance Counsellor explains:

...we had a girl...she was in here in tears, so ashamed of herself. Her father dropped her off at school one morning in his rusty old pick-up. She met some of her school mates on the way in, and was so embarrassed by his appearance and 'shabby' worker look that she told them he was the gardener, not her father. She came in here later and sobbed, so ashamed of herself for lying like that and not being able to admit the man was her father. A lot of these girls really struggle, they're torn between pride and shame for their parents...

Laura, Guidance Counsellor

The presence of young women's visibly working-class parents at the periphery of school spaces, for example, may disrupt their conscientious cultivation at school of a different kind of socio-economic positioning – one that contests the dominant narrative that 'all poverty is Mexican' (Vila 2000: 124). As this chapter has illustrated, young women often feel the school as a space imbued with classed, gendered and racialised assumptions and inequalities. At times, they may feel the emotional toil of being subject to such dynamics and may cope by distancing themselves from such stereotypes at the same time as they partially perpetuate them. In other moments, like Dani above, and Mariana here, contesting such discourses operates to empower them:

There are times when people will be like 'oh 'cause you're Mexican you have this nice...' Like this one kid...was like 'oh, you're mum drove such a nice car, I didn't think *you people* would have one', or something. Yeah, this guy was a total meanie-head!! (She laughs). So he was a total butt! And it doesn't really hurt me...I would take it as like 'one day I want to make myself so much better than you... where you end up working for me, and you see how *much* I can achieve, it's not just white people who can achieve something, Mexicans can do it too'...I don't know, I like proving people wrong because then it makes me look good! (She laughs)

Mariana

Young women of Mexican descent then, who are confronted, either explicitly or implicitly with judgements about them, have a choice in how they cope or react to these kinds of

narratives. I was struck by how commonly young women spoke openly and powerfully about the ongoing presence of these discourses in their lives, and also how strongly they contested and re-appropriated them for their own good, and to positively construct their gender, race and class identities.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has evidenced that far from all ‘downwardly assimilating’, many of the young women who took part in this study exemplified an alternative, more positive picture – that young women from Mexican families are likely to be better positioned than their parents’ generation to make best use of the educational opportunities and future prospects available to them in the U.S. It showed that they can draw upon a range of formal and informal educational funds of capital to navigate the school space – both by employing what are understood to be ‘American’ and ‘Mexican’ attributes and resources. Developing upon the previous empirical chapters, it has shown how constructions of racial and ethnic identity, migration and struggle narratives, gendered and familial expectations, and discourses of freedom and sexuality, are performed by young women in the school space in relation to their educational identities and future aspirations. It has made the case for the school as a key site within and across which to explore identity construction, especially for young Mexican and other minority people given the socio-political discourses that abound about them.

The first section focused on the ways in which the school tends to be constructed as a White, English-speaking space that young women perceive to foster White educational success over that of Mexicans. It has demonstrated how, through language of instruction, tracking, the curriculum, and citizen-making, the school perpetuates constructions of social difference and reifies educational inequalities. It also showed that some young women are able to resist and overcome these inequalities in order to develop educationally successful and upwardly mobile trajectories for themselves. The section highlighted the usefulness and effectiveness – and also the limitations – of targeted support services for Mexicans, and demonstrated how young women themselves seem to really value such services. Finally it showed that in contrast to some of the stereotypes about not valuing education, many young women, particularly those represented in advanced classes, are on course to graduate high school and go on to have positive college or career trajectories.

The second section of the chapter then explored the role that young women’s relationships with their school peers plays in the construction of their relational identities. It examined how processes of social mixing (or not) between themselves and their White American peers

reinforced feelings of belonging or exclusion for them in the school space. It showed that class and racialised differences were particularly important for reifying boundaries, although at the same time, some young women reject social convention by fostering friendships across such boundaries. Finally, the chapter explored how explicit confrontations between young Mexican women and their White peers around dominant narratives of Mexicanness offend and frustrate young women, and at the same time how they provide ammunition for their empowerment – many young women take pleasure in ‘proving people wrong’.

Indeed, young women often exhibited pride in their achievements, especially because they were likely to be the first generation to graduate high school or go to college. Given the migration narratives at work, as explored in Chapter Five, many young women suggested their relative success and mobility in high school had rendered their parents’ journeys and ongoing sacrifices ‘worth it’, and they were prepared to ‘give back’ to their families and communities in the future. Furthermore, this chapter has demonstrated that young Mexican women are not the ‘pliant victims’ (Jeffrey 2010: 500) of the multiple and conflicting expectations of them, nor of the discriminatory school spaces they inhabit in the everyday. Instead, they have been shown to complicate and resist dominant narratives about them, and perform agency in the decisions and actions they take towards improving their futures.

Chapter Nine – Conclusions

Young Mexican women – two views:

‘Average socioeconomic outcomes [for immigrants] are driven down by the poorer educational and economic performance of children from unskilled migrant families, who are often handicapped further by an unauthorized or insecure legal status. Racial stereotypes produce...a negative self-identity for...Latinos, and racialized self-perceptions among Mexican-American students endure into the third and fourth generations. From a policy viewpoint, these children must be the population of greatest concern.’

Portes and Rivas 2011: 219

Janine: *I really want to go to UCLA, just because I like where it’s at...I kinda want to stay near.*

Caitlin: At the moment you live with your mum? How do you think you would feel about moving out of home?

Janine: I think...I’d take a really huge responsibility off my shoulders but at the same time, I’d put a bigger one on (she laughs), just for the fact that...my sister’s studying in Riverside...she’s going to move out and we only have two more [younger] siblings left, and my mum’s working hard so if *I* leave them, because I’m always taking care of them, and I work too, and I work for them in way, because my mum has to pay the rent and I have to pay for like, food and their expenses, so I think in that way I’d leave a huge responsibility like off my shoulders, but at the same time I’d take a really huge weight on because I know that my mum’s not going to be taking care of my brothers or like if they ate today, or what if they didn’t...So, two different...

Caitlin: and how do you think your mum would feel about you moving away?

Janine: I think she would be *really proud* in a way, knowing that I’m going to go and study, so in that sense she’d be really happy, but at the same time she would know that *she* would have to take a bigger weight on, knowing that I’m not going to be there, knowing that I’m not going to help her out anymore, instead I’m going to be helping myself out with my studies, but *she knew that it would be all worth it in a sense*, so she’d be happy.

Janine (Emphasis added)

Young Mexican women who live in the Southern Californian borderlands are subject to a range of dominant narratives *concerned* with their perceived lack of integration, upward mobility and ‘negative self-identities’. Undoubtedly, they are growing up in a socio-political context that places them, as the children of predominantly working-class, at times undocumented Mexican migrants, towards the bottom of the racialised and classed hierarchies pervasive in the region. Young women who grow up in the small beach cities and semi-rural towns of North County San Diego are the latest generation to be raised in a space that has a long history of discrimination towards Mexicans and Latinos. Anti-immigration and related *Anti-Mexican* sentiment is growing, as are the number of deportations from the country. The increasing frequency, visibility and audibility of protests such as the one that occurred in nearby Murrieta resonate loud and clear in the kinds of communities this study’s participants live in.

This thesis has shown that young Mexican women who live in the U.S.-borderlands engage with a range of structural processes that in various ways seek to control, limit and project particular narratives or expectations on to their bodies. These processes take myriad forms, and operate at all socio-spatial scales, from the intimacy of young women’s families, to the nation state. I have demonstrated that young Mexican women enact agency at these various levels and in a variety of ways to contest, rework and at times reproduce such processes and discourses. This study has found that young women of Mexican descent perform *transnational* identities in order to negotiate their intersecting gendered, race, class and age positionalities as they are played out: in their families and at home; in their schools; in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands; and in relation to their belonging in the United States nation more widely. Overall, I have shown that many young women, like Janine above, contrary to traditional ‘deficit’ perspectives of them, are making positive, strategic and informed decisions about their futures, and do so in ways that reflect transnational attachments to both constructions of Mexicanness and Americanness.

This concluding chapter will take the following form. It will first detail the literatures in which this study is grounded, and highlight where this thesis has sought to develop upon the gaps left by these existing bodies of work. It then revisits how I enacted my research methodology to answer the research questions, reviews how effective my research strategy was, and reflects upon how my positionality as British-Mexican woman has shaped the study throughout. I

then chart the evolution of the thesis through each empirical chapter, demonstrating how they develop upon one another and together offer a more holistic and nuanced set of images than much previous work, of the myriad experiences of identity formation for young women of Mexican descent living in the borderlands. Following this I consolidate the themes raised in the empirical chapters into a discussion of the study's overall findings as they are in line with the study's research objective, and respond to the research questions. I frame these findings in relation to the structure/agency negotiations that young women engage in at a number of spatial scales – within their families and in their homes, their schools, the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, and the U.S. more widely.

The lives of young Mexican women vary greatly, and their identities are informed by a range of intersecting gender, race, ethnicity, class and age dimensions. I therefore necessarily drew upon a diverse and yet interconnected set of literatures in order to understand more about how young women have so far been positioned, and also where gaps and limitations in this work lay. I began by interrogating the 'deficit perspectives' that have dominated studies about them, focusing especially on Portes and colleagues' theories of 'segmented assimilation', which arose out of the rightful critique of older theories of assimilation that proposed that all immigrants (*should*) undergo adaptation towards the host society – in this case in the United States – discarding attachments and identities rooted in their home countries, communities and cultures (Portes and Zhou 1993). Segmented assimilation instead held that different groups of migrants adapted to American society in different ways. They proposed that since second generation Mexican students tend to fare less well in education than other immigrant groups, Mexican post-migrants are most likely to 'downwardly assimilate' (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). These studies speculated not only on young Mexicans' educational and resultant career trajectories however, but also cast judgements on their 'negative self-identities' (Portes and Rivas 2011: 219), their pathological families and home cultures, and the poor quality of the lives they were fostering for themselves (López and Stanton-Salazar 2001).

I then illustrated how theories of transnationalism emerged as a critique of these more traditional assimilation frameworks, and explained how they instead grant salience to, and validate the myriad ongoing connections that migrants maintain with where and who they have come from. I made the case for transnationalism as a particularly useful framework for

thinking through Mexican identity in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands because of the effects of ‘immigrant replenishment’ (Jiménez 2008) and geographical proximity to the Mexican ‘homeland’. I showed, for example, how through forms of ‘intradiasporic’ and ‘second generation’ transnationalism, identities and notions of tradition, family and Mexicanness are able to be reformulated alongside notions of Americanness, for example, by the second generation – without this resulting in their so-called failure (Christou 2009, Lee 2011, Levitt 2009, Potter 2005). In fact, the chapter illuminated the ways in which post-migrants have been shown to be able to draw upon their specific social and cultural capital to thrive in the host society, and construct ‘transnational social fields’ in spaces such as the borderland, where simultaneity, and the experience of ‘being both’ become somewhat normalised (Basch et al. 1994). Most importantly, I demonstrated that a transnationalist perspective offers a more *holistic* lens through which to examine young people’s personal-social and educational-career trajectories in the borderland.

Following this, I made the case for an *intersectional* approach in the theoretical and empirical examination of people’s multiple, relational and contextual identities. I firstly illustrated the ways in which feminist researchers have destabilised masculinist tendencies within academia to ignore and silence the experiences and voices of women. I explored the status of ‘gender’ as unstable, and as a social construct, and yet also showed its ongoing power in re-inscribing inequalities, and being mutually constitutive of the construction of particular spaces. I also explored the ways in which migration and globalisation impact upon constructions of gender, and the ways in which women experience such processes in specific ways. I then examined how critical race scholars have theorised race and ethnicity as pervasive social constructs within hierarchies of power, which are rooted in notions of biological or inherent difference. I showed that despite broad acknowledgement of the social constructedness of race, the potential fluidity or ‘flexibility’ of racial identity performance is an option only available to some people – others are racialised in ways that attempt to force particular racial or ethnic identities on to them. The final section of the Literature Review illuminated recent scholarship on youth, education and identity, particularly as it has highlighted this period of the life-course as one of transition, *becoming*, and in-betweenness – and how ‘vital conjunctures’ present opportunities for change, contestation and creativity for young people’s identity performances (Johnson-Hanks 2000). I paid particular attention to the ways in which young women, especially Mexicans, have been portrayed variously as naïve,

disempowered, hyper-sexualised and deviant, whilst more nuanced and attentive work has shown them to also be proactive, engaged and empowered young people. I drew together these three rich bodies of gender, race and youth research not only because of the ways in which they all foreground the role of agency as it is enacted within and in opposition to potentially constraining structures, but also because I believe intersectional and transnational approaches complement each other when it comes to exploring notions of identity, fluidity, mobility, and hybridity.

In addition to drawing upon the rich scholarship these literatures currently offer, I also highlighted where certain gaps exist, and where my research contributes to developing these. I have been particularly keen to respond to the limitations of segmented assimilation theories when it comes to Mexican young people. Such partial and generalising images of them are dangerous because of the ways that such academic research may inadvertently add weight to politically-motivated – in a borderland context, anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican – sentiment, already keen to detract from post-migrant communities (Alba et al. 2011). In addition, much of the evidence for segmented assimilation theories, and also some transnationalist ones, have been drawn from quantitative analysis of school attainment data sets. Many fewer have had a primarily ethnographic focus, which given their proclivity to theorise highly personalised and affective topics such as identity and belonging is a limitation. Most work has also focused on urban neighbourhoods with long-standing Latino communities, but little has explored the suburban or rural geographies of young Mexican lives – my focus on these reflects new migrant destinations and illustrates the more polarised racial negotiations at work in a predominantly White school (much less socially mixed than other more urban study sites). Furthermore, whilst some key studies have explored young Mexicans' experiences of identity, there are relatively few which have explored the intersecting gendered, racialised and classed aspects of these for young women, and how these play out in particular home and school spaces (Bettie 2003, García 2004, Hyams 2000, Sánchez 2007a, 2007b). I therefore wanted to add texture and nuance to our knowledge about this particular population's experiences of growing up in the borderlands.

In the Methodology Chapter I set out the project's feminist, post-colonial and youth-related epistemological groundings and illustrated how I devised a research strategy in line with these. I then introduced in detail the research locale and the qualitative and ethnographic

tools that I employed to gather a rich set of data. Before I explained my analytical approach, I engaged in an in-depth reflection of my research strategy along with an examination of the impacts of my positionality as an in/outsider on the research process. Indeed, given the range of pejorative and subtractive narratives that circulate about young Mexican women, as well my repeated witnessing of the limitations and inaccuracies of such broad-brush labelling, I have endeavoured in this study to (re)present a more holistic image of their lives, drawing upon their own voices. My positionality as a partially Mexican person, a young woman, and a feminist, has had an important role in this process. Identity, social difference, education, immigration/‘legality’, gender, race, class and age, are experienced personally, politically, and relationally by all actors in the borderland, including myself. At the same time, I do not live in the borderland, and I am not a young working-class Mexican woman growing up there – I am an older, socio-economically privileged London-based researcher. I cannot seek to speak *for* the young women who took part in this study, but hope that by interweaving their voices with theoretical perspectives throughout this thesis’ empirical chapters, we have together been able to contribute a more nuanced picture of young Mexican life on the border than has previously been offered.

Beginning the thesis’ exploration of young women’s positionalities, Chapter Four examined young women’s choice of national and ethnic identity labels to describe themselves. It showed how labels operate as lenses through which to start thinking about young women’s historical roots/routes (Gilroy 1993) as formations or foundations upon which they build their current and future lives. The chapter demonstrated that most young women identify as ‘Mexican’ because of the significance they granted Mexican cultural heritage and Spanish language in their lives, and also often claimed such an identity via ‘parental proxy’ – that is, even though the majority were U.S.-born citizens, they claimed their Mexicanness via their Mexican-born parents. Others who acknowledged more of the ‘American’ aspects of themselves, including the technicality of their place of birth, their Southern Californian socialisation, and their English language, identified as ‘Mexican-American’ – although they were often keen to prioritise and prove their Mexicanness over notions of their Americanness. This chapter demonstrated the complicated processes of Othering that are underway in young people’s processes of identity construction, both vis-à-vis their Mexican families and friends, and also their White American school peers. Indeed, in addition to the importance of the home and family for senses of belonging, this chapter illuminated the

crucial role that the school space plays as a site for social meetings and the reconstitution of social difference. This chapter then operated as a springboard from which to explore the myriad other elements that make up young women's shifting identities – migration narratives and family history, gender roles in the home, degrees of freedom, and experiences of the school space, each explored in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Five I built upon young women's frequent references to their Mexican *formations* (Skeggs 1997) to examine the historical legacies of their Mexican heritage on their contemporary constructions of Mexicanness. I showed that young women strategically mobilise memories of Mexico for two divergent purposes. Firstly, young women engage in a process of Othering such that they construct Mexico as 'poor', 'backward' and non-urban, a move which functions to frame themselves as 'sophisticated' urbanised Americans. They simultaneously attempt however, to prove a strong ability to *relate* to those family members that remain in Mexico so that when they return to the U.S. they can claim an 'authentic' Mexicanness vis-à-vis their Mexican-American peers there. Also in Chapter Five I examined the ways in which young women perceive their parents to strategically employ their migration and 'struggle' narratives to instil in their children a desire to make use of the educational opportunities available to them in the U.S., and render it 'worth' their sacrifices, narratives also connected to their school identities, explored in Chapter Eight.

Given the importance of idealised notions of the Mexican *familia* in their discussions of identity labels, migration narratives and formations, Chapter Six examined how conceptions of *la familia* are manifested in young women's everyday lives. It showed how they commonly present *la familia* as a communal, welcoming, warm and caring environment that fosters meaning in relation to Mexican celebrations, culture and a sense of belonging. Whilst they often also associated it with expectations around fairly strict gendered family roles, I show that such ideals appeared to rarely be enacted fully or rigidly in practice. Young women's family and home lives were far from static – they described how negotiations were constantly underway between themselves, their parents, and their siblings around the fulfilment of particular roles, especially in relation to domestic chores. Indeed, whilst *la familia* operated positively for many young women in terms of the emotional and cultural sustenance they received from their families, the home space and related expectations around young

womanhood can also have more negative and limiting impacts on their lives, due to poverty or very strict parental expectations.

Chapter Seven explored themes strongly tied into those around domesticity and *la familia* in Chapter Six – those of gendered freedoms and discourses of sexual safety outside of the home. Here, I explored how young women formulate their identities in relation to three key dominant narratives; that young Mexican women have less freedoms than young Mexican boys; young Mexican girls have less freedoms than young White American girls; and how much freedom a girl is granted is tied into classed conceptions of ‘*how* they are raised’. I demonstrated that discourses of sexual safety and fears around teenage pregnancy figured strongly in parental reasoning for restricting their daughters’ spatial freedoms, particularly because of how such gendered ‘future-fixing’ could potentially destabilise the wider family migratory project to ensure a ‘better life’ for their children. Many of these rules relied upon the binary of the home space as safe and protective of young women, compared to the dangerous, ‘unsafe’ outside. I showed that some young women contested some of these normative expectations, especially if they experienced the home space as unsafe (and did not want to be there), or if their parents are unable to supervise them in the home due to work commitments. I also illustrated the thoughtful and strategic ways in which young women manipulated particular rules or boundaries set upon them to enact their own socialising or dating practices in liminal spaces between the home and school.

Whilst discussions of the school and the socialisation processes that young women undergo there were present throughout the other empirical chapters, in Chapter Eight it was important to explicitly examine the school as a key space within which young women construct their identities. Firstly, I demonstrated how formal educational structures operate to create the school as a White American and English-speaking space that is perceived to prioritise the educational development of White American children over Mexicans. I show that many young Mexican women experience racialisation and physical classroom segregation throughout such a space of educational inequality. At the same time I show that young women can benefit from being Othered as Mexican by accessing targeted support services aimed at them, including English language tuition, Migrant Education services, and tracking into ‘AVID’ classes. The second part of the chapter examined young women’s relationships with their White American peers, the degree of social mixing that occurred

between these groups, and the strong re-inscription of social difference along race and class lines. I showed that young women tended to maintain mostly Mexican friendship groups, both because they perceived themselves to share a common culture and set of life experiences, but also because they viewed White American girls to be very different from them. Some young women did contest social grouping conventions, especially those who were in Advanced Placement classes, although they were often careful about the degree to which they publicised these friendships in school social spaces. Finally, I explored how particular moments of confrontation between young Mexicans and Americans, where young women were challenged to explain or contest stereotypes about Mexican young women, have a profound impact upon young women's gender, race and class identities that they perform at school, but also on their drive and aspiration for the future. This chapter offered a more complicated picture of young women's experiences of the school space than other scholarship has perhaps allowed, and showed that despite the multiple discriminatory processes at work against them, many young women are fostering positive, relatively upwardly mobile lives and futures for themselves, rendering their parents' migratory journeys and contemporary 'struggles' 'worth it'.

In conclusion, this thesis has explored how young women of Mexican descent who live in the U.S.-Mexico 'borderlands' construct their identities across the everyday spaces they inhabit. I have shown how their multiple axes of identification – along gender, race and ethnicity, class, and age lines – intersect and converge such that they perform inherently and strategically *transnational* identities. I have shown that at the same time as they grow up influenced by, and are increasingly part of, their 'American' societies and their 'mixed' borderland Southern Californian communities, they also work hard to stay connected to their 'Mexican' heritage and cultural identities.

Exploring the young lives of Mexican post-migrants and their families is an important and timely task. The ongoing 'replenishment' of immigrant Mexicans in the U.S.-Mexico borderland heightens the salience of race for all who live there. Southern California, and the U.S. more widely, are witnessing the growth in anti-immigrant, anti-Latino, and anti-Mexican sentiment throughout public, policy and media arenas. Mexican communities, regardless of length of time or 'generation' in the U.S., legal status, and socio-economic positioning, are affected by the increase in social meetings between Others, and the ongoing re-inscription

of social *difference*. Their processes of identity construction and their senses of belonging in their communities and in the U.S. are potentially destabilised, ruptured and also revitalised.

Young Mexican women occupy a particularly fragile and fraught positioning in this landscape of social change. As a group, they are subject to a range of dominant narratives that abound about their brown, female and youthful bodies. Deficit perspectives, the primary lenses through which they have been viewed, hold that they are ‘failing’ to ‘assimilate’ into American society, that they do not value education, and that they are likely to descend into and remain part of the ‘rainbow underclasses’ for generations to come. As a result of the ways in which they experience gendered and classed racialisation, they face institutionalised discrimination and alienation in spaces such as the school. ‘Moral panic’ around their perceived hypersexuality and propensity for becoming ‘teen mom school drop-outs’ also justifies their surveillance and policing in home, street and school spaces.

But young Mexican women are individuals, and their lived realities are much more complicated, diverse, and often positive, than many of these (however subtly) racist, sexist and classist deficit perspectives would allow. Certainly, many young women experience difficulties in their families’ post-migratory lives, and they face a number of institutional barriers to their upward mobility. Narratives of *struggle* – poverty, abuse, separated families, alcohol and substance misuse, gang involvement, school drop-out, and teen pregnancy, for example – were present to varying degrees in some young women’s life histories. Many more of them, including those who were more socio-economically comfortable or stable, articulated feelings of Otherness and exclusion due to their Mexicanness – even when they were succeeding at school, for example, they commonly felt it to be a space of inequality. At the same time, many young women I encountered appeared to also experience a range of positive aspects of being a young Mexican, and to varying degrees American, woman. Many of them spoke about a strong connection to their Mexican roots and notions of a shared intradiasporic culture, felt pride and strength in their Mexican families, and employed the cultural capital resulting from these to various social and educational ends. Instead of ‘failing’ to achieve some kind of imagined singular American identity, they appeared more often to be constructing valid and valuable transnational lives – that acknowledged their myriad Mexican, American and in-between hybrid selves – in a region that may otherwise seek to devalue them. This thesis has aimed to explore and shed light upon some of these

complexities as they play out for young Mexican women in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, and calls for scholars to continue to listen to these young women as they become an increasingly visible and empowered group within U.S. society.

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Appendix 1. 2010 Demographic Data – Encinitas, CA.

Adapted from:

DP-1, Geography Encinitas City, California

Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010

2010 Demographical Profile Data

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census.

| Subject | Number | Percent |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Race | | |
| Total population | 59,518 | 100.0 |
| One Race | 57,482 | 96.6 |
| White | 51,067 | 85.8 |
| Black or African American | 361 | 0.6 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 301 | 0.5 |
| Asian | 2,323 | 3.9 |
| Asian Indian | 351 | 0.6 |
| Chinese | 600 | 1.0 |
| Filipino | 353 | 0.6 |
| Japanese | 447 | 0.8 |
| Korean | 218 | 0.4 |
| Vietnamese | 136 | 0.2 |
| Other Asian [1] | 218 | 0.4 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 91 | 0.2 |
| Native Hawaiian | 39 | 0.1 |
| Guamanian or Chamorro | 21 | 0.0 |
| Samoan | 2 | 0.0 |
| Other Pacific Islander [2] | 29 | 0.0 |
| Some Other Race | 3,339 | 5.6 |
| Two or More Races | 2,036 | 3.4 |
| White; American Indian and Alaska Native [3] | 288 | 0.5 |
| White; Asian [3] | 876 | 1.5 |
| White; Black or African American [3] | 156 | 0.3 |
| White; Some Other Race [3] | 344 | 0.6 |
| | | |
| Race alone or in combination with one or more other races: [4] | | |
| White | 52,974 | 89.0 |
| Black or African American | 618 | 1.0 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native | 729 | 1.2 |
| Asian | 3,390 | 5.7 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander | 253 | 0.4 |
| Some Other Race | 3,792 | 6.4 |
| | | |
| Hispanic or Latino | | |
| Total population | 59,518 | 100.0 |
| Hispanic or Latino (of any race) | 8,138 | 13.7 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|
| Mexican | 6,412 | 10.8 |
| Puerto Rican | 186 | 0.3 |
| Cuban | 91 | 0.2 |
| Other Hispanic or Latino [5] | 1,449 | 2.4 |
| Not Hispanic or Latino | 51,380 | 86.3 |
| | | |
| Hispanic or Latino and Race | | |
| Total population | 59,518 | 100.0 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 8,138 | 13.7 |
| White alone | 4,186 | 7.0 |
| Black or African American alone | 45 | 0.1 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone | 142 | 0.2 |
| Asian alone | 32 | 0.1 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone | 10 | 0.0 |
| Some Other Race alone | 3,155 | 5.3 |
| Two or More Races | 568 | 1.0 |
| Not Hispanic or Latino | 51,380 | 86.3 |
| White alone | 46,881 | 78.8 |
| Black or African American alone | 316 | 0.5 |
| American Indian and Alaska Native alone | 159 | 0.3 |
| Asian alone | 2,291 | 3.8 |
| Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone | 81 | 0.1 |
| Some Other Race alone | 184 | 0.3 |
| Two or More Races | 1,468 | 2.5 |

[1] Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

[2] Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

[3] One of the four most commonly reported multiple-race combinations nationwide in Census 2000.

[4] In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population, and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

[5] This category is composed of people whose origins are from the Dominican Republic, Spain, and Spanish-speaking Central or South American countries. It also includes general origin responses such as "Latino" or "Hispanic."

Appendix 2. In-depth Interview Schedule

Place of birth and length of time in San Diego region

1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you been living in the San Diego region?
3. Where would you say you 'grew up'?
4. Where were your parents born?
5. If not born here, how long have they been in the US?

Contact with and memories of Mexico

1. Do you ever visit Mexico?
2. If so, how often do you go?
3. What reasons do you go for and what do you think of Mexico?
4. Where do you go and who do you visit?
5. When you're here, do you have spoken or virtual contact with friends or family in Mexico?
6. What kinds of things do you speak about with people in Mexico?
7. What do you tell them about your life here in the US?
8. What do they tell you about life in Mexico?
9. What do you think about their life there in Mexico?

Mexicanness and multiple identities

1. How would you describe yourself? Mexican, American, Mexican-American, Chicana, Latina. Any of these? More than one of these? And why?
2. Do you think there is a difference between what these terms mean or are they the same thing?
3. What do you think makes someone 'Mexican'?
4. What things about you do you think make you Mexican?
5. What is it like growing up in a Mexican family in the US?
6. Do you think you have Mexican and American sides to you?
7. Are they the same or how do they differ?
8. How do these parts of you fit together?
9. Do they sometimes clash or disagree with each other?
10. If so, how do you 'solve' this issue?

Expectations and norms

1. What do you think young women, like you, are expected to 'be', or how do you think young women, like you, are expected to 'act'?
 - by their parents and family in the US?
 - by their family in Mexico?
 - by their friends?

- by other people in their community such as the church?
 - by people outside of their community?
 - by wider society and the media?
2. How are these expectations conveyed/communicated to you?
 3. What do you think of these expectations? Do you think they make sense?

Embodiment of expectations and norms

1. Do you think these expectations apply to you/are relevant to you?
2. Do you think you fulfill these expectations of you? If not, why not?
3. Do you ever talk to your family about these expectations?
4. If you disagree with these expectations, have you ever disagreed with any of them openly? If so, were there any effects of speaking out?
5. Do you feel free to 'be yourself' or act how you like?
6. Do you think you act the same everywhere you go? Such as at home, at school, out in public?
7. Do you think you act the same or differently when you are with other people? With your parents, your grandparents, your friends, or strangers?
8. What do you think of your friends' behaviour? Do you think they act in the 'right' way?

Gender and Sexuality

1. What should a 'proper' Mexican woman be like?
2. What should a 'proper' Mexican man be like?
3. Do you think there are differences between how Mexican women and men are supposed to be?
4. Do you think Mexican women and Mexican men are equal/have equal rights and power?
5. Do you think you get treated in the same or different ways to your brothers or male family, if you have them? What do you think about this?
6. What do you think about young women having boyfriends?
7. What do you think about marriage?
8. What are some of the expectations around young women and having sexual relations?
9. Do you think Mexican and American views of sexuality are the same or do they differ? If so how?

Education and Work

1. What level of education have you reached?
2. Are you happy with the education you are receiving/you received?
3. What kinds of educational opportunities do you think you have/had?

4. Do you have any desires or hopes for your educational or work career?
5. Do you think you have the same opportunities as your siblings? Friends? Non-Mexican peers? If not, why not?
6. Do you think you'll go to university? Why or why not?
7. Do you work? If so, as what?
8. Do you enjoy your work?

Families

1. What type of relationship do you have with your family/parents/siblings? Are you close? Do you get on?
2. Do your parents pass on values or rules to you, or tell you how they think you should be?
3. Do you think things have changed for young women since your parents were growing up?
4. If they grew up in Mexico, do you think there is a difference to how they were brought up and how you have been brought up in the US?
5. What kind of relationship do you have with extended family?

Appendix 3. Project Information Sheet

This Project Information Sheet is for Young Women of Mexican Heritage

Coming of age in the United States, Becoming Mexican (-American)?

A study of how young Mexican women engage with ideas of womanhood, family and 'Mexicanness' in San Diego, California.

Why am I doing this project?

Young women of Mexican heritage who live in San Diego, California, are all very different – they choose to live their lives in different ways, and they choose to describe themselves using various identity labels. This project is exploring what young Mexican women think about issues such as young womanhood, family, education and “Mexicanidad”. I would like to hear about what kinds of influences Mexican and American cultures have on their lives as they are growing up. This is a social project that hopes to enable young women to tell their own stories.

Who Can Take Part?

Any young 'Mexican' woman between the ages of 16-19 years old who lives in San Diego or surrounding areas, can take part. When I say 'Mexican', it means you may be from a Mexican family, you may have been born in Mexico or in the United States, or call yourself Mexican, Mexican-American, Latina, Chicana or any other Mexico-related description. If you think of yourself as Mexican in some way then you may take part.

What would be involved?

If you choose to take part I would like to ask you some questions about your thoughts on:

- being a young woman
- ideas of family
- experiences of education
- what being 'Mexican' means
- what 'Mexican' and 'American' cultures are and how they influence you

The interview will be very casual and you are free to tell me as much or as little as you like about your views and ideas. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and our conversation is not a test or assessment.

When and where will this happen?

The interviews are taking place between January and July 2010. You can choose a time and place for us to meet.

What will I do with the information?

If I have your permission, I will record our conversation with a digital voice-recorder. I will 'transcribe' our conversation, which means I will type up the recording into a word document. Later on, I will use the information I have collected to write my PhD thesis, and possibly other articles or reports for people or journals who are interested in the subject.

How will I protect your information and your privacy?

When I type up our conversation, I will change all names and words that might personally identify someone so that the record of our conversation is made *anonymous*. I will keep the original voice recordings and transcriptions in a secure place at my university, University College London (UCL). Nothing in the written report will identify who you are. If you wish, I will give you a copy of the transcript so that you can be sure that I've written it accurately and that no-one in it can be identified by others.

What if you change your mind about taking part?

You can change your mind at any time about taking part. You can choose not to take part, and you can leave at any time during the interview without having to explain your reasons to me.

Who am I?

I am Caitlin O'Neill Gutierrez and I am half-English (my mom) and half-Mexican (my dad). I am doing my PhD at University College London (UCL) in England, and I am in San Diego for one year gathering information (through interviews and group discussions) for my thesis. I am supervised by two Senior Lecturers at my university and my project has the approval of the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and my departmental ethics committee.

If you would like to take part you can contact me at c.oneill@ucl.ac.uk or you can call me at any time on **619-246-2050**. Alternatively, you can write to me at 'University of California San Diego, Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, 9500 Gilman Drive # 0528, La Jolla, CA 92093-0528'.

I am very happy to answer any questions you have about the project, and I look forward to talking with you ☺

Appendix 4. Informed Consent Form

Interview Date: / /10 Time: Duration: DS:
Location: Part. Sourced Via: Part. No.

Informed Consent Form

To be distributed along with the Project Information Sheet. The participant and the researcher each keep a copy of this consent form.

Project Title: Coming of age in the United States, Becoming Mexican (-American)?

A study of how young Mexican women engage with ideas of womanhood, family and 'Mexicanness' in San Diego, California.

Name of Researcher: Caitlin O'Neill Gutierrez

If you agree with the statements below, please sign your name at the bottom of the page:

- I have been given full information about the aims of the research on the 'Project Information Sheet' and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I have been given information with the researcher's name, a contact number, and an address if I need more information.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can stop, or withdraw, at any time, without giving any reason.
- I understand that I will to be referred to by a 'pseudonym', or a false name, in any publications arising from the research, such as my thesis.
- I understand that taking part, or not, will not affect my school grades or assessment, or my employment.
- I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to have my voice, views, opinions and responses digitally recorded.
- I agree to take part in this study.

| | | |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Name of Participant | Date | Signature |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Researcher | Date | Signature |