This is to certify that the
dissertation entitled

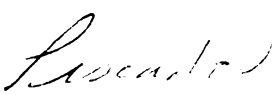
Engendering Transnational Ties: Mexicanas and the Other Sides of Immigration, 1942-2000

presented by

Luz María Gordillo

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Ph.D. degree in History



Major Professor's Signature

August 12, 2005

Date

DATE DUE	DATE DUE	DATE DUE
05 12 08		
06 03 08		
DEC 02 2008		

ENGENDERING TRANSNATIONAL TIES: MEXICANAS AND THE OTHER SIDES OF IMMIGRATION, 1942-2000

By

Luz María Gordillo

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of History

2005

ABSTRACT

ENGENDERING TRANSNATIONAL TIES: MEXICANAS AND THE OTHER SIDES OF IMMIGRATION, 1942-2000

By

Luz María Gordillo

This research analyzes the origins and development of an immigrant transnational network between 1940 and 2000 for women and men from San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, in Western Mexico, and Metro Detroit in Michigan.

It maps out the history of Mexican immigration to and from San Ignacio and Detroit and the construction of transnational communities from the 1940's to 2000. This analysis is focused on gender and Mexican women's construction of social networks as they wove a social tapestry that sustained immigration. Through my investigation I reveal the previously negated historical context on immigration studies, and bring to light the reinterpretation of social, cultural, political and economic structures. This study provides a gendered analysis of the multiple relations negotiated between men and women and how they affect and are affected by immigration. It contends that women in particular are the matrix by which the transnational communities were created and sustained.

This study analyzes the beginning of immigration from San Ignacio with those who migrated as braceros to California working mostly in agriculture, and their decision to migrate to Detroit and join the industrial frenzy of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. It also analyzes notions of sexualities and introduces the concept of "transnational sexualities." Transnational sexualities challenges assumed definitions of transnationalism that have fragmented immigrant's experiences into two different sets of

understandings – one in their community of origin and the other in the US. Transnational sexualities refer to their experiences as one set of constructed notions that are integral to Mexican immigrant's experiences in San Ignacio and Detroit.

This study illustrates how with the arrival of women to Detroit, a new set of social networks began to emerge that juxtaposed the ones men had begun to establish. These social networks ultimately became the pillars that sustained the transnational community. As more and more women entered the flow of immigration and the labor force both in San Ignacio –usually informally and unpaid – and in Detroit – in several industries such as auto parts and *tornillo* factories – they began to challenge traditional gender roles and to construct new meanings of notions of "womanhood," "motherhood," and "femininity." I analyze how the politics of citizenship come into play when Mexican immigrants describe their sense of belonging to a particular space. I revisit the politics of identity through the immigrant experience and the different representations that Mexicans have created in relation to immigration to and from Mexico and the United States.

Para mi mamá, Titi, Luz María de los Cobos Torres,

Para mi abuela, Gangue, Guadalupe Torres Illanes,

Y para toda la gente de San Ignacio que
compartieron un pedacito de sus vidas...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This process has been a long and very enlightening journey. I would like to thank all San Ignacians-Detroitians who very kindly shared their narratives, their homes, and their endless generosity with me. I appreciate the lessons they taught me about myself, and their constant reminders that as a Mexicana immigrant, I have experienced similar sentiments, which include pain and struggle; and it is all right to recognize and acknowledge them as part of what we would all consider a successful narrative. *Gracias a* Juan Javier Pescador for his guidance and his encouragement to challenge my thinking, and for his willingness to share his commitment and research on Mexican immigrants. As my chair and advisor he has overseen my academic development and has helped me become a compassionate and dedicated historian as well as a better educator. To my committee members, David Walker, *que en paz descanse*, who believed in me from the beginning and spent many hours reminding me that I could actually write. I would also like to express my gratitude to Lisa Fine, a great feminist labor historian who supported me throughout my years at Michigan State University and trained me to become not only a feminist but also a women's historian. To Dagmar Herzog whom I owe a great deal for introducing me to the joys of the History of Sexuality, and for constantly reminding me that it takes a lot of patience and dedication to actually "get it." Dagmar constantly pushed me to question and challenge my cultural baggage and I thank her immensely for that. Leslie Moch, gracias, for supporting my research and creating the Immigration Seminar in the Department of History.

I am eternally grateful to my *compañeras* at Washington State University, Pavithra Narayanan, Desiree Helleger and Laurie Mercier. *Muchas gracias* a Laurie Mercier who provided the right atmosphere for my writing and for standing with me in the trenches and dedicating hours of her time to read and revise this manuscript. I also thank Candice Goucher who stood by me and provided emotional and financial support for my research. In Lansing, thanks to my sister and spiritual guide Jolee Blackbear for her endless support and her dedication to the editing of this manuscript. I thank her for the comfort and compassion provided on those difficult times when I doubted my survival of this process.

I express gratitude to the Graduate School at Michigan State University for the financial support to ALANA students. I received from the Graduate School the Competitive Doctoral Educational Fellowship, several research enhancement awards, travel funding, and emergency fellowships that allowed for the completion of this project. I thank the Department of History at Michigan State University for the conference travel funding awards and to Janet Roe-Darden for making all these processes easy. I also thank all the archivists in the Relaciones Exteriores archives in Mexico City, the INS office in Detroit, and the NARA branch in Chicago for sharing with me their knowledge.

Finally, *gracias a mi familia*, to Gangue whose strength and integrity kept our family afloat. To my *hermano* Ricardo for reminding me of the difficult emotional process of becoming a Mexican immigrant in the United States. And finally, to my *mami* who has as much right as I do to lay claim to this work. I am eternally grateful to her for the many hours spent working on this project; living with me in San Ignacio and most importantly for helping me see Mexicanas through a different lens. She has been the best

role model anyone can ask for. Her feminist approach to life – when not even academicians had decided on the meaning of what feminism meant – has guided me through my life. Gracias. *Dankeshön* to Volker who stuck with me through tough times. And especially to my nephews, Bruno and Bernardo, in the hope that they grow up as feminists and share with women a more egalitarian world. And to Eloisa, my niece, whom I know will find the feminist light and discard all the useless cultural baggage she has been growing up with.

LMG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I
LA FIESTA DE LOS AUSENTES 17

CHAPTER II
TRANSNATIONAL SEXUALITIES 47

CHAPTER III
THE POLITICS OF MOVEMENT 88

CHAPTER IV
TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITIES 123

CONCLUSIONS 154

APPENDICES 167

BIBLIOGRAPHY 173

Introduction

"Don't call me gringo, you fucking beaner
Stay on your side of that god dam river
Don't call me gringo, you beaner
No me digas beaner, Mr. Puñetero
Te sacare un susto por racista y culero
No me llames frijolero, pinche gringo puñetero"
Molotov[1]

(Don't call me beaner you fuck
I'll scare you shitless for being a racist and an asshole
Don't call me beaner you fucking gringo)

As the magnificent pure thoroughbred horses began to align, Alejandro prepared the Virgin of Guadalupe's flag which he will proudly hold as he led the immigrant's parade riding his father's beautiful white horse. Alejandro was wearing a grand *charro* costume in black adorned with silver coins that ran on both sides of his pants and on the sleeves of his jacket. His sombrero was embossed with gold and silver thread that matched perfectly the rest of his attire including the big silver belt buckle and his immaculate cowboy-style boots. His white thoroughbred horse raised its head while his gorgeous mane moved carelessly to the rhythm of his footsteps. Behind Alejandro, an entourage of magnificent multi colored horses followed in perfect synch as if their paws had been perfectly coordinated, except for a few *charros* here and there that showed off their amazing animals by slightly sinking their *espuelas* into the animals lower back so that the horse responded by jumping up and down and kicking its hind legs. The endless line of *charros* and *charras* - mostly young girls sitting on female riding saddles that force both of their legs to dangle onto one side of the horse – was followed by the meticulously built allegoric trucks that recreated passages of the bible. Most of the

[1] (P) & (C) 2003 Surco Records J.V. Manufactured and distributed by Universal Music Latino 420 Lincoln Road Suite 200, Miami Beach, FL 33139 through Universal Music and Video Distribution. Printed in U.S.A.

returning immigrants from Detroit had been carefully selected by Father Ignacio Puga to participate in this highly stylized and perfectly orchestrated procession especially designed to celebrate the Virgin of Guadalupe and the town's heroes and heroines: the immigrants.

Right before the elaborate trucks, a group of young girls dressed in exact same outfits holding a plastic ball that matched their attires announced the bible passage the truck was representing. This group of young girls added a surreal touch to this theatrical and perfectly choreographed religious and social ritual that celebrated San Ignacio Cerro Gordo's *fiestas patronales* (religious festivities) the last week of January. Following the trucks, a group of antique cars serveed as platforms for the beauty queens that had been carefully selected to represent San Ignacio in these grandiose celebrations. All around the streets, San Ignacians stood in awe as they acknowledged the welcoming of their fellow *paisanos* that resided in Detroit. A long endless line of returning immigrants followed the Aztec dancers as they moved to the rhythm of a drum and the jingle bells tied to their ankles.

The immigrants returning from Detroit waited their turn to walk proudly and display their success as immigrants through their attires. Children were pristinely dressed with the latest Detroit fashion styles, adorned with gold bracelets featuring the Virgin of Guadalupe medals that also embellished their necks with a thin gold chain. Young women took the opportunity to transgress forbidden spaces by wearing revealing dresses and blouses while older women looked over their shoulders with disapproval and disdain since their final destination was going to be the church. Father Ignacio along with the regional bishop prepared a special mass just for *los hijos ausentes* (the absent children:

the immigrants). That year, 2003, they were going to thank the immigrants for their grand contribution of $14,000 to purchase a gigantic image of Jesus Christ that had already been placed inside the church next to the main altar and beneath the colossal painting of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

This vibrant procession symbolized the transnational community constructed in San Ignacio and in Detroit. In this carnival of success men and women displayed their understandings of manhood and masculinity, – as *charros* and heads of the parade – sexuality and femininity, – transgressing spaces through revealing outfits and posing as beauty queens – and older women as keepers of tradition and culture, - supervising both young men and women. As they entered the church and took their sits, the *cholo* sat side by side to a sexy dressed young woman, an older man wearing a Chicago Bulls jacket with a cowboy-style hat and matching boots, and an older woman wearing a more conservative attire adorned with religious iconographic jewelry that underlined her religious affiliation to the Catholic Church. It was within this transnational context that I began my research in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo in the Western part of Mexico and the midwestern city of Detroit.

When I embarked upon this research, I knew for a fact that something in the official history about Mexican immigration to the United States was certainly missing. Scholars of immigration in the past have focused mainly on the official narratives about immigration policy and its political effects. Recently, scholars have begun to explore the immigrants' narratives and the intersections of gender, class, and race. Academicians within their own disciplines have begun to excavate from under all these misrepresented ruins the experiences of people who have been conveniently rendered politically,

economically, socially and culturally invisible. These immigrants, while marginalized have, at the same time, been the center of political and economic discourses throughout the twentieth century. Despite the fact that in the first three decades of the twentieth century there was an average annual flow of around 46,000 immigrants,[2] Mexican immigrants took center stage with the inception of the Bracero Program in 1942, one of the first official bilateral labor agreements between the United States and Mexico.

Paradoxically, however, Mexican immigrants are conveniently erased and/or praised depending on the economic, political, social and cultural atmosphere in the United States. The Mexican immigration discourse has become the property of politicians, academicians, the media, religious leaders, and political groups. Thus, in as much as the United States has placed an historical demand on Mexican labor, its existence has been manipulated to satisfy the "appropriate" constituents. Conveniently, Mexicans are visible when in demand for cheap labor and rendered invisible when it comes to the allocation of human rights and access to social and public resources. Instead, Mexican immigrants, in general, are considered socially invisible and persecuted for their immigration status despite the continuous aggressive recruitment from the U.S. to meet the large demand for low wage labor.

For a socially invisible individual, the Mexican immigrant is talked about a lot. Since the 1940s, with the creation of the Bracero Program, the United States has played a sadistic game with its ideologies and approaches toward the importation and deportation of Mexican labor. Hence, the economic atmosphere in the U.S. has dictated the image of the Mexican immigrant. A constellation of exploitative agriculturalists, industrialists and

---

[2] Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 34.

conservative politicians who capitalize on cheap labor glorify the image of Mexicans as the "good Mexican worker." Opposite to this perspective is the Mexican as demonized and perilous predator who endangers the future of the United States by threatening its political, economic, social and cultural "integrity." Mexican immigrants have become the quintessential scapegoat in times of economic recession or economic depression. They are converted into ultimate "dementors"[3] accused of sucking up economic and natural resources, and contributing to white racial impurity through miscegenation, and diluting the cultural "integrity" of the United States. Historically, immigration policies have reflected clearly this sado-schizophrenic behavior against and pro-immigration.[4] Understanding the endemic schizophrenic, xenophobic, racist, and exploitative position the United States has historically taken when dealing with the "Mexican immigration problem" is very complex and beyond the scope of this analysis. The intent of this investigation is to unpack and map out several factors involved in Mexican immigration to the U.S. focusing on the dialectics that are involved in the every day lives of Mexican immigrants as they construct transnational meanings directly linked to the intersections of gender, sexuality, nationality, and citizenship.

---

[3] Creatures in J. K. Rowling's novel *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* that literally inhale the life out of humans through their mouth. J. K. Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Arthur A. Levine Books: An Imprint of Scholastic Press, 2001).

[4] In the twentieth century, recruitment of Mexican immigrants during World War I and through the 1920s curtailment during the economic crash of the late 1920s and during the Great Depression of the1930s when thousands of Mexicans, citizens and non-citizens, were indiscriminately deported. Also, In the 1940s the aggressive recruitment of labor with the Bracero Program and the de-humanized and criminal curtailment in the 1950s with the launch of Operation Wetback. With all the civil movements in the 1960s the Bracero Program was killed followed by The Immigration Reform Control Act that encouraged residency by granting amnesty to Mexican immigrants who could prove prior residency in the United States, but at the same time IRCA implemented measures to curtail more immigration by penalizing employers who hired undocumented immigrants and allotting $400 million to the Border Patrol to increase its strength and power. For more information on immigration policies see: Douglas Massey S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002); Jana Evans Braziel. "History of Migration and Immigration Laws in the United States," *Comparative Literature Good & Evil* (Spring 2000).

My research is a case study of a small town in the Western part of Mexico, San Ignacio Cerro Gordo,[5] in the state of Jalisco, and the immigration to and from the large midwestern city of Detroit, Michigan. It is a microscopic vision of a macroscopic phenomenon. In a globalized economy we are not exempt from analyzing the transnational trade of technology, information, culture and communication without incorporating the importation and exportation of human beings, traditionally referred to as labor. Labor is usually defined as productive activity remunerated by a fair wage that allows the worker or producer to provide for herself/himself the basic necessities to survive in a particular society. As globalization expands, this definition of labor is no longer valid; labor has turned into a wholesale exploitation of one portion of the population of the world over another, unfortunately, the latter being the majority. This analysis reveals that it is imperative to look at immigration as part of the global component of trade and that we act to promote and demand change so that transnational communities flourish and are compensated fairly within this global economy. While we continue to ignore issues such as immigration or the selling and buying of human beings as commodities, we are not only supporting this exploitative and dehumanizing system, we are also forgetting how we can construct our lives with dignity and decency.

In the pages that follow I will attempt to share and interpret the memories of all the Mexicanos and Mexicanas that gave me their time and patience to help me understand their discourse and to explain it to myself and to the reader. They risked much in describing their movement between two contested countries and trusted me in protecting their legal vulnerability. While traveling to and from San Ignacio and Detroit, San

[5] From this point forward I will refer to San Ignacio Cerro Gordo as San Ignacio, which is how Mexican immigrants refer to their sending community.

Ignacians transformed public and private spaces by constructing their understandings of culture, politics and economics, and through this process have shaped and reshaped their notions of masculinity, femininity, motherhood, fatherhood, their place in the labor force and in their families. I will map out the history of Mexican immigration to and from San Ignacio and Detroit and the construction of transnational communities from the 1940s to 2000. This analysis is focused on gender and Mexican women's construction of social networks as they wove a social tapestry that sustained immigration. Through my investigation I reveal the previously negated historical context in most of the literature addressing Mexican Immigrants in the U.S., and bring to light the reinterpretation of social, cultural, political and economic structures. As a gender historian, I am interested in gender relations as a set of social relations negotiated between men and women and how they affect and are affected by immigration. Moreover, I consider immigration not only as a social process but also as a subjective conceptualization of living experiences that include agency and resistance within contested terrains in the United States. I will focus on women in particular since Mexicanas are the matrix by which the transnational communities were created and sustained. As I mentioned, previous studies negated the importance of women's roles in the immigration process and this study adds to the literature that looks at the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and citizenship that constructs new meanings that are fluid and permeable.

I began my research in Patton Park in Detroit by attending the soccer games on Sundays. The park on Sundays and the importance of leisure in Mexicanas' lives provided me with a vital source to begin this work. I found that in this social space, Mexicanas developed a social network from which their voices traveled transnational

distances between Detroit and their communities of origin. I explored the ways in which Mexicanas reclaimed a public space where they constructed their social positioning in the United States. Mexicanas shared collective immigrant experiences as a result of contesting and resisting discriminatory and hostile social, political and economic practices in the United States. As a result, Mexicanas used this space to shape and reshape notions of "womanhood," "motherhood," and "domesticity." Moreover, these spaces became centers where women made important decisions linked to their health, jobs, family, and their lives both in Detroit and San Ignacio. Being at the park provided me with an opportunity to observe a piece of their everyday lives. It also gave me an opportunity to meet Mexicanas from San Ignacio and provided a point of departure to investigate the process of immigration more deeply.

Mexican immigration is not just a social process as several academicians like Jorge Durand and his co-writers have stated in their sociological analyses.[6] Mexican immigration is about Mexicanos and Mexicanas constructing culture, politics, and economics and contributing to the society that we all share in the United States. For over forty years Chicana historians struggled with deconstructing and reconstructing the peripheral history of Chicanas/os in the United States and have set the stage for researchers like myself to approach history through a variety of lenses. Vicky Ruiz,[7] Antonia Castañeda,[8] Deena Gonzalez,[9] Alicia Gaspar de Alba,[10] Gloria Anzaldua,[11] *que*

---

[6] Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, Nolan J Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003)

[7] Vicki L Ruiz, From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[8] Antonia Castañeda, "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History: The Discourse, Politics, and Decolonization of History." *Pacific Historical Review* 61:4 (November 1992).

[9] Deena J González, *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880* (New York, Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1999).

en paz descanse, Emma Perez,[12] and many more, broke from traditional racist and sexist schemes, and have turned the map upside down as it were, from South to North, and from the periphery to the center reclaiming academic space from a Mexicana/Chicana's point of view.

I am also indebted to the work of extraordinary social scientists that brought gender to the fore of immigration studies in the United States, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo,[13] Rhacel Salazar Parreñas,[14] Glen Nakano,[15] Maxine Baca-Zinn,[16] and Gloria González-López.[17] I am also grateful to the seminal work by Jorge Durand and Douglas S. Massey who began their own journey with the study of immigration in the early 1980s and continues to supply us with invaluable statistics and information on Mexican immigration to the United States. Additionally, I have been heavily influenced by the path breaking work of historian Juan Javier Pescador who has focused on the immigrant experience and has contributed much to the image of immigrants as agents of their own history rather than passive observers.[18] These are a few of the researchers that have attempted to redefine the historiography and literature on Mexican immigration. Previous

---

[10] Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *Chicano art inside/outside the master's house: cultural politics and the CARA exhibition* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 1998).

[11] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

[12] Emma M. Perez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

[13] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, ed. *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999).

[14] Rhacel Salazar-Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[15] Evelyn Nakano Glen, Issei, *Nisei, war bride: three generations of Japanese American women in domestic service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

[16] Maxine Baca Zinn, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Michael A. Messner, eds. *Gender Through the Prism of Difference* (Boston : Allyn and Bacon, c2000).

[17] Gloria González-López, "De madres a hijas: Gendered Lessons on Virginity across Generations of Mexican Immigrant Women." In Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette, ed. *Gender*

[18] Juan Javier Pescador, *The New World Inside a Basque Village: The Oiartzun Valley and Its Atlantic Emigrants, 1550-1800* (Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2004).

academicians failed to analyze more deeply the formation of social networks from an historical point of view and from the everyday experiences by Mexicanas/os.[19]

Even though we have come a long way from ignoring women in the literature, we need now to understand the basic components of what social networks mean to the people that construct them. The concept of "social networks" contributes to the understanding of the construction of transnational communities. We have grown accustomed to reading about social networks that sustain immigration, but as researchers we have failed Mexicanas/os in understanding what meanings they construct within these networks. In this analysis, I deconstruct these support systems in order to understand how Mexicanas have built upon the bracero generation's first attempts to initiate the movement of San Ignacians to Detroit. I contend that Mexicanas are the main protagonists in weaving and supporting the social networks that are inherent in the construction of transnational communities.

My work relies primarily on oral histories. Mexican immigrant voices have often been spoken for, but seldom listened to. Archival documents have also guided me through my investigation of the history of Mexican immigration. I relied on media and popular culture such as music, comic strips, poems, and short stories, which I wove into the narrative. It is my intention that by bringing the histories of Mexican immigrants to the fore it will inspire a more respectful way of thinking about immigration within a globalized economy that continues to widen the economic gaps between "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries. As Urvashi Butalia states in her book *The Other Side of Silence*, " [...] But to me, the way people choose to remember an event, a history, is at

---

[19] Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930); Paul Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1933).

least as important as what one might call the 'facts' of that history, for after all, these latter are not self-evident givens; instead, they too are interpretations, as remembered or recorded by one individual or another."[20]

Through anecdotal memories, Mexicanos and Mexicanas lead the story in the course of a journey into understanding religious beliefs, social and moral modes, transgressions and ultimately an understanding of what being a San Ignacian/Detroitian means within a transnational context. The first chapter will map out historically the relational changes and influences of the religious festivities in San Ignacio. Through the influence of immigration, small local pious celebrations transformed into an elaborately choreographed and orchestrated theatrical production to welcome *los hijos ausentes* (the absent children - immigrants). Chapter one carefully analyzes the lives of Mexican immigrant women and men as protagonists of demographic, social, cultural, economic, and political changes in their own histories as they constructed their transnational community in San Ignacio and Detroit. I begin my work by demarcating the beginning of San Ignacians' migration with those who migrated as braceros to California working mostly in agriculture, and their decision to migrate to Detroit and work on industrial jobs throughout the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. Additionally, this chapter traces the important economic ties that the first San Ignacians began to establish in Detroit and their community of origin; thus, forming limited social networks that created a continuous economic connection between San Ignacio and Detroit.

Chapter two analyzes notions of sexualities and introduces the concept of "transnational sexualities." Transnational sexualities challenges assumed definitions of

---

[20] Urvashi Butalia, *The other side of silence: voices from the partition of India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 6.

transnationalism that have fragmented immigrants' experiences into two different sets of understandings – one in their community of origin and the other in the U.S. Transnational sexualities refers to their experiences as one set of constructed notions that are integral to Mexican immigrants, experiences in San Ignacio and Detroit. I focus on how women and men see themselves in relation to one another and their gender appropriate behavior within ideas of courtship and sexual practices. Mexicanas from different generations narrate how they construct notions of femininity, womanhood, and motherhood as they question the use of contraceptives versus their religious beliefs that support large families. This analysis challenges generalized assumptions and ideologies that rely on differentiations of Mexico – as backward and traditional – versus the United States – as modern and progressive.

Chapter three maps out how with the arrival of women to Detroit, a new set of social networks began to emerge that substituted the ones men had begun to establish. These social networks ultimately became the pillars that sustained the transnational community. As more and more women entered the flow of immigration and the labor force both in San Ignacio –usually informally and unpaid – and in Detroit – in several industries such as auto parts and *tornillo* factories – they began to challenge traditional gender roles and to construct new meanings of notions of "womanhood," "motherhood," and "femininity." Moreover, through these networks San Ignacians continuously replenished the social and cultural life they formed in Detroit. Mexicanas reveal what social networks mean to them and how those meanings changed through the creation of transnational communities.

In chapter four, I analyze how the politics of citizenship come into play when Mexican immigrants describe their sense of belonging to a particular space. I revisit the politics of identity through the immigrant experience and the different representations that Mexicans have created in relation to immigration to and from Mexico and the United States. Since the 1970s, San Ignacians have tried to become a municipality in the State of Jalisco, but it was not until 2003 that they were able to accomplish their goal. Mexicanas/os in Detroit and in San Ignacio collaborated in order to accomplish this ambitious goal thus emphasizing their affiliation to their transnational citizenship. Transnational politics and the active economic participation from Mexicanas/os in Detroit helped create this new municipality in the state of Jalisco, in Mexico. As a very contested territory, immigration to *el Norte* has historically meant different things, and has also influenced the minds of both Mexicans and Euroamericans through the creation of cultural, political, economic and social ideologies. In as much as the United States' schizophrenic approach to Mexican immigration has affected both Mexicans and Euroamericans, Mexicans' sentiments toward immigration to *el Norte* have also underlined a love-hate relationship affected by hostile practices in the United States and by immigrants' romanticized ideas of their homeland. As the controversial Mexican band *Molotov* clearly stated at the beginning of this introduction, antagonistic sentiments on both sides of the border have created hostile sentiments that continue to not only recycle pernicious stereotypes of Mexican immigrants, but that have also authorized rampant criminal acts against Mexicanas and Mexicanos through unreasonable immigration policies.

Mexican immigrants, in economic and political discourses, are and have been "invading" the United States and creating various economic crises that affect all "American" citizens. Beginning in the early twentieth century, the most popular arguments were – and continue to be - that Mexican immigrants take jobs from Euroamericans, they decrease wages, and they are endlessly draining welfare resources. These arguments have appeared and disappeared in different discourses depending on the general economic atmosphere in the United States.[21] Contrary to the previous arguments of Mexicans being dangerous invaders and active participants in the economic fate of the country, cultural and social stereotypes of Mexican immigrants include images of being backward, submissive, apathetic, dirty, defenseless, lazy, and ignorant individuals.

Since the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these binary oppositions and contradictions are exemplary of the attitudes that Euroamericans have had toward Mexican immigrants and immigrants from groups that are not European. In other words, Euroamericans have created an "Other" immigrant. Contrary to the very core of the ideology that immigrants gave birth to the United States, this "Other" immigrant is a continuous threat to the country's well being.[22] Ideas of citizenship have been shaped by

---

[21] A good example of these economic pitfalls "instigated" by Mexican immigrants is the beginning of the 1930s with the advent of the Great Depression when massive deportations of Mexicans took place, violating their civil rights and aggressively dispossessing them of human dignity. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) initiated Operation Wetback in 1954 under the pretext that undocumented Mexican immigrants were depleting wages and taking jobs from Euroamericans. Thousands of Mexicanas/os were deported –ironically, however, they were signed as braceros by the U.S. Department of Labor and "sent back to the very fields where they had been arrested in the first place!" Douglas Massey S., Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 37.

[22] In the late nineteenth century, 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act curtailed immigration from Asia, and later in early twentieth century, 1907 the Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan ended almost all-Asian immigration. The Immigration Act of 1917 designed to exclude Asian Indians and in 1924 the Immigrant Act, which finally excluded Japanese from immigration and stated that only "whites" could be naturalized as citizens. In 1934 the Tydings-McDuffie Act excluded Filipinos from immigration. These are but a few immigration policies that discriminated against "Other" immigrants who were non-white in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

political climates; who does and does not belong to the nation-state are important definitions in understanding national ideologies. Citizenship in the United States has historically shaped images, ideas, and the mostly hegemonic ideological productions of Mexican immigrants from heroes to criminals, from reputable *señoritas* to dirty greasers.[23]

Transnational communities such as the one analyzed in this work have moved spaces along with social, economic and political ideologies to these two distinct locations in Mexico and in the United States. Detroit has become San Ignacized and San Ignacio has become Detroiticized therefore constructing a whole new set of understandings that are imperative and inherent in the way Mexicanos and Mexicanas construct their lives in both San Ignacio and Detroit. Like Siamese twins these two particular spaces have been transformed by the immigrant experience and vice a versa, thus creating an innovative and dynamic culture that expands constructions of gender, femininity, masculinity, motherhood, fatherhood, laborers, and so on. Notwithstanding, in these processes a series of contradictions and tension continuously arise challenging Mexicanas and Mexicanos to constantly recreate, adapt, accommodate, shape, contest, and create new meanings and understandings of the environment that surrounds them.

The following work will interpret my findings while excavating remnants of memories, memories of people, memories of every day lives, simple lives, complex lives, lives of people who are not invisible and who have, the right to appropriate their own discourse and challenge, contend, share with you and me, how the history of Mexican immigration and their experiences as immigrants needs to be told. It is their discourse,

---

[23] Arnoldo De León. *They called them greasers: Anglo attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

not mine, that I am trying to convey within the pages of this testimony, it is their memories in their own time that will speak in the following chapters.[24]

[24] All of the translations in the text are mine, and the names of San Ignacians have been changed.

Chapter I

"Pues allá sale sobrando que digamos esto porque aquí el patrono es San Ignacio de Loyola pero curiosamente como que no lo queremos la virgen como que le dijo "haste que ahí te voy." La Virgen de Guadalupe, entonces ni si quiera el dia 12 nos esforzamos para hacer algo, es como que la virgen dice "yo me voy a esperar para enero para que me hagan toda la fiesta," y es cuando la peregrinacion es decir las mananitas y cuetes y lo que se puedan como primeras comuniones y tambien viene el senor obispo para enero. Y pues tratamos de cumplir porque el dia 12 es fiesta nacional, es el dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe y no podemos quedarnos sin hacer algo. de echo es bonito pero no lo que podria ser. Entonces la Virgen practicamente es la patrona, llevarla a Detroit no es necesario porque pues en cualquiesr templo esta. O sea que también en eso se gana. Entonces si fuera San Ignacio de Loyola si habia que llevar una replica a Detroit, pero como es la Virgen de Guadalupe pues no hay necesidad de hacerlo."
Father Ignacio Ramos[1]

Well it is not necessary to take a religious image to Detroit because here originally the patron saint is San Ignacio de Loyola, but curiously it's like we don't love him, it's as if the Virgin of Guadalupe told him "get out of the way because here I come." The Virgin of Guadalupe, we don't even make an effort to celebrate the 12th of December it's like the Virgin of Guadalupe said, "I'm going to wait until January so that they celebrate my day with all the festivities," and that's when we have all the peregrinations, and we sing happy birthday, and we throw fire crackers and we celebrate first communions and the bishop comes in January. And well we try to celebrate at least a little bit on the 12th of December since it is a national religious holiday, it's the day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, but not how the rest of the country does. Therefore it is the Virgin of Guadalupe that has become our patron saint so there is no need to take her image to Detroit because she is already there, in most of the Catholic churches. If it were San Ignacio de Loyola most likely we would have to take his image to Detroit but since it is the Virgin of Guadalupe there is no need to do so."

La Fiesta de los Ausentes

Gas, Gas, Gas, Omnigas con el gas se vive mejor; the different tunes of the trucks that sell gas and bottled water, plus the sounds of the bells from the ice cream carts, the vendors of string beans and the scrubbing sound of women sweeping the streets early in the morning, along with the strong smell of the cleaners they use woke me up at daybreak every day in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, Jalisco. These morning sounds in sharp contrast with the nightly bum, bum, bum, the glass shaking from my windows along with my chest following the bass from the loud combination of *música ranchera* and hip hop music coming from car stereos of young men and women became my everyday jingles.

Sounds, smells, and the cordial salutations from San Ignacians colored my life in

[1] Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001.

San Ignacio Cerro Gordo. Looking out the window every morning and watching women sweep and mop the sidewalks and the street I could not help but smile (that is when I got used to being awakened at 5:00 am) and I would imagine a Broadway show having all these women move to the rhythm of an old Ginger Roger's tune. However, my morning anachronistic fantasy helped me cope with everything that had so much contrast to what I am used to after living in the United States for so many years, and growing up in Mexico City. Cleanliness in San Ignacio is an obsession, particularly because San Ignacio has *tierra colorada*, (red earth) which continuously blows into people's houses and their respective sidewalks that have become an essential part of the house. Tiles adorning houses' facades or living room floors, extend onto the sidewalks, so that when one is walking down the street to the nearby market or the plaza or the church one is literally stepping on people's quarters, a stretch of personalized street; public space with an intimate private taste to it. *La fiesta de los Ausentes* (the festivities for the immigrants) has metaphorically undergone the same process of change, from a private, intimate survival-like experience inside a household to a public, extravagant, luxurious ritual that has become representative of what immigration to the United States means to the transnational communities in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, Jalisco and Detroit, Michigan.

In a magical cloud of gray smoke, the priest, Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, steps out in his immaculate white outfit on one side of the main avenue in San Ignacio that is separated by a beautifully landscaped line of trees. The cloud of smoke, however, extends to both sides of the street and in the background we can hear the rhythm of some estranged drum along with jingling bells. The atmosphere takes on a surreal quality as the cloud extends and suddenly without warning (to those of us who are experiencing the

festivity for the first time) the firecrackers begin to burst. There are lines of firecrackers placed at certain distance ahead of the priest so that every time he steps out of the smoke the noise is deafening as he continues his foggy path followed by the endless smoke. Once the noise and the smoke dissipates, the bishop clothed in black with a fuchsia pileolus on his head steps forward followed by an entourage of six priests all dressed in white tunics imprinted with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. They all walk very slowly while shaking people's hands on their way – San Ignacians are ecstatic to have the regional bishop visit once a year for the January religious festivities. Followed by the religious troupe, a group of Aztec dancers move to the rhythm of drums and the jingle bells they have wrapped around their ankles. This grandiose procession is literally possessed by the Virgin of Guadalupe who seems to be everywhere in the costumes that all the participants are wearing, in the flags they hold, the beautifully framed paintings and posters, and of course more personalized in the *relicarios* and medals that people wear around their necks. There is no doubt this is a display of a major ritual to celebrate on the one hand the patron saint of San Ignacio Cerro Gordo the Virgin of Guadalupe, and on the other, the more recently venerated heroes and heroines of San Ignacio, *los hijos ausentes* (the absent children): the immigrants. Los *hijos ausentes* is a local customary term used for those San Ignacians that have left to live in the U.S. but includes those who have moved to major cities in Mexico like Guadalajara or Mexico City.

On a sunny morning in 1948, Don Chuy crossed the U.S.-Mexican border for the first time. He was not alone; Don Chuy was one of the thousands of Mexican men that were hired under the Bracero Program, initiated in 1942. Little did Don Chuy know, however, that he would be the first San Ignacian who was to travel to Detroit and plant

the seed for one of the most dynamic transnational communities in Michigan. Don Chuy was hired initially to work in California – the stepping-stone for most Mexican immigrants working under the Bracero Program (or not) – for the picking of tomatoes, onions, and citrus fruits. "We would go from here to Tijuana and from there we would be hired and they would take us in (the United States)."[2] Like many Mexicans, Don Chuy traveled back and forth between the United States and Mexico for several years.

This chapter historically maps out the relational changes and influences of the religious festivities in San Ignacio and how they were transformed by immigration from small local pious celebrations to an elaborate perfectly choreographed orchestrated theatrical production to welcome *los hijos ausentes* (the absent children - immigrants). Taking a close look at these celebrations one can begin to understand what transnationalism means to communities. This chapter analyzes the beginning of immigration from San Ignacio with those who migrated as braceros to California working mostly in agriculture, and their decision to migrate to Detroit to join the industrial frenzy of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. This chapter also traces the important incipient economic ties that the first San Ignacians began to establish as they took different industrial jobs in Detroit and how these new economic advantages began to impact their community of origin. As a gendered labor program, the Bracero Program provided young male San Ignacians with a medium to seek better opportunities that allowed many of them better economic positions when they formed families. Consequently, as they began to form social networks they not only created a continuous economic connection, but also the creation of transnational communities. With the arrival of women to Detroit, a new set of

[2] Don Chuy, interview in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, November 2001. " [...] entonces era cuando nos ibamos de aquí a Tijuana y de ahí nos contrataban y nos metian para dentro." My translation.

social networks began to emerge that substituted the already established networks by the bracero generation thus becoming the pillars that sustained them. As more and more women entered the flow of immigration and the labor force both in San Ignacio –usually informally and unpaid – and in Detroit – in several industries such as auto parts and *tornillo* factories – they began to challenge traditional gender roles and to construct new meanings of notions of "womanhood," "motherhood," and "femininity," to name but a few. Moreover, through these networks San Ignacians continuously replenished the social and cultural life they formed in Detroit.

The Bracero Program was one of the first official bilateral labor agreements between Mexico and the United States, recruiting Mexican labor to work in agricultural fields and the railroad temporarily in the United States.[3] While the war in Europe demanded Euroamerican manpower as well as African American, and Mexican Americans to help the United States become a world power, the need for social survival in the United States demanded Mexicanos' manpower to support and allow the United States to triumphantly arise as a world power after World War II. But, unlike the soldiers acclaimed as heroes and martyrs of Democracy that were combating Europeans and Japanese on the other side of the oceans, Mexicanos were discriminated against and the stipulations of their contracts constantly violated – those contracted under the *Programa Bracero* – depriving them from civil rights that they were legally entitled to under the program's guidelines. Even though the Bracero Program was referred to as a "guest

[3] There were several labor agreements starting in the nineteenth century with the construction of the railroad both in Mexico and in the United States. President Taft and President Diaz had a labor agreement for Mexican labor to work in the U.S. Also, during WWI, again Mexico and the U.S. entered into a labor agreement for Mexican labor to work in the U.S., however neither one of these agreements set out a systematic structure and/or institutionalized the agreement by assigning specific governmental branches to take responsibility in both Mexico and the United States as did the Bracero Program. Moreover, these agreements were unilateral where the United States delineated the economic and political contours of both programs.

worker" program and the U.S. as the "host" country, these terms came to signify the complete opposite by creating an open space where Mexicanos were constantly humiliated and mistreated, working under deplorable conditions, and earning meager wages. The *Programa Bracero* laid the foundation for a self-sustained exploitative and corrupted mechanism against Mexican labor supported by both the United States and Mexico.[4]

Historically the institutionalization of migration and the commoditization of Mexican labor has had a tremendous impact affecting economic, political, social and cultural spheres in Mexico and the United States. It is important to analyze some of the processes by which both governments sanctioned not only the overt exploitation of Mexican laborers, but also the corruptive measures they encouraged through the different institutions used to administer and control the operation of the Bracero Program, especially between the years of 1942 through 1954.[5] The first 14 years of the program's existence was the primary time for both nations to negotiate and shape the outlines of the international agreement. Both countries received a lot of resistance from Mexican Nationalists who believed that the progress of Mexico could only be sabotaged by the

---

[4] For more on the Programa Bracero see: Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, Nolan J Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003); Manuel García y Griego, "The Importation of Mexican Contract Laborers to the United States, 1942-1964" in David G. Gutiérrez, eds. *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States* (Wilmington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc. Imprint, 1996), 45; Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican labor and the second world war: Braceros in The Union Pacific Northwest 1942-1947* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1990); Richard Craigs, *The Bracero Program: Interest Groups and foreign policy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971); Ernesto Galarza, *Merchants of Labor, The Mexican Bracero Program Story, An Account of the Managed Migration of Mexican Farm Workers in California 1942-1960* (Santa Barbara: California, McNally & Loftin, Publishers, 1964).

[5] Letter from the Vicecónsul de México in the Centro de Recepción de California, "Continued violations to the worker's contracts and irregularities that the agents from USES (United States Employment Services) are the main complaints that our Mexican laborers are filing. An example is how our workers are being forced under threats by a "tyrannical" government representative to sign contracts with specific companies. These is a violation of their contracts that stipulates that our workers are free to choose their employers." 5 June 1952. TM-3-8. ARE *Conditional Permit for Mexican Agricultural workers.*

loss of thousands of laborers both urban and agricultural; they were also well aware of the recent massive deportations from the U.S. of Mexican immigrants during the depression years. Wholesale civil rights violations against Mexican immigrants, Mexican Americans and of many Chicana/os by U.S. authorities were rampant. Thus Mexican politicians, artists and businessmen interceded, albeit in vain, to stop the exportation of Mexican laborers.[6] Paradoxically, most of these same individuals in the U.S. agreed with their counterparts in Mexico; however their reasons for opposition were radically different. Mexican Nationalists were also privy to the constant racist treatment that their co-nationals were persistently exposed to by U.S. Nativists who in turn were afraid that Mexican immigrants would "contaminate cultural life and the social fabric of the U.S."[7] The Bracero Program also serves as a starting point to outline the schizophrenic behavior the United States has demonstrated with the constant aggressive recruitment and curtailment of Mexican immigration from the 1940s to the close of the twentieth century.

---

[6] Letter from the Mexican Consul in Detroit to the Mexican Embassy in Washington DC condemning the deplorable conditions of Mexicans in Detroit due to the *paralización de la industria automovil* (Auto Industry's decay). The document underlines how Mexican families have to recur to public services. It also states that the U.S. government gives preference and access to public services to U.S. citizens, and because of this situation many Mexican families are forced to work in beet fields where they get paid horrid salaries. The document asks Relaciones Exteriores to stop the flow of Mexican immigrants to the U.S., 7 March 1930. W-76-3. AHGE

Memorandum written by a group of "concerned citizens" to the President of Mexico, 1945. "[...] Hace algún tiempo, decíamos antes, los braceros volvían a México. Hoy es común que se alejen del país y tan pronto como obtienen algunos recursos, hacen venir a sus familiars y allegados, y lo que fué en un principio la expatriación de un hombre, se convierte para México en la pérdida de toda una familia. [...] En nuestro caso, en que en lugar de sobrante de población tenemos una gran deficiencia aunque parezca inhumano debería negarse toda protección al que se aleja del país, poniendo la mayor pare de obstáculos a esta emigración creciente." IV-657-63. AHGE

"How can Mexico fulfill the demand for labor in the U.S. without affecting Mexico's economy?" Migratory Labor Conference, Mexico City, 16 July 1951. TM-1-1 ARE *Fondo de Braceros: Contratación de Trabajadores Agrícolas en EU.*

[7] " Institutions of dominant culture further subordinated Mexicans (Midwestern Mexicans in post World War II) by representing them as foreigners and outsiders, whether they were recent immigrants or U.S. citizens. Underlying such representations was the continued unequal political and economic relationship between the U.S. and Mexico, a legacy of colonialism." Dionicio Nodin Valdés, Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 177.

In as much as one can use the word "recruit" within the context of the program's constant violation of civil rights then one can also set the stage under which to conceptualize and understand the word "curtailment" that has criminally not only violated civil rights, but has catapulted sanctioned criminal behavior by the authorities in the United States particularly the Border Patrol and the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service), along with the United States Department of Labor, and currently Euroamerican civil society (like the presently supported Minuteman program) against Mexican immigrants.

In a document written by a few braceros that came from the states of San Luis Potosi, Jalisco, Hidalgo, and Mexico City they describe the conditions, which the average bracero underwent. They were hired to work in a ranch in Arkansas with a contract for 40 days. On the tenth of October of 1951, approximately 400 braceros were singed up in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico. They were lined up in a Military Base and given assigned numbers and consequently interrogated by U.S. immigration officials. In a letter written to the Office of Mexican Foreign Relations (Relaciones Exteriores), a group of braceros expressed the way they were mistreated by officials whom they believed some were of Mexican origin. After questioning, they were sent to the first floor and told to undress for the medical examination that they described as *muy riguroso* (very rigorous). They were administered with vaccines, and all of their personal data including their fingerprints were filed. Consequently, they were taken to a large dining room where they had dinner financed by the U.S. government: *Chilaquiles* (pieces of tortilla with tomato sauce) with beans and piece of bread. The braceros were then transported by bus to the *Campo de Concentración de Braceros* (recruitment camp) of Harlingen, Texas. Upon

their arrival, they were told to settle for the night on the floor without access to blankets or sleeping mats.

The next day, the braceros realized there were approximately 3,000 more braceros waiting to be hired by mostly farmers. After breakfast, farmers, supervised by immigration officials, would proceed to pick and choose laborers at their convenience, therefore leaving until the end the oldest and weakest looking braceros, some of which had been in the camp for more than eight days, ultimately getting hired because of the demand for labor. The latter braceros would comment on the mistreatment and methods of intimidation that the U.S. authorities would inflict upon them, narrating how every night soldiers with machine guns conducted rounds where they slept. While at the camp, the braceros that wrote the letter also described how a few braceros were forced to eat their supper naked as a disciplinary method for some unknown reason.

The document also describes how these braceros were hired under contracts of 40 days and when their contract expired, the employer along with the braceros went to the Mexican consulate in Memphis to renovate the working contracts. However, one of the employees in the consulate, according to the letter, asked for a bribe of $100 per contract. The braceros were sent back to Mexico hardly making $60 to $75 in the forty days of their contracts, partly because of the low paying wages, but also because when it rained they would not work and consequently were not paid, yet the employer would charge them ninety cents per day for food, which he would withhold from their paychecks.[8]

Despite the fact that most Mexican immigrants were aware of these violations, Mexicanos continued to travel back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico under the

---

[8] Letter from braceros to Relaciones Exteriores, 19 November 1951, TM-3-1, ARE, *Acuerdo Básico Internacional.*

Bracero Program, with tourist visas, and as undocumented immigrants. One of these migrants, Don Antonio, left San Ignacio Cerro Gordo to go north for the first time in 1943 with his brother who had been hired as a bracero in California. Don Antonio began a circular migration that was to last many years before he moved to Detroit. "One time, after I had crossed through the barbed wire in 1951, (undocumented) I went as a bracero but they only hired for 40 days and I did not like it."[9] Mexicanos made choices from the opportunities available to them. The Bracero Program continued to encourage a constant flow of Mexican labor,[10] both documented and undocumented to the United States – mostly to California – that slowly began to divert to different states, depending on the needs of Mexicanos and the choices they made mostly based on building better futures and increasing their incomes. Like Don Antonio, Don Chuy and many more San Ignacians continued to travel back and forth from San Ignacio to California until one day, Don Chuy recounts that he was in Laredo, Texas and while chatting informally with a man, he was advised to go to Detroit. According to this man, he could make twice as much working in Detroit ($3.00) rather than working in the fields ($1.25 or less). "So I thought, I'm already far away from my parents and my family, so I'll go. And I made the decision and I went to Detroit."[11] He arrived in Detroit August 18, 1964. The Bracero

---

[9] Don Antonio, 78 years of age, interview in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo November 2002. "Una vez tratando yo despues de haberme ido de alambre en el 51, me fui de bracero pero solo por 40 días y no me gusto." My parenthesis. 2002

[10] Immigration between Mexico and the United States has been documented since the Mexican-American war 1846-48 when the United States colonized more than half of the Mexican territory, into the first three decades of the twentieth century. Jalisco has historically been an immigrant-sending region. For more information on Jalisco's immigration see: Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930). Also Paul Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933).

[11] Don Chuy, 73 years of age, interview in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, November 2001. "[...] bueno pues de todos modos estoy lejos de mis padres de mi familia pues me voy de una vez hasta allá, y me anime y me fui."

Program came to an end in 1964, but it was not until 1965 that most bracero contracts expired.

The Bracero Program was a controversial bilateral labor agreement that caused economic, political and cultural turmoil both in Mexico and in the United States. During the first years of the program thousands of Mexicans left their hometowns to travel north to satisfy the labor demand initially brought on by the war in Europe. However, more braceros were hired every year after WWII than during the war years. Approximately 168,000 braceros were hired during 1942-45.[12] By the end of the war the U.S. agricultural economy had already become dependent on Mexican labor. According to some scholars the numbers after the war varied between 400,000 and 450,000 annually.[13] Jesús Hernández left San Ignacio in 1953 to work in Salinas, California under the Bracero Program. After two years he was hired as a cook for the agricultural fields to feed the large groups of braceros that worked there. With a couple of years of experience under his belt, Jesús stopped working under the bracero contracts and got a letter of recommendation from one of his employers and became a legal immigrant. His father was a well-known Mexican *arriero* (muleteer) buying and selling manufactured goods from town to town in the Altos de Jalisco region. Jesús signed up for the Bracero Program in an effort to help his father support the family. After seven years of traveling between Mexico and California, Jesús submitted the documentation necessary to ask for his brothers' residencies. The first one to join Jesús was Don Gabriel who crossed the

---

[12] Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, Nolan J Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 37-38.

[13] Ibid., 36-37. Furthermore, the authors state that: "Nearly 5 million Mexicans entered the United States during the program's twenty-two-year history – a figure that dwarfs the combined total of legal and contract labor between 1900 and 1929 – but this massive movement remained out of the public eye." This statement questions the politics of immigration during the tenure of the Bracero Program particularly during Operation Wetback in 1954 when thousands of Mexican immigrants were deported to satisfy McCarthyism and to ameliorate civil society's concerns raised by the supporters of such politics.

border in May 23, 1960. Don Gabriel worked for five years with his brother as an assistant cook in the agricultural fields cooking for large numbers of braceros. A year after Don Gabriel arrived to California, his brother Delfino joined them and a year later their younger brother Rubén followed them. Although Delfino and Rubén worked in different fields they all joined forces and began to run a small business in Salinas. The brothers bought a car and they would go to the nearest towns to buy everyday necessities and then they would go back to the fields and sell them to the braceros that would hardly ever leave the fields due to several factors of which transportation, long work hours, and language barriers were among the most important.[14]

Braceros have been historically stigmatized and overlooked as individuals, but they were either lumped as a group of "ignorant," "defenseless," and "passive" laborers or as just mere parts to a giant machinery denying Mexican immigrants any agency. Recent academic work continues to recycle these pernicious stereotypes of braceros: "Daily life (for Mexican immigrants) was consumed by making a living, and their aspirations rarely reached beyond the four walls of their houses. They were gratified, however, to have a couple of radio stations play some music they remembered, a television station that showed programs they had seen in Mexico, and an occasional market where they could find tortillas and *pan dulce*."[15] In this analysis, I use concrete experiences from San Ignacians to dispute these pernicious stereotypes of braceros.

---

[14] Doña Anita, 70 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. "Cuando el (Jesús Hernández) estuvo trabajando ganaba más o menos bien, y este aparte a él le daban chance de vender a los braseros. Les vendía que rastrillos que cigarros, y cosas que ocupaban ellos, que jabón, ellos (Jesús y sus hermanos) hiban al pueblo a comprar cosas y se ganaban sus centavitos." My parenthesis.

[15] David E. Hayes-Bautista, *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 53. Hayes-Bautista's argument, although trying to vindicate the image of Mexican-Americans including Chicana/os, from pernicious stereotypes in the United States has fallen victim to the very thing he is trying to get away from: racist images and diminishing images of Mexican immigrants, particularly braceros and new coming Mexican immigrants.

Nevertheless, these negative images and the newly felt pride as industrial workers rather than agricultural workers permeated the Mexican imagination for many years. These stereotypes developed a cultural shame of being braceros. Thus, San Ignacians have made efforts to disassociate themselves from being identified as braceros and agricultural work after working in industrial jobs, as in the case of the Hernández brothers and other San Ignacians.

Archival documentation and oral history provided a very different image. Braceros constantly challenged, negotiated and accommodated to the circumstances they found themselves in. They would write letters not only to the Office of Foreign Relations in Mexico City, but they would also appeal to the Mexican consulates to intercede for them. The Mexican consulates were assigned to make sure that the braceros' rights were not violated and in general to insure their well being.[16] Modes of resistance through official venues were not only limited to demanding fair wages and treatment, better working and living conditions; many braceros would walk out of the agricultural fields and either go back to their sending communities or change fields to those where

---

[16] The Mexican Consulates in the United States had been designated as the main supervisors and overseers of the Bracero Program. Their main objective was to make sure that the braceros' rights were not violated. However, due to the magnitude of the program, the numbers of braceros, and the pervasive corruption within the consulates this objective was more often than not inconsequential.
Instructivo Especial No.3 Sobre Aplicación del Artículo 30 del Acuerdo Internacional: "El artículo 30 del Acuerdo Internacional del 11 de agosto de 1951, celebrado entre México y los Estados Unidos de América, que corresponde al capítulo intitulado "Procedimiento para el cumplimiento efectivo del contrato de trabajo", le asigna a nuestras Oficinas Consulares en los Estados Unidos la importante fución y grave responsabilidad, de formular las quejas y reclamaciones de los trabajadores por violación de sus contratos de trabajo; de intervenir en las investgaciones que se practiquen para esclarecer los hechos que se denuncien, y finalmente, dictar la resolución que proeda, cuidando en todo tiempo de obtener la participacioón del correspondiente Representante del Secretario del Trabajo de los Estados Unidos de América." TM-1-3, 28. ARE
Memorandum: Personal Consular para la protección de braceros en Estados Unidos de América: "La movilización de aproximadamente 400,000 braceros que anualmente se trasladan a los E.U.A.; su distribución geográfica en los lugares de empleo; la renovación periódica de sus contratos de trabajo y principalmente la protección qe se les imparte con arreglo a las estipulaciones expresas al Acuerdo Internacional en vigor, requieren constantemente la oportuna y eficaz intervención de nuestros Consulados en dicho país." 25 February 1956. TM-1-3, 186. ARE

employers treated them better.[17] Word of mouth was a powerful tool of resistance for braceros within the context of their restricted menu of opportunities underlined by their financial needs. Mexican co-nationals would also take advantage of these opportunities and make money by exploiting these limitations. Such was the case of the Hernández brothers who sold items to the braceros in the fields.

While the Hernández brothers, and many other San Ignacians were traveling to and from Mexico and the United States in a period of more than ten years, they established not only economic ties between their community of origin and the United States, they also created families in San Ignacio who became indelibly tied to the U.S. Emotional attachments and the creation of family ties while these men were traveling back and forth were the beginnings of the now very dynamic transnational communities in Detroit and San Ignacio. Mexican women in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s although not a majority, had already begun to migrate in small numbers, particularly to the Midwest where farmers in the sugar beet industries preferred to hire families taking

[17] Document written to Foreign Relations from Consul Miguel G. Calderón " [...] cancelaciones de contratos que estan propiciando y también adjunto la queja sobre trabajadores mexicanod que *desertaron* por las condiciones de vida de los trabajadores." My emphasis TM-3-5, ARE *Cancelación de Contratos* Letter from a bracero to Office of Foreign Relations followed by documents from that office to the Mexican Embassy in Washington DC. Mexican Ambassador writes, " Uno de nuestros trabajadores fué apoyado por un miembro de la Nacional Agricultural Workers Union que siempre se ha opuesto a la contratación de trabajadores agrícolas mexicanos solamente interviene para persuadir a nuestros compatriotas a ingresar en dicho sindicato. Este trabajador, Francisco Cano Hernández hablaba por tres mil trabajadores quienes le pagaron los gastos para que viajara a Washington a quejarse ante la embajada. La queja es que trabajaban para la Royal Parking Company de Salinas, California donde el alojamiento y la alimentación eran malas y además se les cobran $1.75 diarios. También se quejan de que el trabajo no es continuo y a veces solo trabajan tres horas y se les cobra el alambre que utilizan para el amarre de las legumbres a $.65 el millar y a veces no se los dan completo. También se les da un cobertor por $6 o $7 y al terminar el contrato tienen que dejarlo en el campamento; se les obliga a cubrir $3 mensuales por servicios medicos y que estos servicios no existen; que ya se habían quejado con el Consul de México en Fresno y no había echo nada. De acuerdo a los trabajadores, al quejarse con autoridades del trabajo y el representante del contratista en represalia ordenaban su deportación." 1952.TM-3-6 ARE *Documentos sobre la alimentación de trabajadores.*

advantage of female and child labor.[18] However, in San Ignacio, aside from a few women who were remembered to have migrated prior or during these three decades it was not until the beginning of the 1970s that the first San Ignacian families began to arrive in Detroit. Notwithstanding, Doña Anita, Doña Tere, Doña Ana María, and many other women had initiated the formation of these transnational communities in their town of origin, San Ignacio.[19]

Doña Anita, while her husband Jesús Hernández was following a circular migration, had thirteen children. During a period of fourteen years, Doña Anita had already initiated a breaking of translocal borders and a series of transgressions challenging traditional gender roles and the division of labor in a household along with the many other women whose families were divided by the 2,000 mile long political border between Mexico and the U S – ironically the distance between Detroit and San Ignacio is approximately 2,000 miles as well. Doña Anita, Doña Tere, Doña Ana and Doña Elodia shared more than the common experience of having their husbands be circular migrants, they were also sisters-in-law, married to Jesús, Delfino, Rubén and Gabriel Hernández respectively. Needless to say, in the late 1950s when they married, their position as wives of immigrants was very precarious, considering that their

---

[18] "(By the late 1890s and early 1900s) Initially most Midwestern industrial employers did not recruit Mexicans to work for them because there was little need to do so. Better wages, greater job security, and the lure of the city attracted enough workers from other sources. Most early Mexican immigrants to the Midwest came as agricultural workers to toil in the beet fields or as members of railway construction and maintenance crews." Juan R. García, *Mexicans in the Midwest 1900-1932* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996), 4-5. For more on this early migration to the Midwest see: Saragoza Vargas, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Also, Dionicio Nodin Valdés, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 177.

[19] See Appendix A, tables 1.2 and 1.5

husbands' paychecks were not always on time, not sent to begin with, lost in the mail, or worse, their husbands could abandon them, suffer injuries or even death.

In March 1949 Señor José Santos Gálvez died in a truck accident while working as a bracero for the company Fitzgerald Nad Litrov in California, the place which was usually the stepping stone for most migrants that ended up in the Midwest. Six months after his death, his wife Señora Eloisa Ortega Viuda de Gálvez asked her daughter to write a letter to the Mexican Consul asking him to help them get the insurance money as stipulated in her husband's individual labor contract and that they were entitled to in case of accident or death. The Mexican Consul in turn wrote to Relaciones Exteriores (The Office of Foreign Relations) asking for permission to act as an arbiter in the dispute over benefits braceros' families were entitled to in case of accident or death. Nine months later, the Mexican consul wrote a letter to Fitzgerald Nad Litrov petitioning for the compensation owed to the Gálvez's family according to the company's insurance policies. The company, after what seemed to be an eternity for the Gálvez family, finally "sent" compensation papers for the amount of $3,200, which Señora Gálvez had to sign and return agreeing to the stipulated amount. On June of 1950, Señora Gálvez again wrote to the Mexican Consul letting him know that she had never received the company's papers and that now she had received an ultimatum from the company stating that if she did not return the documentation sent to her the company would no longer be responsible for the compensation. The last letter filed in the archive was dated January 20, 1951 from Señora Gálvez imploring Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City to intercede on her behalf since she was unable to travel to California and her family desperately needed the money for their survival. Señora Gálvez and her family were originally from Arandas, Jalisco, a

town that is about 15 minutes away from San Ignacio. Arandas is the *cabeza municipal* (municipality) that San Ignacio belongs to.

Señora Gálvez, Doña Ana, Doña Tere, Doña Ana María and Doña Elodia and many other women developed survival strategies with husbands away that allowed them to support their families and to establish a network of support among family members that included help with the children while they worked. Señora Gálvez's situation clearly demonstrated some of the precarious situations that immigrants and their families underwent as they constructed their lives both in the U S and in Mexico. Moreover, it also illustrates some of the strategies that women began to develop to exploit all of the resources available to them, such as the Mexican consulate in California and Relaciones Exteriores in Mexico City. Despite the fact that the Gálvez case was unresolved (or not filed in the archives), Mexicanas, since the conception of the Bracero Program in 1942, have continued to shape and reshape their positions vis-à-vis U.S. migration.

One of the most important aspects of this positioning is the intersection between migration and gender. Doña Ana María for example, when her husband Ruben decided to join his brothers in California, was left with four children and 20 pigs to take care of while he tried his luck in *el Norte*. Doña Ana María and Rubén ultimately had eight children. Doña Ana María recalled how she managed:

He would send money almost every month, first he sent $40 then it went up to $80, but in the meantime I took care of raising 20 pigs here. I was pregnant and I did everything in the house and raising the children, I did laundry, I ironed... I tell you being young is amazing you don't get as tired, you rest at night and then you get up with a lot of energy and ready to take care of the children, so while I fed one the others

needed clean diapers and back then there were no disposable diapers we had to wash them and iron them, we were so silly we even ironed the diapers, now young women complain when they only have two children, if they only knew.[20]

Doña Ana María was not alone in playing the role of the mother and the father as she took control, not only of the family's finances but most importantly of all the decision-making concerning the well being of her immediate family. Traditionally referred to as unpaid labor, for most women in San Ignacio who had male family members in the U.S. it became a door to cross certain local borders that had to do with the allocation of traditional gender roles. Taking care of their families and their house chores, although a traditional female gender role, in this case became more complex since these women for the most part were the heads of their households. To compound the complexity of this traditional division of labor was the fact that most of them were left in charge of whatever form of subsistence their husbands had been providing prior to their leaving, whether the raising of cattle and pigs, milking cows, or other agricultural work.

Some Mexicanas were left in charge of small businesses that their husbands financed with money earned in the U.S. Such is the case of Doña Anita who took care of a *tortilleria* (tortilla making shop) in San Ignacio while her husband Delfino worked in the U.S. Some of Doña Anita's thirteen children began to immigrate to the U.S. and joined her husband Jesús. Nevertheless, Doña Anita took charge of the small business at the same time that she took care of the household and its respective necessities. This

[20] Doña Ana, 62 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Me mandaba cheques casi cada mes, me mandaba primero $40 y después $80 pero mientras tanto yo criaba 20 puercos aquí embarazada. Yo hacía todo lo de mi casa, lavaba, planchaba... le digo no la juventud es hermosa no te cansas, descansas en la noche te levantas con nuevos brios y con niños; a uno le daba el biberón y al otro, entonces no había pañales desechables era lavar y planchar porque éramos tontas y hasta los pañales planchaba, que tonta fui, ahora se quejan con dos."

situation assigned new roles for local women as the facto household heads in the absence of the adult males.

Doña Tere took care of a small locksmith shop her husband Luis Mercado opened just eight years after he began his immigration cycle in 1960. She and her oldest daughters ran the small business from its inception in 1968 until 1974 when the whole family left for Detroit. New economies and familial ties began to gradually develop within these two transnational spaces, San Ignacio and first California and Texas and later exclusively with Detroit. This everyday border crossing opened social and cultural spaces that allowed women to contest and negotiate traditional gender roles. More importantly, the responsibilities that gave women the complete control of decision making within the family while their spouses, male siblings or parents migrated to the U.S., would enable them to acquire skills that facilitated their own emigrational experience. Contrary to most of the literature written on migrant women which argues that it is the emigrational experience that gives Mexicanas the skills to become more independent and thus challenge gender roles, I contend that the skills stemmed from their experience while residing in their communities of origin as heads of households.

In 1965, after he decided to leave Texas for Detroit to seek better wages, Don Chuy asked his brother Luis to join him. Luis Mercado had been in Texas in 1960 as a bracero but returned to San Ignacio the same year. In 1965 with a tourist visa he joined his brother in Detroit. Don Chuy and Luis were the first San Ignacians to move to Detroit. The Mercado brothers had been working as Mariachi musicians in San Ignacio prior to leaving for the U.S., and after Don Chuy arrived in Detroit he decided to continue his career as a musician. Later, joined by his brother Luis, they played for two years with a

group called *El Carretero*. Shortly after their arrival in Detroit they met a few other young Latino men and taught them how to play music. Initially they had very little business, being the first ones to take Mariachi music to Detroit. However, after two years they were hired to play in cantinas, and people also hired them to play for weddings, baptisms and later even for burial rituals. The seed had been planted by the Mercado brothers for numerous other San Ignacian families to begin their journeys to Detroit where they found better jobs in the auto, steel, construction and meat packing industries. The Mariachi group did well, but not well enough for the men to be able to support their families and the businesses already opened in San Ignacio, so they looked for jobs that would give them better remuneration. They never abandoned the Mariachi group completely, signifying their commitment to establishing a cultural outpost in the north, as well as pioneering a new place for work in the Midwest.

Within three years of his arrival, Don Chuy had secured a job in a steel company and through his employer was able to become a documented immigrant and help his brother "fix his papers" (*arreglar*). By 1974 Luis had processed his family's papers and was able to take them to Detroit without any risks in crossing the border. In 1967, Don Chuy and his brother Luis contacted the Hernández brothers in California and told them of the higher wages and better working conditions, as well as how they felt in terms of holding more respectable jobs working in the industry rather than working as agricultural workers in "back-breaking jobs." In 1969 Jesús, Rubén, Don Gabriel, and Delfino Hernández moved to Detroit and lived with the Mercado brothers until one by one they began to rent or buy their own places of residence. Don Gabriel remembered his first experience as an autoworker in a company that built ambulances and UPS trucks,

> When I arrived in Detroit and I started working, I thought to myself, here they will not pay me anything. I felt that I was not doing anything, because over there [California] so many hours of hard labor, and here [Detroit] only nine hours making little holes with a drill and putting little wires, son of a bitch I was so comfortable! [...] So, the first week I knew that they gave out the checks every week but I did not expect any money and then this guy started to call out names and I was certain that they would not call my name because this job is too easy, but he did and I took the piece of paper and put it in my pocket because I did not want to look at it thinking that it would be insignificant. But when I went home I opened it and I was making the same for half the hours I did then [in California] and not doing anything and a few days later they gave me a raise, so I stayed in that company for over eight years.[21]

The Hernández brothers were the first ones to live with the Mercado brothers after their arrival to Detroit, but not the last; this was only the beginning of the construction of social networks that encouraged many more San Ignacians to move to Detroit. They made their first stop at the Mercado's where they were provided with much more than just a place of residence. They also received "financial support," information about available jobs and the working conditions of these, and of course inclusion in one or two *parrandas* (parties) with the Mariachi and one or two *partidos de football* (soccer game bouts).

The Mercado brothers provided all these in exchange for monetary remuneration, in other words, usually when a San Ignacian arrived in Detroit, the Mercados would either lend them money to start them of, or they would wait until they had jobs in order to get paid. This system became much more accentuated once the social networks began to

---

[21] Don Gabriel and his son Sergio Hernández, 70 and 46 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. " Cuando llegue que empece a trabajar yo dije aqui no me van a pagar, no me van a pagar, sentia que no hacia nada, ay porque allá tantas horas aca nueve horas con un drill haciendo aujeritos poniéndole alambritos, hijo de la mañana! [...] o sea que la semana primera la dejaba mejor porque daban cheques a la semana y yo ya sabía, pero ni esperaba, pues empezo fulano a decir nombres, y yo me dije, a mi no me van a llamar pues este trabajo esta regalado y pues ya me hablaron, agarre el papel y ni lo quise ver, dije sabe a como y me lo eche a la bolsa y cuando llegaba a la casa pues ya lo abri y ganaba lo mismo que allá y sin hacer nada y menos horas y al rato me aumentaron y todo total que me quede mas de ocho años ahí." My parenthesis, 2001.

grow, where family members would borrow money for the "journey" – whether documented to pay for the trip or undocumented to pay for the "coyote" and the trip – and pay the money back (either with interest or without, depending on the relationship to the lender). The contours of these social networks began to be visible once some of the Hernández brothers brought their families, as well as Luis Mercado who unlike Don Chuy, did move his family to Detroit.

In as much as their lives changed once they moved to Detroit in the late 1960s and early 1970s, San Ignacians would continue to go back to their sending community once every year or once every two years. Initially San Ignacians had to get permission from the factories they were working for in order to go back to Mexico. However, once the industrial boom of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s began to deteriorate in the 1970s Mexican workers found jobs primarily in construction work and landscaping. These jobs enabled them to leave Detroit at the beginning of the winter months October-November and return in March-April. Usually during these months they were laid off and most of them were able to collect unemployment depending on their employers. These dates coincided with the traditional religious festivities in San Ignacio. When the first braceros from San Ignacio left to the U.S. these celebrations were local and very small, usually celebrated by different *colonias* in the towns. This, however, would change dramatically as the development of the transnational communities became economically and culturally more significant.

When San Ignacian immigrants returned home in the 1950s and 1960s most of them hired as braceros, their arrival was a very private, familial and intimate process. They returned primarily to see their families and to make sure that they were well taken

care of. As they continued to return, so their families continued to grow. San Ignacio is a very Catholic-centered town in the Cristero region[22] of the western part of Mexico; and while women have historically contested religious oppression in several ways, child bearing in San Ignacio continued to be influenced by the church's prohibition of methods of contraception, and lack of information.

In addition to religious prohibitions on women's sexual choices, the town had not been introduced to mass media in the mid-twentieth century. Asides from a few radios here and there[23] people in general were absorbed with strategies for survival, and hence the church became the primary source of cultural production. The priest as the producer of knowledge became indispensable in the social, cultural, as well as religious lives of San Ignacians. Social life revolved around the family and the church-organized activities. San Ignacio was a small town in the 1940s and 1950s. Doña Ana María, a nurse assigned to work in San Ignacio in 1959, remembered, "oh my it was a very small town with about 100 houses that were very small. [...] The church has been renovated through time and it is now much bigger than how it was, but its façade style remains the same."[24]

---

[22] Los Altos de Jalisco along with Michoacán were the matrix of the Cristero Revolt 1926-1929. Because of their strong religious beliefs and their attachment to traditional modes of land ownership via the *ejido* (community owned land) the western part of Mexico rose in arms when the new centralized government driven by anticlerical sentiments and the agrarian reform – principally to privatize landownership – threatened the population's way of life and their systems of belief. When the Mexican president Manuel Avila Camacho threatened to dispossess the church from its land holdings and to ban mass services aggravated by the complete reform of land distribution, Mexicans began a revolt that was to last three years. For more information on the Cristero Revolt see Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999).

[23] Don Cosme Martínez, 83 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "[...] Un radio traje la primera vez nada más de Arkansas. También luego me traje otro. No pues aqui de todos modos en esta parte fué en el 57 (1957) muy buen radio. Si ese radio lo vendí yo y le saqué 1,000 pesos que en ese tiempo ..."

[24] Doña Ana, 62 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Uf, era un pueblito chiquitito con 100 casas. [...] la iglesia la han ampliado mas, pero el estilo de afuera no le han cambiado nada." 2003

The church had been a place of worship, but also a place to gather and talk to friends and families after mass. Socializing through the church activities was embedded in San Ignacians' cultural life. The religious celebrations were a good example of such social activities. During the celebrations bands played and small nomadic carnivals along with food vendors gathered around the plaza in front of the church, and the celebrations lasted only a few days. For the immigrants, however, these festivities were religious celebrations for the Virgin of Guadalupe and social gatherings. During the decades that followed WWII, contrary to the past fifteen years, Mexican immigrants from San Ignacio were not publicly recognized as heroes or heroines in these celebrations, they were family members returning home. In these intimate arrivals, Mexican immigrants and their families enjoyed each other's reunion and children awaited impatiently for the things that their fathers brought with them. Sergio remembered how he felt,

> When my dad was hired as a bracero in 1964, I was very young, about eight, I remember that he would leave and we would stay, [...] and we would wait for the time of the religious celebrations and Christmas for him to come back. He would bring back a lot of things, a lot of toys and food that was new to us because we had never seen it before. He would also bring clothes and toys, like those airplanes with batteries that we did not have here. I remember my favorite was an airplane with propellers and it would raise itself and it had lights on the wings and everything moved by itself. It had a small ladder and it had a door that opened in the back, it was so great.[25]

Don Chuy, Don Gabriel, Don Ramón and many more men that returned home to visit their families, privately and more intimately were heroes, heroes to their own families,

---

[25] Don Gabriel and his son Sergio Hernández, 70 and 46 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "Yo me acuerdo de que se iba y aqui nos quedabamos. [...] y nadamas esperabamos a mas o meno este tiempo (las fiestas de la virgen) a que viniera para navidad. Cuando venía traía muchas cosas, muchos juguetes y cosas de comer o alguna cosa nueva que no hubiera aqui. Traía ropa, juguetes, aviones con baterias que aquí no habia ni nada de eso. My juguete favorito era un avión de hélices que se paraba y tenía sus luces en las alas y todo se paraba solo y tenía una escalerita y abría la cola, si muy bonito."

especially their children. Don Gabriel's son Sergio Hernández remembered how he grew up with the idea of at some point in his life going north as well. Many years later when Sergio was 18 years old he would leave San Ignacio to join his father Don Gabriel in Detroit. Today, however, when Sergio returns for the annual religious festivities in San Ignacio he stands proudly in the long line of hundreds of immigrants that form behind a banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe and a big colorful sign that reads: DETROIT. They are waiting for the procession to begin, and they wait patiently dressed in their best clothes along with their families carrying the several gifts the priest has instructed them to bring: candles of a particular size that will fit all the candle holders in the church, wine of a specific brand name that is used for mass, flowers of all colors, and of course the one gift that is not so visible but that its presence is more than obvious: dollars. In 2003, the immigrants from Detroit gave father Ignacio Ramos Puga $14,000 to purchase an enormous image of Jesus Christ that would be housed in the church. These religious celebrations are no longer called "*las fiestas de la virgen,*" they are now called "*las fiestas de los hijos ausentes*" (the celebrations for the absent children: the immigrants).

As in San Ignacio, the church in Detroit became the center by which the newly established transnational communities would begin to establish social networks that would support newcomers as well as provide families with different kinds of entertainment. Most San Ignacians began to purchase homes in what is now called Mexican Town in Southwest Detroit where houses were affordable to them. In the vicinity of the neighborhood there were two churches, the Holy Redeemer and Santa Ana. Religious iconography and worship was something that San Ignacians could identify with in Detroit, despite the many barriers they confronted, among them, racist

and prejudicial sentiments from native white Detroitians, but also language and culture. Don Gabriel recalled how in 1972 he wanted to bring all of his family, but when he went to the INS, they told him that he needed to make more money in order to allow the residencies for all of his family,

> I wanted to fix the papers for all the family from the beginning but they would not accept my petitions because according to them I did not make enough money to bring them. So I explained to them that I did not make more because I had to go back to Mexico twice a year to see my family because I did not want to leave them without my *protection* but finally [...] thanks to a priest there he called a lawyer friend of his and the lawyer went to immigration and said to them, "you can not keep this family separate this young man makes enough money and has already bought a house for his family to join him." The name of the priest was Father Francisco Amico.[26]

Despite the fact that women in San Ignacio raised their children, took care of household chores, worked on the fields, tended cattle and pigs, and usually managed a small business, their husbands still maintained the idea that without them the family was "unprotected" and vulnerable to economic and emotional doom.

This priest, Francisco Amico, was also mentioned when Doña Tere recounted her experience when she had just arrived in Detroit in 1969. Doña Tere was the first woman from San Ignacio to arrive in Detroit. Her husband Delfino had worked out the petitions to bring his family and after she had her last child they all moved to Detroit to join their father. Doña Tere did not know any other women in Detroit, but as soon as she arrived she met a woman from Chihuahua, Mexico, who immediately befriended her and began

---

[26] Don Gabriel and Sergio Hernández, 70 and 46 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "Yo les quería arreglar a todos desde un principio, pero no me aceptaban, que ganaba poco, pues era al año y yo tenía que venir (a Mexico) casi dos veses al año para ver a mi familia. Yo no quería *desampararlos nunca los desampare.* [...] Pero luego por medio de un sacerdote allá (Detroit) agarro un abogado amigo de él bueno, ese abogado hablo con migración y dijo, "tu no tienes porque tener separado a esta familia, este muchacho ya tiene casa, tiene en que moverse y quiere a su familia aquí." The name of the priest was father Francisco Amico. My emphasis and my parenthesis.

to inform her about the different schools for the children, the health centers available to them, and the nearest food market. She also told Doña Tere of the churches that were near the neighborhood and Doña Tere took her family to the Holy Redeemer church, which was close to her home. Doña Tere recollected,

> She immediately became my friend, and informed me about the school so that my four children that were of age could go, Héctor, Martín, Gustavo y Graciela and oh yes and Lorena. And also Father Francisco helped me get them to the Holy Redeemer school, because there I had to pay and when I got there it was already time for them to start school and for me to pay the tuition, and I needed help from someone because I had to come up with the money.[27]

It is important to mention that even though Doña Tere was the first San Ignacian to arrive in Detroit, she established cross-Mexican and cross-Latinas affiliations that enabled her to lay the foundation for the support of social networks that women would take over as the transnational community began to grow.

Most of San Ignacian families arriving in the early 1970s made connections with the church and chose whether they would go to the Holy Redeemer church or Santa Ana. Doña Teresa and her husband Luis Mercado preferred Santa Ana at first because it was the first church that began to offer mass in Spanish. Later the Holy Redeemer also acknowledged the growth of the Mexican population in the neighborhood and began to give mass in Spanish. Nevertheless Doña Teresa remembers when the mass was given in English: "Well to begin with I did not understand anything but I still went there. Once

---

[27] Doña Tere, 73 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. " Ella luego luego se hizo mi amiga y me dió protección o sea me ayudo para que entraran mis cuatro hijos que llevaba a la escuela, Héctor, Martín, Gustavo y Graciela a si y Lorena. Me ayudó el padre Francisco porque para que entraran a la escuela del Holy Redeemer, porque ahí se tenía que pagar y ya era tiempo de que entraran y yo necesitaba ayuda de alguién proque tenía que pagar desde antes la colegiatura."

they began to give mass in Spanish, well it was very nice."[28] The Mercado family changed to the Holy Redeemer because it was close to their home. And so many families remembered how they began to offer a mass in Spanish at the Holy Redeemer's basement, but then the growth of the population overgrew the basement and now both the Santa Ana and the Holy Redeemer churches deliver three masses each on Sundays in Spanish to accommodate mostly San Ignacians that live in Mexican Town.

With more women and families arriving in Detroit, this transnational community began to flourish. From the 1970s on it was the women who began to support, shape, contest and construct the social networks that facilitated the flow of San Ignacians to Detroit.[29] Taking over the already established social networks that the Mercado brothers had initiated, Mexicanas took over the responsibility of constructing these social networks that have historically been the catalysts for the growth of so many transnational communities in the world. As women from San Ignacio began to form relationships with one another, they shared information about jobs, schools for their children, English language courses for themselves, health care available to them and many more important issues concerning their new lives in Detroit. Like Father Ignacio put it at the beginning of this chapter, it was as if Mexicanas told their male counterparts what the Virgin of Guadalupe told San Ignacio de Loyola "*haste que hay te voy.*"[30] Moreover, Mexicanas from San Ignacio are now an integral part of the grandiose annual one-week long celebrations in their sending community the last week of January. They stand in line

---

[28] Doña Teresa and Luis Mercado, 67 and 71 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "Pues de bueno no la entendía pero yo de todos modos iba, ya que la hicieron en Español pues ya más bonita."

[29] See Appendix A, table 1.1 and 1.2.

[30] Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, November 2001. "Get out of the way because here I come."

waiting for the procession to move forward with their families and friends by their side to show off proudly their success as immigrants. This common experience as immigrants shapes women's conceptualizations of notions of "womanhood", "femininity", and "sexuality," that are inherent in the way they construct their everyday lives.

It is during these festivities that both immigrants and non-immigrants share their common experiences as a well-founded and dynamic transnational community. The celebrations emphasize the mobility and the permeability of San Ignacians' identities and the way they perceive their realities. Among the many visible transformations of San Ignacians' shared experiences is the way women take advantage of the procession for the *hijos ausentes* (absent children) to challenge notions of female appropriate behavior via their clothing, the courting rituals - that take place during the months when most immigrants return to San Ignacio - and the way they talk about their sexuality. In 2003 when I witnessed for the first time the *fiesta de los ausentes* there were a few women lined up in the procession that ended up in the church for the mass especially orchestrated rehearsed and directed toward the immigrants. Some of the immigrant women were dressed very "provocatively" according to older women. They were wearing tight dresses, that were "too" short, and "too" revealing – the cleavages on the dresses were steep – challenging religious and social mores of appropriate feminine behavior. Father Manuel Ramos Puga, however, did not make any attempt to address this issue, which was more than obvious, causing many older, and also some younger women to gossip and criticize them. Furthermore, the regional bishop, who was hosting the mass that day, did not intercede either, focusing on his sermon for that day and thanking several times the immigrants for the grand contribution of $14,000 to buy the enormous image of Jesus

Christ that was to be revealed and celebrated that day. It is to these challenges to religious and social mores by women from San Ignacio that I turn to in the following chapter.

Chapter II

"Ya esta cerrada con tres candados
y remachada, la puerta negra
Porque tus padres estan celosos
y tienen miedo que yo te quiera
Han de pensar que estando encerrada
vas a dejar pronto de quererme
pero la puerta, ni cien candados
van a poder a mi detenerme."
Los Tigres del Norte[1]

(It is already closed, locked with three padlocks,
and secured, the black door
because your parents are jealous,
and they are afraid that I am in love with you.
They may think that since your are locked in
you will stop loving me,
but neither the door, nor one hundred padlocks
will be able to stop me).

Transnational Sexualities

"My husband and I met when he used to sell milk and I was only 15, so we started to talk. We used to talk through a hole on the wall."[2] Many women in San Ignacio began their courtship by sneaking conversations with their boyfriends through holes and cracks on walls or doors and sometimes in a fiesta or going to the *serenatas* on Sundays. Parents were very strict about their daughters dating, "Yes, my parents were very strict, I couldn't go out with him. No, I had to chat while standing by the door in my house. Every so often maybe I saw him in a *kermes* or a *serenata* in the plaza if we were lucky."[3] Lola was the third of fourteen siblings of whom ten resided in Detroit. She had nine children of her

---

[1] Los Tigres del Norte. "La Puerta Negra," *Colección de Oro* (México, D.F:Ciscos Musart, S.A. DE C.V., 2000).

[2] Tina and Saúl, 47 and 52 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Mi esposo y yo nos conocimos cuando el vendía leche y yo lo veía pasar. Empezamos a platicar, platicabamos por un hoyito en la pared."

[3] Lola, 50 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Si eran muy extrictos, no podia salir con él, no, tenía que platicar ahí en la puerta de la casa y de repente en alguna kermes o alguna serenata ahí en la plaza era donde nos veiamos nada más."

own and her oldest daughter had one. Lola began to talk to her daughters about using contraceptives when they were very young because she thought that despite her Catholic beliefs, having so many children was a difficult task, particularly when you had to provide for them in Detroit. She also felt that the lack of information available to her when she was younger was minimal and the Billings method (the rhythm) that the church recommended was obsolete. "I was suppose to have only four, but to be honest with you we used the Billings method and I had five more." For this reason she thought prudent to have a more open conversation with her daughters and her only son as well.

The use of contraceptives was and continues to be a very contested terrain for Mexicanas; however, younger generations are more open when talking about sexual practices with their partners. "I think that now that I have my partner and we are stable it is important that you get to know each other completely. Sex is very important in a couple, I think that understanding each other in that way is very important. [...] I don't think it's that vital to be a virgin when you marry, although many men are still very sexist, not just San Ignacian men all men in general."[4] Like this younger generation of Mexicanas, older women also commented on how they never received any information from their mothers about sexuality and that caused them many tribulations.

In the history of immigration, scholars for the most part have ignored the role of sexuality in shaping immigrant communities, gender relations, and Mexicanas' lives. In this chapter I will analyze how women from San Ignacio have identified and defined their

[4] Vivi, 28 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Yo pienso que ahorita que tengo a mi pareja es todo estable. Yo pienso que tienes que conocerte en todos sentidos y el sexo es bien importante en una pareja. Yo creo que entenderte en ese sentido es bien importante. Yo si pienso que no es tan importante ser virgen o no antes del matrimonio. [...] muchos hombres son machistas, si porque yo creo que no nada más los de San Ignacio, todos son machistas."

notions of sexuality and how they have positioned themselves vis-à-vis discourses on sexuality that have historically, in a patriarchal social system, remained in the hands of the state and several institutions such as schools, the family, health clinics and the church. Moreover, the immigrant experience, I argue, has historically changed and constructed different patterns of gender "appropriate" behavior that have challenged social institutions. In turn these institutions have struggled to maintain the power to manage, regulate and discipline the sexuality of women specifically in their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters, and as Mexican immigrant women.[5] I will also introduce the concept "transnational sexualities" by challenging assumed definitions of transnationalism that have fragmented immigrant's experiences into two different sets of understandings – one in their community of origin and the other in the U.S. Transnational sexualities refer to these experiences as one set of constructed notions that are integral to Mexican immigrant's experiences in San Ignacio and Detroit.

The church and local authorities in San Ignacio and Detroit have been instrumental in the process of regulating and responding to women's sexuality since the 1940s, and have exercised different roles as the primary possessors of discourse on morality and definitions of normativity. The motivations driving the church as well as the local and regional authorities in Mexico have been influenced by several historical,

---

[5] Foucault's *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, stresses that the configuration of sexuality and sexual practices were socially constructed as discourses. He questions the ownership of such discourses and the power that many social institutions – medical, political, educational, and religious - had to appropriate and disseminate these discourses. An important contribution of Foucault's analysis is the relationship between the individual and the state. Foucault's analysis utilized the image of a grid that has divided power between several institutions that transformed over the last three centuries through the ownership –or lack thereof - of such discourses. However, Foucault's analysis lacks an in depth examination of gender relations which in turn inspires the development of such discourses by appropriating, challenging, accommodating and contesting their meanings. Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I. (New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, Inc., 1978).

economic, cultural and political factors. One significant influence has been the millions of dollars that immigrants send to the community of origin in the forms of remittances – 10 million annually according to Tito who owns a service for sending remittances to Mexico from Detroit.[6] Since the 1940s the church, as the main producer of culture and as the center for social activities as well as the keeper and overseer of moral values, has continued its effort to dictate women's reproductive "obligations" through confession and through the many church activities that target the management and control of women's sexuality seen through a patriarchal social lens that focuses on marriage.[7]

In the last three decades another incentive for the local authorities to intercede along with the church on discourses on morality and religious mores has been the town's efforts since the 1970s to become a municipality.[8] One of the many requirements that San Ignacians had to meet in order to become a municipality was to increase their population

---

[6] Trino, 57 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "[...] y se me ocurrió poner un envio de dinero a San Ignacio, entonces yo se lo que entra en San Ignacio diariamente o anualmente, entonces yo le calculo que a San Ignacio entra anualmente 10 millones de dólares."
Also, Manuel Gamio began analyzing Mexican migration to the U.S. in 1927 by looking at remittances sent from the U.S. to Mexico. In his seminal work, Gamio looks at remittances sent to the state of Jalisco which underlines the historical continuity of Jalisco as a major sending state, and at the same time the economic importance of remittances to the communities of origin.

[7] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 10, 2002. "(in 1949) [...] El señor Cura nos tenía que indoctrinar, nos tenía que preguntar el catequismo si lo sabíamos el catequismo, que hablaba del matrimonio verdad. Que iba a ser para toda la vida y como te comprometes a educar. Todo eso preguntas y nos doctrinaba, el adentro en la sacristía o en su cuartito su despacho lo que ahora la notaría ..." My parenthesis.
Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "[...] entonces quieren venir (los migrantes) y en caliente rápido a quererse casar. Entonces algunos ya como que agarran la onda porque saben de que alla no son las pláticas sino que es todo un año que tienen sus pláticas cada mes o cada quince días. Y aquí se supone que estamos en el pueblo hay más contacto, mas relación y pues tiene su retiro son catequistas y otras vienen al catequismo se conocen más o menos la gente se preparan y hacen su retiro de dos o tres días. (en esos retiros) se les habla de una manera en general sobre ya de la vida matrimonial inclusive sobre paternidad responsable, sobre el método Billings."

[8] San Ignacio Cerro Gordo belonged to the *delegación* Cerro Gordo itself belonging to the municipio of Arandas in the state of Jalisco in the Mid-Western part of Mexico. Since the beginning of my research the community has continued its efforts to become a Municipality and they have accomplished the goal. By 2007 San Ignacio Cerro Gordo will be able to elect a *Presidente Municipal* and be totally independent of Arandas.

numbers, which Arandas (a town nearby San Ignacio) and the State of Jalisco claimed were low. San Ignacians appealed to have the immigrants living in Detroit counted in their Census arguing that they were active economic participants. They were denied. However, they did meet the population numbers sometime in 2003 to become a Municipality.[9] In 2001, while giving mass, Father Ramiro appealed to the immigrants' sense of obligation through *paternidad responsable* (responsible parenthood) by demanding that they have more children and accusing them of not following the church's dictates of relying only on the Billings method, (the rhythm) as a means of birth control. He reprimanded them for denying their cultural roots of having traditional large families.

Another very strong social motivation from these San Ignacian institutions was the fear that services focusing on health and sex education in the United States along with cultural factors might diminish traditional religious control and management of sexuality and interfere with their efforts to control both morality and sexuality discourses, particularly issues on reproduction.[10] In the United States, efforts to assimilate Mexican immigrants through state regulated educational campaigns on the one hand and the

---

[9] "San Ignacio is being put on the map next year – literally. The steady stream of Detroit money has created enough hope of an independent economy that the Mexican government will make San Ignacio an official municipality. "Detroit is very important in getting us to this step," says José Luis Orozco, the president of the town delegation to make San Ignacio official." In "On the Map" *Detoit News*, Sunday, March 6, 2005. "Será benéfico para Jalisco la creación de dos nuevos municipios San Ignacio Cerro Gordo y Capilla de Guadalupe, a que brindará mayor atención a los habitantes, aseguraron investigadores de la Universidad de Guadalajara (UdeG)." *Noticias Notimex*, 31de mayo del 2005. For more information on San Ignacio's *municipalisación* see also San Ignacio's web page: http://www. Sanignaciocg.da.ru/

[10] Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "(the immigrants) si también han sido influenciados por esa costumbre de que allá (Detroit) es muy fácil muy cómodo y si tu quieres hasta moralmente y hasta se promueve el "no seas tonta nada mas ten dos hijos" cuando que sus costumbres sus tradiciones acá en su pueblo son familias de 10 de 12 y allá pues esa muchachita que pertenece a una familia de 12 pues pierde todo eso. No necesariamente tienen que ser de 8,9, o 10 pero tiene que ser lo que llamamos una *paternidad responsable* que es de pareja y que es conciencia delante de Dios en cuanto al tiempo y las circunstancias que estamos viviendo pues hay que organizarse hay que planificar su familia conforme a las normas de la iglesia católica y ellos allá (Detrotit) pues no se guían por la iglesia católica." My parenthesis and my emphasis.

importance of the local Catholic Church on the other have also been instrumental in the production of discourses on morality and normativity.[11] Americanization programs targeting Latinos were rampant in the United States from the beginning of the twentieth century, but after World War II they intensified in tandem with a nationalist discourse as the U.S. asserted its global hegemony and cold war stance. This national effort to assimilate Latinos, but Mexicans in particular - depended on regional population growth of Mexicans in places such as Los Angeles, and in this case Detroit – was intended to acculturate and "integrate" them into the social fabric. In the Midwest, these Americanization programs were instituted by several social and religious organizations such as settlement houses and the Catholic Church.[12] Some of the services provided by these institutions included: "English language training, cooking, sewing, and child care [which] were less concerned with changing identities than preparing workers for specific segments of the job market or performing their domestic roles more effectively."[13] Both institutionalized religious and state sponsored programs worked under racist and pernicious stereotypes about Mexicans. The Catholic Church in Detroit, unlike its counterpart in San Ignacio - which encouraged immigrants to hold on to their traditional roots[14] – joined the Americanization frenzy targeted towards Mexicans in particular and

---

[11] See Vicky Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (NY Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). In her work, Ruiz focuses on state and church-sponsored Americanization programs that targeted Mexican mothers in hope that their offspring would "integrate" themselves to the social fabric of, in this particular case, El Paso, Texas, "targeting women and especially children, the vanguard of Americanization placed their trust in the rising generation," 33.

[12] Dionicio Nodín Valdéz, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas, 2000), 114-128. For more information on Americanization Programs in the Midwest see Juan R. García, *Mexicans in the Midwest 1900-1932* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996) 141-145, 176-178, 215-221.

[13] Ibid., 119.

[14] Padre Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "Si bueno pues podemos decir de echo la misa tiene este sentido hacerles ver [a los migrantes] que no pierdan sus valores morales cristiano

began a series of programs to promote the complete shedding of what they perceived to be the "Mexican identity,"

> "Detroit Archbishop Edward Moody (1937-1958) initiated a conscious and public effort to repress Mexican culture. Early in his tenure, he presided over the closing of *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Our Lady of Guadalupe), and despite the frequent pleas he refused to permit parishioners to construct another national church or to engage in any Mexican religious or cultural functions under church auspices, claiming that such activities would impede Americanization. Furthermore, the archbishop demanded that "no racial or nationality distinction be made toward the Mexican. He absolutely forbids the priests giving any encouragement to the idea of a church especially for Mexicans, and this applies to other organizations, religious or otherwise." Saginaw priest Peter T. Feixa concurred: "churches for Mexicans would tend to segregate them."[15]

Nevertheless, these institutions did provide social services and educational programs, English lessons in particular, that Mexicans took advantage of revealing their intent to embrace opportunities within oppressive structures.

In her work on Mexican women in the twentieth-century, Vicky Ruiz introduces her concept of "cultural coalescence" whereby "[Mexican] Immigrants and their children pick, borrow, retain, and create distinctive cultural forms."[16] In her work, Ruiz begins to unpack certain understandings of transnationalism. However, her work places Mexican

---

que no pierdan sus tradiciones sus costumbres y eso nos toca a sus mismas familias y al sacerdote y a las personas que estan aquí en el pueblo. Las mismas autoridades civiles pues hombre una obra de teatro que instrulle, festivales culturales no le hace que sean modernos pero que llevan un mensaje que entretengan a los jóvenes."

[15] Ibid., 152-153.

The church Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (The Lady of Guadalupe Church)was built in 1923 as a response to the growing Mexican population in Detroit. See Norman Daymond Humphrey "The Migration and Settlement of Detroit Mexicans," in *Economic Geography*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Oct., 1943), 358-361. Also see the other racist articles written and published by the sociologist Norman Daymond Humphrey: "The Detroit Mexican Immigrant and Naturalization," in *Social Forces*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Mar., 1944), 332-335; "The Education and Language of Detroit Mexicans," in *Journal of Educational Sociology*, Vol. 17, No. 9 (May, 1944), 534-542; "Some dietary and Health Practices of Detroit Mexicans," in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 58, No. 229 (Jul. – Sep., 1945), 255-258; "The Housing and Household Practices of Detroit Mexicans," in *Social Forces*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (May, 1946), 433-437.

[16] Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, xvi

immigrant women as a backdrop to Chicana history. Chicanas take the center stage, limiting her analysis of Mexican immigrant women. Nevertheless, Ruiz emphasizes subjectivity and agency, and she also delineates the contours of how these Euroamerican institutions were obsessed with managing and disciplining Mexican immigrants' lives. Despite their differing social, cultural, political and religious agendas, the institutions in Mexico and the U.S. have been instrumental influences on Mexican immigrants' experiences and their constructions of gender relations and notions of sexuality.

San Ignacians have continued to respect and practice their religious beliefs. Most immigrants that I interviewed identified closely with the local churches they attended in Detroit and in San Ignacio. The immigrant experience has shaped and reshaped the discourses on morality and sexuality as well as redefined the concepts of normativity. Despite the church's strong and authoritarian presence, women in San Ignacio and Detroit have created complex cultural and social processes that informed their notions of sexuality. These notions did not necessarily adhere to church regulations on sexual mores. Gradually, women's interpretations and manifestations of sexuality have become uncontested both by the church and patriarchal-informed institutions. Authority over marriage and family revealed an increasing power of women in the transnational process. However, despite the fact that gender relations, as socially constructed processes, continued to influence and be influenced by immigration, these usually unfold within a patriarchal social order, thus limiting certain options available to women. Sexuality both as a discourse and as a set of practices has continuously produced several meanings and interpretations that are inherent in the way both men and women approach each other, and how they construct and define their notions of masculinity and femininity.

In the case of Mexican immigrants and the creation of transnational communities, sexuality has been constantly informed, shaped and reshaped by the immigrant experience. The relationship that immigrants construct in Detroit with the community of origin has reorganized and transformed a spatial and geographic distance into an interstice that gives way to several interpretations of social life and the way people relate to one another. I am introducing the concept "transnational sexualities" which refers in particular to this interstice placed within an historical context of how San Ignacians have enabled, shaped and mediated as well as appropriated constructions of sexuality through their experience as immigrants. Furthermore, transnational sexualities show how some women have transgressed gendered "forbidden spaces" dictated by patriarchal institutions - religious, secular and civil - and created their own space informed by a shared experience as immigrants, by the U.S. and Mexico's cultural and social changes, and by their accommodations and contestations of their everyday life in the United States and in San Ignacio. Transnational sexualities are constructed by a set of dialectically informed contradictions that despite what many academicians may think, are not necessarily affected by a bipolar understanding of "traditional" versus "modern."[17] Transnational sexualities, I argue, are not a hybridization of two opposing stereotypes of Mexican –

[17] Authors like Anthony Giddens, in *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) and Carlos Monsiváis in "¿Tantos millones de hombres no hablaremos ingles? (La cultura norteramericana en México)." Simbiosis de culturas: Los inmigrantes y su cultura en México, edited by Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1993) who have argued that changes in cultural attitudes towards sexuality are becoming more "modern" and that eventually "traditional" values will disappear as modernity re-conceptualizes cultural changes on Mexican sexuality. This argument permeates literature that refers to any or most cultural change in Mexico not just on sexuality. The idea that "traditional" means backward and "modern" means progressive is in my opinion inconsequential.

traditional and backward – or Euroamerican –modern and progressive – sexualities;[18] transnational sexualities are a creation - not a hybridization or amalgamation - by Mexicanos and Mexicanas of the changes in their attitudes and understandings of femininity and masculinity and how these express themselves in their everyday understandings of their lives and their relationships with one another.

Unlike most of the literature on Mexican immigration to the United States, this analysis transcends geographical borders and incorporates immigrant's experiences both in their community of origin and in Detroit. Previous research has focused either on Mexicanas in the U.S.[19] or in Mexico.[20] This analysis reinterprets the term "transnational" by arguing that academicians have fragmented the meaning of the concept transnational. We can not make assumptions historical or otherwise (sociological or anthropological) on social constructions of the immigrant experience without taking

---

[18] Even authors like Héctor Carrillo who argue that we can not separate the "traditional from the "modern," but consider them part of a hybrid culture in a space where both exist is still falling victim to this limiting binary opposition in *The Night is Young: Sexuality in Mexico in the time of Aids*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 293. He argues, "[...] Mexicans seemed to strongly favor the search for ways to adopt contemporary values while at the same time respecting core traditions (or at least appearing to respect them). This respect translates, in my opinion, into the presence of mixed attitudes that might appear to contain contradictions but that individuals managed to hold with some coherence within their own worldview."

[19] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo in *Gendered transitions: Mexican experiences of immigration* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994). In her most recent work, *Doméstica* she again focuses on Mexicanas and other Latinas in Los Angeles, but makes very limited interrelational connections to their communities of origin, and usually just as a point of comparison for constructions on notions of motherhood. Also, sociologist Gloria González-López in her essay "De madres a hijas: Gendered Lessons on Virginity across Generations of Mexican Immigrant Women," *in Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends*, eds, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press: 1999), 217-240, focuses on Mexicanas in Los Angeles; and although she produced seminal work that introduced studies of sexuality into academic work on Mexicanas in the U.S., it also lacks a thread that connects Mexicanas in Los Angeles and Mexicanas in their communities of origin and the interlocking of this connection that creates, in my opinion, new meanings and understandings on sexuality.

[20] Ofelia Woo Morales in *Las Mujeres También nos Vamos al Norte* (Universidad de Guadalajara, 2001), focuses on Mexicanas from Ciudad Guzman, Jalisco. Most Mexican scholars who focus on Mexicanas and their migration to the United States center their arguments on the communities of origin, leaving behind their experiences in the United States.

into consideration the sending community and its sister in the United States as integral parts of the whole. One cannot exist without the other. Social constructions on sexuality are informed by both experiences and these in turn create new meanings and understandings of not only sexuality but social, cultural, economic and political realities that apply to Mexicanos' and Mexicanas' everyday lives whether in San Ignacio or in Detroit. I argue that we cannot separate them because these processes are not quantifiable nor are they fixed, on the contrary they are fluid and permeable. The concept "transnational sexualities" refers precisely to that spatial rupture scholars have neglected that incorporates the experiences of San Ignacians both in San Ignacio and in Detroit and how these together recreate and reconstruct new conceptualizations of sexuality and notions of masculinity and femininity.

The significance of transnational sexualities becomes more apparent in San Ignacio in the month of January during the religious festivities that celebrate the immigrant's return and the Virgin of Guadalupe. Migrants return to San Ignacio and the success of the immigration experience is flaunted extravagantly throughout the town. Consumerism is one way of displaying a successful immigrant experience and it becomes apparent via the way returning women dress; their ownership of businesses, houses, and cars; and their contributions to the church.[21] Since the 1950s the church in the main plaza has undergone many historical changes due to generous donations from immigrants. The renovations to the church have been many; Doña Alicia remembered what changed,

> [When I got married in 1950] no the Church was very small, it had a yellow floor with white flowers and just one tower and it was so much smaller. Later it started to

[21] An example would be the $14,000 they generously donated to the church in 2003 to purchase the image of Jesus Christ that I mentioned in chapter I.

> grow more and now the outside that has the white façade, used to be where *el Señor Cura* lived. The atrium on this side [she gestures with her hands] and on the other side did not exist either, and the house next to it were barns. The house for the priests was an old decrepitated house where you paid the *diezmo*, because each year when people picked up their harvests they would bring boxes of corn and beans that they would give the *diezmo* to our Lord. The *diezmo,* and it would stay there and later, in that *diezmo* house, one of my brothers lived there, he died, but he lived there and there were huge warehouses where they kept the corn.[22]

Many San Ignacians remembered how the church has changed throughout time, marking as it were the beginning of an economic dependency between immigrant's donations in the forms of remittances to family members - who then donated money to the church - or direct contributions to the church from Detroit.[23]

In this procession of success many women grab the opportunity to overtly challenge traditional expectations of female-acceptable-behavior, demeanor, dress codes and more importantly notions of femininity and sexuality. During the 2003 festivities in the procession of *los hijos ausentes*, a few women were wearing dresses that according to other San Ignacians were inappropriate especially since the procession ended in the church for a grandiose and well-orchestrated mass that involved several priests and the bishop. Older women tended to blame this religious and social transgression on the social

---

[22] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. " [Cuando yo me case en el 50] no el templo era más chiquito, tenía un piso Amarillo con flores blancas y este una pura torre y era mucho más chiquito, depués fué ampliando más y ahora más. La parte de afuera era blanca de la iglesia era el curato, no estaba el atrio de este lado y el atrio del otro lado no existía, ahí era la casa y eran las cocheras. La notaria la casa de los padres ahí había una casa vieja que era el diezmo, que se decía el diezmo. Porque cada año la gente cuando recogía sus cosechas llevaba sus cajas de mazorcas de maíz de frijol que le daban al diezmo qaue le daban a nuestro Señor su diezmo verdad. Y ahí se conservaba eso y después en esa casa de diezmo, hubo un tiempo en que vivió un hermano mio que ya murio también, ahí vivieron y había unas bodegas grandes en donde guardaban el maíz."

[23] Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "Si hay Buena voluntad, de echo comenzamos a la construcción pues yo dije era mucho dinero y si yo me hubiera puesto a pensar lo que iba a gastar pues nunca me hubiera atrevido a hacerlo pero cerre los ojos y dije bueno... Y pues arrancamos con kermeses con rifitas de una camioneta y de un carro que se llevan a Detroit bloques de boletos para la construcción de la parroquia, para esto para las casa pastorals para la capilla y para el campo de football."

evils of immigration while younger women challenged these ideas by asserting that some women from the town had always dressed in such fashion whether they were immigrants or not. However, these younger women also pointed out that dressing styles are distinguishable immediately between those who live in San Ignacio and those who live in Detroit: " I think that immigrants are more open because they don't care so much; like for example a tattoo, here people would talk and criticize whereas in Detroit you put it on and that's it. Also when women migrate to Detroit, there you can wear shorts [when it's hot] and it's normal, but when they come here people almost die."[24] These young women also associated dressing more "revealing" or "comfortable" with class, "well, we can tell that they don't live here, [...] it's *gente más popis* (people from a higher social status)."[25]

These associations with moral values and class are paradoxically contradicted by local older women who felt that recent consumer fashion from Detroit and Mexico was not only too "revealing" and vulgar but it also denoted a lower class, thus denying the immigrants of the upward mobility they have earned through their immigrant experience and the ownership of material goods. Doña Alicia commented, "Well you see I am very puritan, I think that this particular fashion (more revealing), I don't like it, not at all. I think that in order to look pretty and decent (in Spanish *decente* is associated with class and morality), a young woman has to dress better, because the attire you wear says a lot

[24] Reyna, 15 years of age, Mónica, 15 years of age, Bianca, 13 years of age and Elena, 14 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. Elena commented, "Pienso que si que son mas abiertos allá como que, no les interesa como aquí; por ejemplo un tatuaje y ya, ya trae un tatuaje y allá te lo pones, andas con shorts y como si nada. Y aquí te pones algo así y ay ya son esto y lo otro y como, bueno las muchachas se van allá y vienen aquí y pus allá siempre andan normal con sus shorts y todo y llegan aquí y la gente casi se muere."

[25] Ibid. Mónica, "Pues se distingue la gente, porque son como mas frescos, mas aca, es gente mas popis."

about you. If you look elegantly well dressed, not necessarily following these new fashions, you need to look for a fashion that becomes you, a style that is more you." [26]

Despite the comments made by Doña Alicia, she and most San Ignacians recognized that while dress codes break certain religious and social protocols, they also pointed to the fact that being an immigrant, especially a successful immigrant, allowed them some "liberation" from local cultural constraints and upper social mobility. And with this mobility they had access to a wider social space where women both in San Ignacio and Detroit explored and transgressed certain parameters related to their sexuality and their notions of femininity. Although young women in San Ignacio felt that they had less social mobility, during the nine days of festivities –and less obvious but also during the few months that the immigrants stay - they enjoyed a temporary protective and collective strength that they would not during the months when the immigrants go back to Detroit.

One area where they explored these temporary parameters was courting. Within this context dressing codes became symbols representative of how courting rituals have historically changed (or not) in San Ignacio. How women were supposed to dress in front of men was a social, religious and a familial concern, emphasizing the fact that women were to be tantalizing but not too coquette as to look or behave like a *puta* (whore), but enough to attract possible mates. Courting rituals became a manifestation of interpretations of sexuality and appropriate social mores particularly when women chose

---

[26] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interviews in San Ignacio, November 2002. "Yo pienso pues mira yo soy muy puritana, yo pienso que a mi esa moda (de enseñar mucho) no me gusta nada nada. Y yo pienso que para que se vea bonita una muchacha y se vea más decente, si de veras quiere ser decente, tiene que vestir mejor, porque el vestuario tiene que decir mucho porque te ves muy elegante, bien vestida, no con modas que no te vienen aunque sean modas, no te vienen, hay que ver una la moda que te acomode verdad..."

between either enticing a possible immigrant mate for marriage or enticing him for temporary pleasure since they knew that eventually he would have to go back to Detroit.

Courting rituals in general undergo historical changes depending on the social and cultural contexts. These rituals are not fixed in time; on the contrary they are fluid and constantly changing.[27] Doña Alicia remembered her first "dates" with Jesús,

> [When we were boyfriend and girlfriend in 1949] we would give each other letters very quickly in a bus stop when he worked as a bus driver. When we could talk either because he had a day off or for any other reason where he would stay here [San Ignacio] with his parents, we would talk through the door, with the door closed. We would talk with the door closed and through a hole or a crack on the wooden door, we would look at each other like this [makes a sign with her fingers surrounding one eye] with one eye and the other and that's how we saw each other.[28]

Several couples and widows from different generations discussed that their courting involved communicating through a "small gap on the door" or "though a small crack on the door or a wall." It seemed that somehow women and men managed to find either holes or cracks or doors semi-open by a parent, usually a mother, to engage in conversations. Women mostly emphasized the secrecy of their encounters outlining

---

[27] There is not a lot of historiography on courting rituals in the twentieth century, however see anthropologist Jennifer S, Hirsch, *A Courtship After Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003). Also Katherine Elaine Bliss, "The Sexual Revolution in Mexican Studies: New Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Culture in Modern Mexico," in *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2002), 247-268. The historiography on courting rituals during the Colonial Period is much more abundant: Asunción Lavrin, ed. *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America* (Lincoln:University of Nebraska, 1989); Noemí Quezada, *Sexualidad, Amor y Erotismo: México Prehispánico y México Colonial* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdes Editores and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México,1996); Silvia Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985); Juan Javier Pescador, *De bautizados a fieles difuntos: Famjilia y mentalidades en una parroquia urbana, Santa Catarina de México, 1568-1820* (Mexico City: Colegio de México and Centro para Estudios de Demografía y de Desarrollo Urbano, 1992).

[28] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, 2002 "[...] (Cuando éramos novios en 1949) con puras cartas y cuando platicaba que se quedaba aquí que le tocaba descansar por algo se quedaba aquí con sus papas teníamos que platicar con la puerta cerrada, con la puerta cerrada y por una hendidurita de la madera de la puerta nos veíamos así (hace la mímica) un ojo y el otro y así no veíamos." My parenthesis.

physical separation between the possible mates and themselves. However, every Sunday in the main Plaza right in front of the church a traditional ritual of courting, *la serenata* was displayed. This was and still is a ritual where men lined themselves up in a large circle facing each other leaving a space in between them, while women walked (usually in pairs or small groups) in the middle of the circle. Men did not move while women would go around the circle several times. Throughout this elaborate ritual, men would throw confetti at the women and chat informally with them. Presently, some young women complain that men touch their hair and sometimes their buttocks.[29] Apparently as the tradition has it, once a man or a woman chooses a partner, the man offers the woman a rose and they break away from the circle to stroll in the park and the plaza.

When I asked women from a previous generation as well as younger women if this ritual had been there when they were young and they all agreed. Moreover, they all recalled their mothers also talking about it as an experience prior to marriage.[30] It is understood that all the participants both male and female are unmarried and available for a possible match. The contradiction between making sure that I understood that they had no close contacts with men and the physical proximity by which male and females were exposed in these Sunday courting rituals became apparent with many older women. Ironically, in their narratives, the private space of the household where they would talk "through a crack on the door" became the forbidden space for physical contact, whereas

---

[29] "[La serenata] a mi no me gusta porque ahora no nomás te agarran el pelo sino una pompi tu sabes todo eso, pero eso viene de uf muchos años y no se porque..." Ana, 18 years of age, interview in San Ignacio 2003.

[30] Ibid. "[...] si y a las 5:00 o 6:00 de la tarde me metía mi mamá y ya él se iba a su casa, y así, así fue nuestro noviazgo no había que un baile, que había la serenata pero no siempre nos dejaban, la serenata que había en la plaza para dar la vuelta... Desde mi mamá existía la serenata."
Ana, 18 years of age, interview in San Ignacio 2003. "Uf, desde mi mama [es la tradición de la serenata], pero mi mamá dice que, ya vez que avientan papelitos, confeti se llama, a mi mamá le aventaban unas cosas serpentines que se las embonaban en todo el cuerpo ..."

the public space of the plaza became an acceptable open space to explore their sexuality, under the supervision of most of the town and the overseeing and all-powerful image of the church lurking from every angle in the plaza. Church and parental supervision was instrumental in the construction of virtue or "purity" whether this supervision was real or not.

On the one hand women tended to invoke respect by telling the "hole on the door" story, but on the other they enjoyed talking about these Sunday *serenatas*. Older women's notions about sexuality and courting were grounded in strong religious ideologies about the absence of premarital sex –whether they engaged in it or not - and the respect that purity elicited from future husbands. Within this context, parental supervision also represented the daughter's "virtue," and the mother's respectability by "raising her daughters right" -in the case of mothers whose husbands were in Detroit. The pressures on women to fulfill various gender roles were emphasized in parenting because they were supposed to play the role of "father" as well as mother. Moreover, the townspeople became a mechanism by which these women were "supervised" and judged based on how well they managed these local border crossings into "male contested arenas." Sergio 46, and Sonia 43, remembered how their mothers managed to cross these traditional male arenas, particularly when it came to the discipline of the family,

> [For my mother to educate the ten of us while my father was in the U.S.] was very difficult. I saw my mother struggle with all of us because of the many responsibilities she had as a mother and also as a father at the same time. She had to dress all of us to go to school every morning, and fix breakfast. We all tried to help her with the cleaning of the house before we left for school. When we returned she already had dinner for us very punctual at 2:00 pm always.[31]

[31] Sergio, 46 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "[para educarnos a todos los diez] era difícil, yo veía a mi mama que batallaba con nosotros por la responsabilidad que tenía como mamá y papá a

> My mother was the one that was there, my father was always here (Detroit) because we stayed in San Ignacio and he would work here and would go see us for only one or two months and then go back (to Detroit). [...] But my mother was very strict with us, she always said that she did not want us to do something wrong because since she was alone, my father left her the responsibility and he would not want to know that we were misbehaving. Actually we had to respect her and adhere to her curfews.[32]

Ironically, Sergio chose in his narration to emphasize the domestic responsibilities his mother had only within the context of female traditional roles such as cooking, and taking care of the children, despite mentioning her taking on the role of the "father" as well. Sonia, on the other hand, illustrated a more vivid image of what it meant for women to assume traditional male gender roles like disciplining children and issues associated with limiting youngster's mobility, such as curfews.

However, at the same time, women used this familial management of sexuality to avoid close encounters with undesirable suitors. As one narrator recalled, "I was very embarrassed that people saw me with him because he is much older than I am, so we would talk, me in the window of my house and him on the street. He wanted me to come to the door and talk to him but I told him that my parents would not let me, but they

---

la vez y tener que arreglarnos una mañana para irnos a la escuela todos a desayunar pero siempre le ayudabamos aqui al aseo de la casa antes de irnos a la escuela y cuando llegabamos ella ya tenía la comida lista para todos puntual a las 2:00 de la tarde siempre."

[32] Sonia y Francisco, 43 and 44 years of age respectively, interview in Detroit 2004. "Si, si mi mama era la que estaba allá (San Ignacio), mi papá siempre estaba aquí (Detroit), porque nos quedabamos nosotros allá y él se venía a trabajar e iba simplemente un mes o dos meses y otra vez se regresaba. [...] Pero mi mama fue bien estricta con nosotros, ella decía todo el tiempo que ella no quería que fuéramos hacer alguna cosa porque como esta sola, mi papa fue duro siempre con ella. Le dejaba la responsabilidad y él no quería saber de que anduviera uno mal, incluso pues no maltratados pero responsabilidades que teníamos que respetarlas. Si ella nos ponía un horario y nosotros teníamos que estar en ese horario."

did."[33] Despite the fact that many older women emphasized abstinence until marriage and parental supervision as a discourse of virtue, contradictions within these discourses show that it was not so much that they did not have sexual encounters or that they did not talk about sex; it was more about how much they talked about not talking about sex or having sexual encounters.

Women have challenged and altered the meanings of courting within the immigrant experience. Courting rituals are now centered around the time the immigrants return to their communities of origin to celebrate the religious festivities in January (although, they begin to arrive in the months of October and November). These dates also accommodate most male immigrants who are unemployed in the winter months due to jobs in construction and/or landscaping unlike their predecessors who worked mostly in industrial jobs during the 1950s and 1960s. This schedule makes it easier for most "single males" and families to travel to San Ignacio and celebrate Christmas and the January religious festivities with their families. Women, on the other hand, usually work in factories, yet still get time off for the Christmas Holidays to return to Mexico.

During these festivities, young male and female San Ignacians (migrants and non-migrants) took the opportunity to select their potential partners for pleasure and possible marriage. Women's sexualities were constantly redefined as they were faced with the idea of emigrating (those who had not) or of meeting *un hombre decente,* (those who had). Female San Ignacians become both tantalizing and seductive but at the same time many also appealed to traditional ideas of parental discipline and supervision for their

---

[33] Mari and Goyo, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "A mi me daba vergüenza que me vieran con el porque estaba muy Viejo y yo platicaba con el de la ventan y el quería que platicara con el en la puerta y yo le decía que no me dejaban, pero si me dejaban."

own needs. Young women talked about men not respecting them if they thought that they were "loose," thus redefining their own sexual parameters influenced by Mexico's social ideologies about sexual practices, religious gendered oppression, unequal gender relations, but most importantly positioning themselves as "valuable" emotional and trustworthy partners.

When I asked a group of young female San Ignacians what they thought about premarital sex, they all agreed that it was best to wait until marriage for sexual relations. However, most of their responses had no relation to religious mores or parental prohibitions, most were based on preoccupations about the respect a man would or would not allot them if they were or were not virgins.[34] Some of these young women challenged the traditional assumption that virginity equals value and virtue by questioning their position once they were married. Do women then lose all value and virtue after marriage once they have had sex with their husbands? Nevertheless all young women still agreed that virginity was a valuable bargaining tool that left their husbands no argument to question their integrity. The oppressive religious commoditization of sexual practices relegated exclusively to procreation, triggered a sense of guilt in Mexicanas. However, most of their practical concerns with premarital sexual practices were directly linked to patriarchal and sexist fears. In other words, social marginalization and resentment from husbands if they had engaged in premarital sex seemed to influence young Mexicanas' sexual ideologies.

---

[34] Reyna, 15 years of age, Mónica, 15 years of age, Bianca, 13 years of age and Elena, 14 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. All of them said unanimously, "We all want to be virgins when we get married!" Elena, "no me gustaría que después de que estuviera casada mi esposo me dijera, o que tuviera problemas, "no ya no eres virgen, y quién sabe con cuantos anduviste." Mónica, "Pues como mujer supuestamente, dicen que bueno es algo que nunca me ha quedado claro, que una mujer vale nada más por ser virgen, pero yo digo que no, a veces si pero yo digo, ya después que no eres virgen, ya que te casas que?

Yet young Mexicanas are engaging more in premarital sex partly because of cultural transformations in Mexican sexual ideologies, and also the influence by mass media both in Mexico and in the U.S. Mass media is a disseminator of sexual culture and various images promoting certain practices and body images that constantly bombard Mexicanas. Due to their experience with immigration both in San Ignacio and Detroit, Mexicanas are creating "transnational sexualities" where they affirm and politicize their sexual identities and these in turn interlock with their social, economic, and cultural realities. Several young women that I interviewed were pregnant before they were married, and despite the religious and social "taboos" inflicted on births out of wedlock, Mexicanas have carved a space where their decision-making has transgressed these taboos.

In 2003, Lily 17, and Cam 23, got pregnant out of wedlock, and I knew it because pretty much the entire town already knew. However, Gaby, Cam's sister and a good friend of mine, invited me to their wedding. She wanted me to experience a wedding in the town before I left. I also agreed to take photos for them. When I asked what time the wedding would begin she said at 7:00 in the morning. Mostly disappointed by the fact that there could hardly be a great *parranda* after the wedding, I asked why it was so early. Her response both shocked me and gave me a morbid kind of pleasure because it just so happens that mostly to my disbelief, Father Ignacio was going to marry them in a religious ceremony (I thought we were going to attend a civil ceremony!) at 7:00 am, because that is how he disciplines religious transgressions such as engaging in premarital sex. My morbid pleasure stemmed from the realization that Father Ignacio had not only been indifferent to the recent events of women breaking away from rigorous dressing

codes that symbolize either purity and social class or "putarity" and lower class, but he now was tolerating a much more serious religious prohibition, premarital sex. Needless to say, Cam is an immigrant who has been going back and forth between Mexico and the U.S. since the early 1990s.[35] Lily looked beautiful in her white dress and despite the fact that we all had to wake up pretty early the ceremony was beautiful and the bride and groom seemed happy. Her white dress, however, became a contentious symbol, which for many would have signified a lack of respect. In recent social, religious and cultural codes, white in a bride represents purity, which in turn symbolizes female virginity. Lily's and Cam's social and religious transgression informs how transnational sexualities have not only challenged religious and social norms and values, but have also claimed and constructed particular spaces where they can reclaim in this case their social virtue. Women and dress codes give us a panoramic view of the historical changes in creations and constructions of notions of femininity and womanhood firmly rooted in sexual identities and how these are expressed.

Doña Alicia criticized on the one hand that the priest would discipline them in such fashion by marrying them in the morning, but on the other she also criticized the idea of women marrying in white when it was obvious that they were pregnant – either because it showed or because the whole town already knew. This suggested that older women were very attached to certain ideologies influenced by oppressive measures both civil and secular such as relationships between femininity and virtue.

> Oh well I feel sorry because they must feel really bad, because our Lord should be the only one that punishes us. I wish the priest didn't humiliate them like that. [...]

[35] María, 49 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "[...] en seguida se fue Cam, he left right after his father died. He was about 17 or 18 years old when he left. He is now 28."

> The only thing though is that marriage is something pure and one should be pure and should wear white when one marries. White signifies purity and virtue so all I would say is that they shouldn't marry in white but at whatever time of the day they would prefer. They [women] should by themselves say, "Well I will pick my dress in a different color like in pink or an off-white ivory tone;" if everyone already knows that she was living with him or whatever, she should say, "Well I won't wear white, I am not pure in entering this sacred institution" so I think it's not nice to marry them on a Saturday at 7:00 in the morning.[36]

Obviously Doña Alicia's definitions on purity and virtue solely refer to women. Interestingly, however, all these notions of purity and virtue are, as I mentioned before, directly linked not only to constructions of sexual identities and femininity, but also to class. In the case of Doña Alicia, ironically, her wedding ceremony in 1950 was at 5:00 in the morning, because she did not have any money to buy a white wedding dress. She said that she had to buy other things necessary to her wardrobe and a white dress that would only be worn once was not a wise thing to purchase. So, "[...] I was married at 5:00 in the morning. This early mass was for the poor because those who were rich would be married at noon with a beautiful white dress and everything. I was very sad and all during the ceremony I cried because I wanted my white dress ..."[37] Not having a white dress which is a symbol of purity, and apparently of class as well, in this case created a

---

[36] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2002. "Ay dios pues que mal se han de sentir, a mi me da tristeza por esa discriminación que si nuestro Señor es el único que nos tiene que castigar y yo no quisiera que el Señor cura, no me gusta, yo opino eso, digo yo que comprendiendo que al matrimonio se va puro y con vestido blanco significa verdad, la pureza y todo, yo lo único que diría es que no se casaran de blanco, pero a la hora que quisieran y cuando quisieran. Si ellas mismas deben decir, "pues agarro mi vestido un color hueso, un Rosita que la fregada, si ya toda la gente sabía que vivía con el otro o con lo que sea, pues no me pongo blanco, ya no voy pura al sacramento." Pero que las casen a la hora que quieran se me hace muy feo que tienen que ser en sábado a las 7:00 de la mañana."

[37] Ibid. "[...] no tuve para comprar vestido blando, dije si me pongo un vestido blanco, no se usaba que trajera uno vestido blanco en la calle se lo ponía uno el día que se casaba y lo guardaba y a mi me hacían falta otras cosas."
"Y así al otro día a las cinco de la mañana, era misa de pobres porque los que eran ricos se casaban a las 12:00 con vestido blanco de cola y todo pero a mi me dio mucha tristeza y toda la misa lloré porque yo quería mi vestido blanco y se me hizo muy triste ..."

shameful situation that defined Doña Alicia's social position as well as questioned her attachment to religious and social mores. Nevertheless, in her reasoning although the early morning wedding was humiliating, being poor was an acceptable transgression to the white wedding dress tradition that did not questioned her "purity." But known pre-marital sexual relations represented by Lily's pregnancy and her transgression by wearing the white wedding dress was not only unacceptable but also highly disrespectful to the community's religious and cultural beliefs.

Doña Alicia never questioned the priest's religious transgression by breaking a very strict Catholic more and marrying pregnant couples. In Catholicism pre-marital sex is sinful behavior, but it is the women's sexuality that is judged not the man's. However, the rise of transnational sexualities demonstrates that the religious borders are capable of being broken and have also altered the priest's actions and challenged the community's ideologies on sexual practices. Exemplifying this is the priest's choice of "punishment" for the couple in the same manner that class was punished in previous years.

Transnational sexualities create new meanings to understanding different social, cultural, economic, and religious mores. What was "traditionally" and religiously understood as sinful behavior takes new meanings, as several institutions both secular and religious rearrange their structures to accommodate these transnational sexualities. Mexicanas are informed by a set of complex social dynamics whereby choices of sexual practices and sexual mores become paramount to their experiential life cycles. On a Sunday morning during the 2003 religious festivities, I attended mass and Father Rómulo was literally scolding the immigrants for not having enough children. He alluded to the fact that young couples married in San Ignacio left for Detroit, and when they came back

after a few years they would only have two children. Father Ignacio corroborated the same argument by adding that,

> [...] Yes the immigrants have been influenced by those customs in the U.S. that it is easier and much more comfortable and [Euroamericans] even morally encourage women by saying "don't be foolish only have two children at the most" when their traditions and customs here in their town have been large families of ten or twelve. And in Detroit that young woman who belongs to a large family of say twelve will lose those values. And I am not saying that she has to have eight, nine or ten but it has to be what we call "*paternidad responsable*" (responsible parenthood) that means the couple has to be mindful of God's teachings when it comes to the timing and circumstances that we are living nowadays, because they have to organize and plan their families but adhering to the Catholic Church's norms. And the immigrants in Detroit do not guide themselves under the Catholic Church's norms and values.[38]

Father Ignacio and his counterpart were both blaming immigrants for being exposed to and adopting U.S. "immoral" customs of "irresponsible parenthood" through the use of contraceptives and women's overt challenges to these and the Church's commands. The average number of child rearing of the women that I interviewed from the 1950s generation was thirteen. For example, Doña Luna was born in 1929 and married Don Andrés when she was 15 and had 17 children of whom only eight lived. Don Andrés worked as a bracero since 1945 in Texas and later in California until he moved to Detroit in 1978. All the years that Don Andrés worked in the U.S. he tried to go back to Mexico at least once or twice a year to see his family. Despite the many deaths of her children, Doña Luna continued to get pregnant. Now, she and Don Andrés travel back

---

[38] Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "(los inmigrantes) si también han sido influenciados por esa costumbre de que allá (Detroit) es muy fácil muy cómodo y si tu quieres hasta moralmente y hasta se promueve el "no seas tonta nada mas ten dos hijos" cuando que sus costumbres sus tradiciones acá en su pueblo son familias de 10 de 12 y allá pues esa muchachita que pertenece a una familia de 12 pues pierde todo eso. No necesariamente tienen que ser de 8,9, o 10 pero tiene que ser lo que llamamos una *paternidad responsable* que es de pareja y que es conciencia delante de Dios en cuanto al tiempo y las circunstancias que estamos viviendo pues hay que organizarse hay que planificar su familia conforme a las normas de la iglesia católica y ellos allá (Detroit) pues no se guían por la iglesia católica." My parenthesis and my emphasis.

and forth between Mexico and Detroit, and all of her children, now adults, live in Detroit. When I asked Doña Luna if she agreed with the priest's attitude toward "responsible parenthood" (which means not using contraceptives because according to church mores this is indicative of sexual relations as a form of pleasure and not purely for reproductive means) she responded that, "Now there are ways to avoid getting pregnant; in my times there was nothing, no information: that's why I had 17 children." She went on to say that despite the priest's attitude, she advised her daughters and daughters-in-law to take care of themselves and use contraceptives even when, "oh my, if el *Señor Cura* (a formal way to address a priest) would see me he would get angry."[39] She also acknowledged the availability of information on the use of contraceptives in Detroit emphasizing the importance of anonymity versus in San Ignacio where most people know each other. I asked her if she thought that her ideas about reproduction had changed with her immigrant experience and she felt that they did. She underlined the importance of taking care of one's body and one's sexuality as a woman and at the same time she emphasized the importance of economic survival in Detroit and the expenses that raising children demanded.[40]

The use of contraceptives for Mexicanas both in San Ignacio and in Detroit has been a topic of contention. Aside from the religious belief that contraception is morally wrong and that it is sinful to artificially stop reproduction, women from San Ignacio born

---

[39] Doña Luna and Don Andrés, 72 and 74 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "Pues ahora como están los tiempos, se ponen a pensar y ya hay muchos medios de que se pueden evitar eso (embarazo). En mis tiempos no se uso eso, yo tuve 17 hijos."
"Fíjese si me viera el Señor Cura se enoja." My parenthesis.

[40] Ibid. "Yo aprendí sobre eso (anticonceptivos) en Detroit, con mis amigas y mis hijas. Yo les platico a mis hijas y a mis nueras también para que quieren tantos hijos, horita ya por lo difícil que es, por la manutención y la educación. Yo les digo que se cuiden."

in the 1930s, 1940s and even some in the 1950s also felt that having children was an important manifestation of womanhood and motherhood. In other words, some women felt pride in their stories about how much they "tolerated" without complaining the several *partos* (births) of their children. Despite this pride or sense of obligation many of these women feared consequences of multiple births. Doña Ana told me how she started to use contraceptives after she had six children and why:

> I started taking contraceptives by prescription because there was no other way. Here they would die giving birth and they would say *morir en la raya* [die in the trenches] and I would think, " I don't want to die" so I went to see a male gynecologist in Guadalajara and he said, "you are going to take this and no more children!" and I still had two more! My mother-in-law used to say that she did not even complain when she was giving birth. I did, I yelled and kicked while it came out.[41]

Women had to consider several factors before they even thought about stopping their multiple births. The church and its strict rules about contraception, and their social and cultural understandings of womanhood and motherhood weighed heavily in their decision. It seemed apparent that women's pregnancies were ideologically internalized as part of their duties and requisites of being women and good mothers at the same time. The politics of contraception then for women of the mid-twentieth century in San Ignacio became a very tenuous path, despite their knowledge (or lack thereof) that multiple births could be detrimental to their health.

---

[41] Doña Ana, 62 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Yo los empecé a usar por prescripción médica, porque de otro modo no, aquí se morían de parto y decían, "morir en la raya", yo decía, "yo no me quiero morir y fui con un ginecólogo en Guadalajara y me dijo, "me vas a tomar esto y ya no mas hijos," ¡y todavía me eche dos! Mi suegra decía que ella ni siquiera se quejaba cuando nacían, yo si grito y pataleo mientras sale."

Cultural prescriptions and expectations influenced men and women, but the lack of education, too, affected the choices that they made. Another couple dealing with these issues in the 1950s was Doña Toña, 61 and Don Jacinto, 70 who had eighteen children and after the tenth, Doña Toña remembered listening to women talking about contraceptives. However, when she tried the "pill" she said that the *medicamento* "medication" made her very nervous and affected her head.[42] This argument I heard many times among older and younger women as well, where they agreed that the pill made them very nervous and affected them emotionally and physically. I started to think that the creation of a myth was in the making, whereby word of mouth via the Catholic Church, medical institutions, mothers and daughters, or from friends to friends would pass on an idea that demonized the pill – and contraception in general - so that women would not use it. Doña Alicia illustrated this ideology when she advised,

> Well, if they [younger women] want to take care of themselves, as long as they do it according to the church's norms [the rhythm] so that they don't get ill, because you know that those "pills" are detrimental to their health right? Well, when I was going to a psychiatrist because I was very nervous, I saw many women locked up in there, and they told me that all of them were ill because they had taken contraceptive pills and that they were bad for them. That's why they were *trastornadas* [this word literally means crazy] of the mind. So I tell my daughters that the pill is detrimental to their health and they have followed the *natural* way the Billings (rhythm) method and it has worked for them.[43]

---

[42] Doña Toña y Don Jacinto, 61 and 70 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. "[...] Cuando yo tenía diez yo empecé a saber a oír "mira que cuídate que esto y que lo otro," pero y no a mi no me valía no podía tomar medicamento porque me hacía daño para la cabeza, me ponía muy nerviosa y no había otra cosa."

[43] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. "Mientras que se cuiden, que no vayan en contra de la iglesia y que no les haga daño a su salud verdad? Yo cuando estuve llendo con un siquiatra porque estuve llendo a la de los nervios, vi muchas señoras encerradas y me dijeron que así todas eran porque habían tomado pastillas de anticonceptivas y que les caía mal y se ponían medio trastornadas de la mente. Y les dije yo eso, les hace daño mijas ustedes sabrán, pero ahora hay métodos que les han servido muchísimo, el método natural, Billings."

In her statement, Doña Alicia confirmed that whatever information she had about contraceptives came from the church – that insisted on using the Billings method – and medical institutions. One can understand the creation of such a myth when we analyze carefully the ideological baggage that women from San Ignacio carry with them. Religious and social sexist oppression was inherent in this myth making as was the intervention from local health services. Moreover this myth has transcended generations and has become integral in the formation of transnational sexualities. In 2004, I attended a birthday party in Detroit where a lot of San Ignacians both young and old attended. At some point there were about nine women talking about contraceptives. Before I could ask anything they had all started to complain about different methods of contraception and their availability at the local clinic. When I mentioned the pill as an option, they unanimously agreed that it was bad and that their experiences with it whether they had tried it or just heard about it were very bad and that it affected you body as well as your mind, and it made you terribly nervous. Gel, 25, commented on her experience with contraceptives,

> [I started to use] the Depro injection every three months, but since I am very nervous and not well it did not work for me, I got very sick. I had my neck very tense and I was very nervous constantly so the Doctor here in Detroit told me that I could not use contraceptives not even the pill because I was sick. I had a problem with being nervous and that everything would affect me including getting very bad headaches.[44]

[44] Gel, 25 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Con la injección Depro cada tres meses pero como estoy mala de los nervios a mi me cayo mal y tenía bien tenso el cuello y bien nerviosa que me puse. Enotnces el Doctor aqui me dijo que yo no podia cuidarme con nada porque pues tenía un problema de los nervios pues todo me iba a afectar y el dolo de cabeza y eso."

Due to this myth-making many San Ignacian women both in San Ignacio and in Detroit have allowed their partners to take "charge" and "take care of them,"[45] despite the inefficiency of this method. Nan, 25, got pregnant in San Ignacio immigrated to Detroit and then married her partner. She commented, "I didn't want to have another child, but I am two months pregnant. *Mi viejo me estaba cuidando*, (my husband was taking care of me) according to him, but apparently not. I used pills before but I was getting very nervous I didn't feel well. I used them for a year and I stopped last October and now after seven months I'm pregnant."[46]

Despite the access to more information for younger women in Detroit unwanted pregnancies continued, most of which happen while their *viejos las cuidan* (their partners take care of them), emphasizing the ideological oppressive baggage about contraceptives. In contrast to these younger women in Detroit, older women who had their children in San Ignacio continued to mention multiple pregnancies due to the lack of information available in the 1950s and 1960s. Doña Toña 61, and her husband Don Jacinto 70, agreed with her, "No, in those times we didn't know anything so we would have one after the next. We didn't even know how we were going to educate them or support them for that matter. We didn't think about that at all, we only believed in God and life and moving forward."[47] Doña Toña also admitted that the lack of mass media influenced their lack of

---

[45] By this, Mexicanas meant that their partners ejaculated outside to "protect" them from getting pregnant.

[46] Nan, 26 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Yo no quería tener otro pero estoy embarazada de dos meses. Mi Viejo me estaba cuidando según él pero no. Use pastillas pero me estaban cayendo mal y ya no, me sentía mal, las use por un año, las estaba tomando y las deje como en octubre pasado y pues ya pasaron como siete meses y salí embarazada."

[47] Doña Toña y Don Jacinto, 61 and 70 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. "No menos en aquellos tiempos no sabíamos uno atrás del otro, ni siquiera sabíamos como los vamos a educar ni como los vamos a mantener. No pensábamos en nada de eso, solo Dios de vivir para delante."

knowledge.[48] Despite the fact that historically the church has so blatantly been against contraceptives, many San Ignacians had either heard of them or used them or asked about them.[49] The fact is that there was very little access to health education in the 1950s and 1960s in San Ignacio. In 1959, Doña Ana, a nurse educated in Guadalajara arrived in San Ignacio to work at the "clinic" and she remembered,

> The clinic was improvised back then; it was just a large room that we separated to make small examining rooms and a waiting room. [...] It was very hard for me because I had to educate people. There were a lot of flies back then, a lot of unhygienic settings. There were no bathrooms; we had to teach people how to make latrines. We would visit houses to tell them how to boil water and how to treat stomach parasites. We were engaged on a campaign against diarrhea and giving people medication and conducting tests.[50]

Despite her education and access to information, Doña Ana did not take contraceptives until after her sixth child, and she had to go to Guadalajara to get a prescription from a gynecologist.[51] Moreover, she had two more children after she had been prescribed the contraceptives.

Younger women talked more freely about talking about sex and how they perceived their sexuality. Although older women disclosed significant amounts of information about their intimate courting rituals and their notions about sexuality, especially around the issue of motherhood and reproduction, they tended to repeat during

---

[48] Ibid. Doña Toña, "No había medios de comunicación con trabajos y habían unos radios de esos que poníamos ahora como grabadora una que otra persona tenía porque no todas las personas podían tener."

[49] See Appendix B, tables 2.1 and 2.2.

[50] Doña Ana, 62 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, 2003. "La clínica que había aquí en San Ignacio, entonces, improvisada, era simplemente un cuarto grande, una galera, y ya hicieron separaciones como para consultorios, sala de espera y eso, eso era todo. Fue duro porque tuve que educar a la gente se puede decir, aquí había mucha mosca, mucha insalubridad. No había baños, tuvimos que enseñarlos a hacer las letrinas. Y lo de aconsejarles casa por casa sobre como hirvieran el agua como se trataba a los parásitos porque todo el mundo tenía parásitos. Y era una campaña contra la diarrea, les dábamos medicina y les hacíamos análisis."

[51] Ibid. See footnote 41.

the interviews how much they did not know about sex and how much they were not supposed to talk about sex. Information about sex according to Mexicanas that I interviewed was very restricted, especially in San Ignacio, since it was such a Catholic community and its residents followed an old tradition of not talking about sex. As I have noted above with Mexicanas of different age groups, age was almost inconsequential in terms of how much information men and women had or had not received about sexual practices and about contraception. As one woman noted,

> No, as a matter of fact sometimes my sister tells my mother, "ay how come you never told us that we were going to suffer so much to have children and everything else [she refers here to her menses]" and my mother just tells us, "*pues quién las manda* [well why did you do it?]. But she never told us anything and neither did my father. We usually figure it out by ourselves, *sola.*[52]

This statement was significant in that it delineated the parameters of silences about reproduction by constructing these silences as natural. The Church's oppressive and sexist ideologies affected the construction of transnational sexualities, but at the same time the experience of Detroitians became integral in these constructions. Therefore, access to more information and the changing sexual cultures of both Mexico and the U.S. were important components in the constructions of sexual identities, in this case transnational sexualities.

When I asked older women how much they knew from their mothers about their sexuality they would all agree that it was close to nothing. Moreover, when I asked them if they had talked to their daughters about it most of them said no. The discourse on sex

---

[52] Nan, 26 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004, "No, de echo en veces le dice mi hermana a mi mama, "ay ustedes porque nunca dijeron que ubamos a sufrir tanto para tener hijos y todo, para no haberse metido," mi mama nomas nos dice, "pues quién las manda," pero nunca nos platicaba, mi papa tampoco, nadie sola te diste cuenta, *sola, sola.*" My parenthesis and my emphasis.

was therefore invisible, but yet it was ever present in the lives of Mexicanas both in San Ignacio and in Detroit. So, even though they repeatedly told me that they never talked about these issues, at that specific moment we were usually engaged in a conversation about not talking about sexuality. These obvious contradictions are inherent in the politics of any identity whether it is sexual, personal, or national, etc. Identities are not fixed; they are fluid and mutable, and sexuality is not an exception. These contradictions, however, help us understand what in this case Mexicanas thought it would be important to emphasize in front of me, in front of other women, their husbands or boyfriends.

Discourses on sexuality are not easily expressed because there is always a lurking threat among women who talk about sex as being perceived as promiscuous, "loose" or *una mujer de la calle* (prostitute). However, Mexicanas have found ways to describe their sexuality and at the same time appropriate the discourse on sexual practices by describing Euroamerican women's sexuality as "different" (implying loose), therefore protecting their respectability and at the same time constructing a discourse on moral superiority vis-à-vis Euroamerican women –and sometimes other Mexicanas who are *de la calle*. By appropriating it as a discourse of moral superiority, Mexicanas opened a space where they could "safely" talk about sex, if and only if they had that point of comparison at hand and when needed. So, if the situation arose where they needed to appeal to the "looseness" and *libertinaje* of Euroamericans, Mexicanas would play the card and carry on with their conversation.

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Yen Le Espiritu have in their research with Latina immigrant women, the former, and Filipina women, the latter, underlined immigrant women's defense mechanisms when positioned with hostile environments in

the United States. They both argue that as a consequence of racism and hostile environments in the U.S., Mexicanas and Filipinas will claim moral superiority both within notions of motherhood and womanhood. Hondagneu-Sotelo underlines that Latina nannies in Los Angeles criticized their employers of not being "good mothers" because of their absence in their children's lives.[53] And on a similar note, Filipina women contest Euroamerican women's sexuality by claiming that Filipinas have superior moral values and respectability when it comes to relationships with men. Espiritu gives as an example the way parents discipline and manage their teenage daughter's sexuality. "In doing so," she argues, "they are not acting out some scripted cultural legacy, bur rather reacting to the experience of colonialism, the Americanization of their nation, and their experience of racism in the United States."[54] Doña Luna's and Don Andrés' reaction to their youngest son dating a Euroamerican young woman also points to the fact that mothers managed and disciplined their son's sexuality by claiming or appealing to family closeness and therefore superior moral values as well,

> Doña Luna, "Yes, I was worried about our youngest son (who is dating a Euroamerican) because he is *enredado* (literally "wrapped up" as in not being able to move) with an *Americana* so when she calls on the phone I hang up, and she calls again and tries to talk, but I hang up, [they both laugh] well, I don't understand.
> Don Andrés, "She knows it's her, just by listening to her voice, just her voice, [he laughs]"
> Doña Luna, "Then my son says "mom who called me now?" and I tell him "I don't understand anything and I don't know anything," so he says, "*Ay* mom answer the phone, besides she just told me that she called," so I told him, "well tell her to speak so that I can understand," and yes I think that they are seeing each other. They have

---

[53] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila, "I'm Here but I'm There":The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood," in in *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends*, eds by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press: 1999), 334.
[54] Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, "Gender and Immigration: A Retrospective and Introduction," in *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends*, eds by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press: 1999), 16.

been dating for a little while, maybe six months or so, and I don't want them to date." [...] I'm afraid that a woman that is not from our culture would *desbaratarnos* (literally to undo) because our family is so close."[55]

I argue, however, that more than just a defense mechanism against hostile practices in the U.S., Mexicanas both in San Ignacio and in Detroit create spaces where they can talk about sexual practices without necessarily accusing overtly Euroamericans of being morally inferior. This is a collective understanding that is usually not articulated directly unless one probes further. San Ignacian women are usually very kind in describing Euroamerican culture in general, but although they don't necessarily call their counterparts in the U.S. loose, they do imply that their sexuality is "different". Moreover, they also imply that Euroamerican families are not as united as Mexican families are and therefore, their moral values are "different".

In her book *A Courtship after Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families*, Jennifer S. Hirsch argues that Mexicanas have changed their perceptions about marriage with age and their experiences in the U.S. Hirsch suggests that older generations were looking for marriages more as a convenient and appropriate institution and that younger generations are now looking for companionate marriages. Through this analysis she identifies younger couples that are using contraceptives in order to enjoy their mate's companionship before beginning a family. Her research is

---

[55] Doña Luna and Don Andrés, 72 and 74 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001.
Doña Luna, "Si, porque el más chico se anda enredando con una (Estadounidense) y habla por teléfono pus le cuelgo, y vuelve a hablar pos le cuelgo, pos no entiendo (se rien los dos)"
Don Andrés, "La conoce en la pura voz, la conoce en la pura voz (se rie)
Doña Luna, "Luego me dice, "¿ama quién me hablo ahora?" yo no entiendo nada yo no se nada, "Ay ama pero conteste, pero ya se ya me dijeron que si hablaron, me iba a hablar una muchacha," le dije, "a pos dile que hable que le entienda porque ya sabes que yo no entiendo. Si, si anda si creo y tiene poquito tiempo pa ca, como medio año, como que anda con él, y yo no quiero. [...] Como le vamos a hacer, si somos todos tan unidos y luego va a desbaratarnos como estamos todos."

founded on a social context that implies that socio-economic factors influence the way Mexicanas construct notions of sexuality and understandings of gender relations. Her seminal work, however, separates Mexicanas' experiences in their sending communities and in the U.S. Furthermore, she makes assumptions about their notions of sexuality based solely on her interviews leaving out the variable of how women talk about sexuality and sexual practices or how they talk about not talking about these issues.[56]

On the one hand this analysis implies that the older generations did not enjoy sex, and on the other Hirsch is bringing to the table the argument of "traditional," Mexican versus "modern," Euroamerican. This argument leaves out older women's acknowledgment –or lack thereof – of enjoying sexual practices and of constructing their own sexual identities. Mexicanas in my research have contested these "traditional" versus "modern" arguments by accommodating both religious and social mores to their own needs and in the process have created and constructed new meanings of those understandings. When I interviewed Doña Toña and Don Jacinto, who had 18 children, they told me of how the births happened. Both were joking and laughing when they narrated their experience,

> Don Jacinto, "Well I didn't [get scared when she was giving birth] once she started going to the doctor [they both laugh] but before when we lived in the rancho, well, men had it bad."
> Doña Toña, "Then later when I had the doctor they would take me in and he would lay down in the living room and sleep [they keep laughing].

---

[56] "Seen this way, the insistent efforts of these men and women to convince me that they have modern bodies, modern loves, and modern sex could be understood as their response to a conversation they did not start and in which they perceive themselves, perhaps rightly, to be at a permanent disadvantage. Laying claim to modern intimacy and modern gender identity is a strategy to claim citizenship in a global community that may be otherwise inaccessible to them; cell phones and beepers are expensive, but hugs and kisses are free." Jennifer S, Hirsch, *A Courtship after Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003), 280.

Don Jacinto, "They didn't let me in. I only saw the birth of four or five of my children, and it was the first time I saw a woman giving birth, [he goes on to give me the names of the children]"
Doña Toña, "They would take me on horseback."
Don Jacinto, "It was always at night [he laughs].
Doña Toña, "Yes, yes it was always at night, because *en la noche se hacen*... [you make them at night].
Don Jacinto, "Well yes, yes that is the way, don't they say that *lo que en la noche se hace, en el día aparece,* [this is a Mexican saying that means whatever you do at night it appears in the day. This saying has a particular sexual connotation that refers to sexual activity, and they both continue to laugh].[57]

Many Mexican sayings such as the one about *lo que en la noche se hace, en el día aparece* have sexual connotations. The dialogue between Doña Toña and Don Jacinto illustrated how older couples did "talk" about sex. But it also emphasized the importance of the humor shared by both in front of me, and the underlining excitement of the interplay of sexual jokes about sexual practices.

Ahistorical general assumptions about Mexicanos' and Mexicanas' constructions of notions of sexuality and how they express sexual practices are limiting and one-dimensional. Despite the socio-economic circumstances that transnational communities navigate, Mexicanas and Mexicanos are continuously producing culture and ideologies influenced by the many variables that affect their lives - cultural, social, political and economic. Generational differences emerge, but as we dissect the narratives that

---

[57] Doña Toña and Don Jacinto 61 and 70 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002.
Don Jacinto, "Pues no ya cuando ibamos al médico ya no (me asustaba), pero antes en el rancho los señores si se la pasaban mal (se ríen).
Doña Toña, "Ya después cuando el médico me metían y el se acostaba en la sala a dormir (se siguen riendo los dos).
Don Jacinto, "No me dejaban entrar, pero si vi el parto de los primeros de cuatro o cinco (continua a dando los nombres de sus hijos)."
Doña Toña, "Me llevaban a caballo"
Don Jacinto, "Siempre era en la noche si (se rie)
Doña Toña, "Si asi era en la noche, como en la noche se hacen...
Don Jacinto, "Pues si así era dicen que lo que en la noche se hace en el día aparece... (los dos se rien)."

Mexicanas choose when talking about issues on sexuality and sexual practices, the emphasis questioning these differences, I propose, is more on *how* they choose to narrate them rather than the narrative per se. Underlining discourses are always lurking in these narratives and one has to stop and listen to what Mexicanas both young and old are formulating and how they choose to do it.

Even though younger Mexicanas are more explicit about their sexualities, both older and younger Mexicanas underlined similar circumstances about their knowledge or lack thereof about issues on sexuality and sex and courtship rituals. These in turn were affected by their experience as immigrants and by changing cultural and social circumstances in Mexico and in the U.S. Mexicanas experienced circumstances differently in relation to what they perceived around them and therefore assumptions based on dichotomies such as "modern" versus "traditional" were not applicable. For example, Nan had sex with her husband before she got married and before she migrated to Detroit. She remembered,

> [I knew about sex] because I had friends and everything and some had already had sex and they would say, "you are missing out." And I think that you really had an idea of what it was but I was embarrassed to talk about it. But I had sex with my husband [before they were married] and it was about five years ago, I was only 20, so for me it was something new, it was great![58]

Mexicanas are having more pre-marital sex, and these "transgressions" sometimes lead to pregnancy. And pregnancy out of wedlock leads sometimes – not always – to

---

[58] (yo sabía del sexo) si porque yo tenía amigas y todo de que pues a lo mejor ya habían tenido sexo, o algo, namas te decían, "ay de lo que te pierdes mensa," y tu pues, tenías una idea no pero no sabía que onda, pero a mi me daba pena andar platicando de eso o pues asi, y yo tuve sexo con mi esposo (antes de casarse) ahora que pues hace unos cinco año, tenía 20 años, asi que para mi fue algo Nuevo, ay padre! Nan, 26 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. My parenthesis.

immigration. As Gel commented, "[Laughing] Well I was pregnant with Galan, my oldest son and Polo [her husband now, boyfriend back then] was going to come [to Detroit] so I told him fine leave but I'm pregnant. So he said, "no we will leave together then." And that's why we decided to come here together because I was pregnant and I could not stay in my house and he wanted to leave." [59]

Therefore, even though the general narrative constantly denied knowledge of sexual practices in interviews with both older and younger Mexicanas, the fact remained that they were and are engaging in sexual activities. Moreover, whether young or old, many enjoyed their sexual experiences. When we compare these experiences by separating first, Mexicanas nationally – those who reside in Mexico and those who reside in the U.S. - and secondly, by using "modern" versus "traditional" as a backdrop we are denying Mexicanas' fluidity in the constructions of notions on sexuality and sexual practices. Moreover, we are supporting traditional patriarchal assumptions on female sexual identities that use as a starting point the argument that women don't like to have sex. Transnational sexualities can not be separated by useless dichotomies based on Western's ideologies about the "other's" constructions of sexualities, transnational sexualities speak to a particular circumstance that inhabits transnational communities, taking into consideration Mexicanas' ideologies formulated by both their experiences in their sending communities and in the U.S. These ideologies permeate Mexicanas'

[59] Most of the young women that I interviewed acknowledged their engagement in premarital sex both in San Ignacio and in Detroit. Despite the fact that many of them got pregnant, they nevertheless articulated their pleasure when engaging in sexual activities with their husbands or boyfriends. "Estaba yo embarazada de Galan, del niño más grande, entonces Polo (su esposo) se iba a venir y yo le dije que pos que se viniera y yo le dije que estaba embarazada y dijo no pues nos vamos juntos y por eso decidimos por estar embarazada, no me podia estar en mi casa, el se iba a venir." Gel, 25 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.

consciousness, I argue, whether they decide to migrate to the U.S. or stay in San Ignacio. It is precisely the connection between these two that defines transnational sexualities. The creation of these transnational sexualities allows us to reconsider conceptualizations of gender, womanhood and femininity by acknowledging their transparency and fluidity when these are shaped, reshaped, contested, and constructed by the immigrant experience. Furthermore, concepts of femininity and masculinity are expanding through the process of migration and the creation of transnational communities.

Courting rituals for Mexicanas have come a long way from "we talked through a hole on the wall"[60] to the very elaborated *serenatas* and processions during the *fiestas de los ausentes* where a few young Mexicanos displayed their cars as symbols of their success as immigrants. Both young women and men in San Ignacio enjoyed days of courting via different ways, of which one was to show their assets. Young women in San Ignacio, however, agreed that despite the luxurious and extravagant cars males displayed, they were aware of the young men's economic situations. They knew that most of these young men owed the money for the cars and furthermore, they were aware of the hard labor that led to acquiring a few material possessions.[61] Since most of the young women in San Ignacio had relatives in the U.S. and were constantly exposed to the immigrant experience in the town, they recognized that "money doesn't grow on trees," and knew that most likely they would have to join the labor force in order to contribute to the household. For example Ana, 18 years old, got married in 2004 with an immigrant whose

[60] Tina y Saúl, 47 and 52 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.

[61] Reyna, 15 years of age, Mónica, 15 years of age, Bianca, 13 years of age and Elena, 14 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. Elena comenta, "Si la mayoría tienen su carro, dicen "ay me voy a ir para comprarme un carro y traerlo," [esto significa que] fue porque no se fue a andar de vago y que le echo ganas y fué y lo trajo." Reyna agrega, "[que compro el carro] se me hace normal, que junto su dinerito y se compro su carro."

family owns a restaurant in Detroit. She commented that, "At first yes I will work in the restaurant, but it is not my great aspiration to be a waitress, I want to succeed. No, I want something more in time. I know that I have to learn English and everything and later I can have a good job."[62] Young women were also aware of the hardships that immigration brought about such as family dislocations. Thus, their experience with migration living in San Ignacio had not only informed them of the reality of immigration but it had also opened up venues where their choices for a prospective mate and a better economic future empowered them and allowed them to plan and strategize on how best the emigrational experience would suit them. Nonetheless, this process of selection, mostly based on a successful future as migrants, was also influenced by several other factors such as their relationships with their families, their sense of adventure –or lack thereof - their financial situations; and most importantly it relied on the kind of social networks they could count on to facilitate their migration. It is to these networks that I turn to on the next chapter, emphasizing the gender contradictions and tensions that are inherent in the constructions of these networks.

[62] Ana, 18 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, 2003. "Voy a trabajar en el restaurant de la familia de mi novio] de primera si, no es mi gran aspiración trabajar de mesera en el restaurant. No, yo quisiera algo más con el tiempo. Yo se que tengo que aprender ingles y todo ya después agarrar un buen trabajo."

[...] No crea que me gusto mucho [Detroit cuando llegue en el 1970], no me gusto y la casita no me gusto tampoco pero yo estaba contenta porque yo tenía toda mi familia y mi esposo allá, entonces uno es feliz porque tiene a su familia. [...] Mi esposo me llevo a mi, pues no se a la mejor porque me quería mucho (se rie) porque a las demas (esposas) no, bueno no se...Cuando llegue empece a ir a templo de Santa Ana porque ellos [su esposo Delfino y sus hermanos] ya habían empezado a ir al Santa Ana. El templo es más acogedor [que el Holy Redeemer] además también uno se reune, hay un café, o sea hay un lugar donde hacen café, ahí la gente hace, da dinero y hay una persona que hace café y pan dulce y entonces la gente se va al café y al pan y entonces cada quién se hace bolitas a platicar con sus familiares o con sus amigos o de todo eso, o sea es como muy familiar más que los otros templos. Ahí había de todo no había gente de San Ignacio cuando yo llegue pero había gente de Santiaguito [un pueblo cerca de San Ignacio] había gente Puertorriqueña, había de Cuba. Yo me hice amistades de todo, como yo tenía muchos hijos ya grandes y luego no estan tan feos, muy vanidosa yo entonces yo me hice de muchas amistades porque las personas aquellas les gustaban mis hijos para sus hijas entonces a mi me hacían amistades. Tengo diez hijos y tres hijas.
Doña Tere[1]

Well I didn't like it too much [when I arrived in Detroit in 1970], no I didn't like it and nor did I like the small house but I was happy because I had all my family and my husband there, so one feels happy because you have your family. [...] My husband took me, well I don't know why perhaps because he loved me very much [she laughs] because the other ones stayed here [wives of other immigrants], well I don't know...When I arrived I started to go to Santa Ana church because they [her husband Delfino and his brothers] had already started to go there. The church is very cozy [more than Holy Redeemer] besides one visits with other people, there is coffee, like a coffee shop where people give money and there is someone making coffee and *pan dulce* [sweet bread], so people go there and have coffee and bread and they form groups of people and you can talk with your family or friends, you know all that, is more family oriented than other churches. There were a lot of people [when I got there] not from San Ignacio at first but from Santiaguito [a town very close to San Ignacio], there were Puerto Ricans and people from Cuba. I made a lot of friends, partly because I had a lot of older sons, and they are not that ugly, I'm so vain [she laughs] so then I made a lot of friends because some people liked my sons for their daughters so they became my friends. I have ten sons and three daughters.

The Politics of Movement

On one of my visits to Mexican Town in the summer of 2004, my friend Gaby volunteered to give me a tour of the neighborhood. We started out with the Holy Redeemer church and from there we moved on to Santa Ana's church. Gaby thought the tour would be far more interesting when I saw these two beautiful churches. She was right, they were stunning, but what made them so beautiful was all the people that were

[1] Doña Tere, 73 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. My parenthesis. Doña Tere was the first woman from San Ignacio to arrive in Detroit. Her husband Delfino Hernández applied for her residency as well as all of his children's and Doña Tere arrived in 1970.

gathered around to chat informally after mass. I recognized almost everyone, many of whom I had seen just a year before at the *fiestas patronales* in San Ignacio. Doña Alicia remembered how she perceived her community,

> I like being in Detroit because there are so many people from here [San Ignacio] there. We see each other with a lot of joy when we meet in the stores, in the church everywhere and we help each other a lot. Besides my children are there and I enjoy doing things for them, I know that they love me and I do them as well and they like it when I'm there, there are so many of them! But now I'm older and I get sick, my heart is weak and I can't handle bad news or work too much because I already had minor heart attacks."[2]

Doña Alicia's recollection painted a vivid illustration of how their transnational community had developed over the years. Considering the hostile environment that Mexican immigrants had and still have to endure when they cross the border north, they have considerably turned a small part of Detroit into a second home. Her statement underlined the ambiguities that inhabit Mexicanas' decisions toward choosing between staying in Detroit with most of their families or going back to San Ignacio as they get older. This contradiction was just one of the many that permeated the San Ignacian imagination as they constructed their lives both in Detroit and in San Ignacio. Older women struggled with these serious ambiguities about temporal or permanent residency in Detroit caused by several factors of which one was their historical efforts to carve spaces –private and social – within hostile, racist and patriarchal systems. Younger women, although not exempted from these vicissitudes, have developed various ways to

---

[2] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. "Me gusta estar allá [Detroit] y que las personas de allá que son de aquí, nos vemos también con mucho gusto. Cuando nos encontramos en las tiendas en la misa en donde quiera nos prestamos algun servicio, alguna cosa y se hace muy bonito estarles dando allá a mi hijos también. Yo se que me quieren mucho y yo a ellos y donde quiera me ocupan pues son tantos! Sucede que ya estoy tan enferma de reumatismo del corazón y todo eso, que no puedo soportar penas grandes ni trabajar mucho porque ya me dieron infartos y todo eso."

navigate within these very limited parameters, thus making the politics of movement more flexible and finding ruptures where they can challenge and shape the contours of patriarchal gender relations and hostile environments in Detroit.

Once in Detroit, Mexicanas began a process of constructing a sense of community building the intricate foundations of immigrant social networks. Within this context, gender relations became the matrix where all other factors such as class, sexuality, economic and social forces, as well as racialized institutions in Detroit, intersected. And nothing as the immigrants' sense of obligation toward their family members and friends demonstrated these everyday struggles and negotiations to facilitate the movement from San Ignacio to Detroit. Immigrants created alternate understandings of morality, ethics and family obligations based on their immigrant experience. Moreover, these new understandings have restructured the meanings of kinship and friendship in San Ignacio and in Detroit.

The creation of social networks which involve kinship and friendship support have historically sustained immigration as mentioned by Massey, Alarcón, Durand and González in their path breaking study in 1987.[3] However, this study like many others, focused only on male immigrants, and left Mexicanas in the background only mentioned in relation to their roles as wives and mothers that accompanied their male partners. Recently, academic studies on Mexican immigration to the U.S. have begun to place

---

[3] "[...] The second principle is that, once begun, this migration (international) eventually develops a social infrastructure that enables movement on a mass basis. Over time, ties between sending and receiving areas grows, creating a social network that progressively reduces the costs of international movement. People from the same community are enmeshed in a web of reciprocal obligations upon which new migrants draw to enter and find work in the receiving society."
"[...] Kinship forms one of the most important bases of migrant social organization, and family connections are the most secure bonds within the networks. The strongest relationships are between male migrants interacting as fathers and sons..." Douglas Massey, Rafael Alarcón, Jorge Durand, Humberto González, *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987), 5, 140-41.

gender as a category of analysis, contributing a rich and informed analysis on Mexicanas that migrate to the United States.

However, these studies for the most part, have been using the term "social networks" all too indiscriminately without focusing on what these social networks entail in the lives of Mexicanas. Thus missing the cultural and social constructions of gender that come about in everyday experiences. Even in recent feminist literature on immigration, these social networks are taken for granted without a deep understanding of how these are constructed and therefore negating the intersection of class, gender, sexuality and nationality.[4]

In this chapter I deconstruct San Ignacian social networks and analyze more deeply how Mexicanas weave the social fabric that supports and sustains the migratory flow to and from San Ignacio and Detroit. Even though the first generation of immigrants to Detroit were mostly men – primarily due to a gendered demand for labor such as the Bracero Program – once the women started to arrive, they built on the first social networks initiated by Don Chuy in August 18, 1964. Contrary to most literature on immigration and transnational communities that credit men for creating these social networks, I contend that it is San Ignacian women who have continued to maintain and support these systems of relationships. They have created a community by being exposed and participating in U.S. social structures such as schools and hospitals, by performing

---

[4] See for example: Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001); Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism" in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, ed. David G. Gutiérrez (Wilmington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc. Imprint, 1996); Jennifer S. Hirsch in *A Courtship After Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003); Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo in *Gendered transitions: Mexican experiences of immigration* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Ofelia Woo Morales in *Las Mujeres También nos Vamos al Norte* (Universidad de Guadalajara, 2001).

reproductive and productive labor, through church related activities, and lastly but most importantly through kinship.

The immigrant experience challenged kinship systems in San Ignacio and in Detroit creating new relationships that reassessed San Ignacian ethics, morals, and familial obligations. Transnational families restructured and accommodated new definitions of hierarchical and emotional family ties, which challenged "traditional" kinship systems along the lines of immigration. Within all these social, religious, and familial processes, however, a series of contradictions, tensions, conflicts and dislocations are dialectically constructed, and these in turn shape and reshape the contours of the social networks. Moreover, they also open spaces where women navigate within gender relations heavily influenced by patriarchal mores that can be "liberating" or can also be very oppressive.

Academics have debated whether the experience of immigration for women changes traditional gender roles and provides them with more decision-making power within the family. The problem with this focus is that first, it uses as a backdrop of comparison Mexicanas that live in the sending communities. This makes an inherent assumption that they are more "traditional" – backward – and supposes that the experience of Mexicanas who live in the U.S. makes them more "liberal" – modern. I suggest that this mode of inquiry is ineffective when studying transnational communities, because gender relations are constantly changing and readapting to the particular circumstances –social, economic, cultural - that surround Mexicanas. Additionally, my point of departure recognizes that the women in San Ignacio have mostly crossed translocal borders by experiencing the migration of family members, - in the 1940s and

1950s usually by husbands, and in the 1960s husbands, daughters, and sons - by adopting male-traditional roles in the sending community and becoming heads of households. Finally, we need to be cautious when we are dealing with different systems that involve social participation, familial dislocations, and most importantly emotional relationships, therefore, making it much more complex to make general assumptions.

As gender academicians, we are often so focused on finding challenges to patriarchy that we sometimes miss the variety of ways women negotiate and contest oppressive and patriarchal systems. As feminist historians we need to listen to our subjects because patriarchal systems are not monolithic. Being particularly cautious and listening to Mexicanas' narratives of their own histories and experiences for the past six decades this analysis focuses on historical processes that affect and are affected by immigration. I also acknowledge the limitations of this inquiry since women in general have to navigate within patriarchal systems. Therefore, my point of departure is not how much more "liberated" Mexicanas are through the immigrant experience, but rather how Mexicanas maneuver within the contested spaces they create despite lurking oppressive and patriarchal systems.

Sociologists such as Rhacel Salazar-Parreñas have documented the dislocations of family separation, downward (or upward) social mobility, and the dehumanization or commoditization of labor by a systematic globalized economy that immigration creates. In her seminal work, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work*, argues that, "the experience of migration is embodied in dislocations."[5] Her work focuses

[5] Rhacel Salazar-Parreñas in her book *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* brings to the fore the fact that many Filipina immigrants in Los Angeles and Rome have had a formal education yet they have to work as domestics. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 3.

on four institutions, the nation-state, the family, the labor force and the migrant community. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Saskia Sassen have also contributed to the literature on immigration, the former focusing on gender and Latinas who do domestic work, and the latter offering a socio-economic and political analysis on how capitalism and the global economy have triggered and supported large diasporas by interlocking transnational corporations and labor forces in underdeveloped countries. Moreover, they all suggest that globalized economies create low-wage labor that for the past three decades is filled mostly by women.[6] They also supported the original idea that Massey, Alarcón, Durand and González put forth about the creation of social networks; however, they integrated gender as an analytic category. In as much as I agree with all of them, I also recognize there has been a general oversight of important everyday processes that directly affect the social networks and the gender struggles and tensions that derive from them. These tensions in turn affect notions of "femininity" and "masculinity," "motherhood" and "fatherhood," domesticity, and workers' identities.

Once the bracero generation of San Ignacians was established in Detroit, they were confronted with the dilemma of whether to bring their families to live with them or not. This decision-making process had to do with several factors such as their uncertainty of whether they would stay permanently in Detroit or go back to San Ignacio once they saved enough money. Also, some Mexicanos felt that their family's journey north would

---

[6] In her article "Strategic Instantiations of Gendering in the Global Economy," Saskia Sassen points to the creation of global cities as a consequence of "today's global economy" she adds that, "[...] we are seeing the return in all the global cities around the world of the so-called serving classes, made up largely of immigrant and migrant women." In *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends* ed. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), 45. See also, Saskia Sassen, "U.S. Immigration Policy toward Mexico in a Global Economy," in *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States*, ed. David G. Gutiérrez (Wilmington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc. Imprint, 1996), 213-227; Roger Rouse, "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism" Ibid., 247-263.

erode their patriarchal power and challenge their identities as men and heads of households. A year after the Hernández brothers arrived in Detroit in 1969, Delfino brought his wife Doña Tere and his children. Like most men who migrated to the U.S. during the Bracero Program, the Hernández brothers processed their residency status and were able to petition for their families without complications. Although they all had the opportunity to petition their families Rubén Hernández decided not to. Unlike his brothers, Rubén believed that taking his family to Detroit would erode familial "traditional" values and to him this meant the diminishment of the ability to control the family, in particular his children. What he identified as the inability to control his family demonstrates a loss of patriarchal power and is exemplified by Rubén's view of his brother's family's experience in the U.S. His wife Ana María shared this as an example of what Rubén would refer to as an erosion of "traditional values,"

> Yes, Delfino took his whole family, he began to process his eldest son's papers [for the residency] and then his wife and the youngest ones. But after a while his sons began to rebel against him and that served as an example and a warning for Rubén who said, "No if that were my son I would beat him up, look at how he [one of Delfino's sons] talks to my brother. That's why I'm not taking my children," and since I had a sister in California and she also told me, "no, don't even think about coming here [the U.S.] to live, life here is so routine-like and very *enfadosa* [angry-like literally, however, in this context it would mean very uncomfortable].[7]

Rubén along with other Mexicanos created an image of life in the U.S. that challenged his male domination over the family while avoiding having his wife and the family nearby. Thus, the U.S. in as much as it became an economic heaven for some, also

---

[7] Ana, 62 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Si, Delfino se llevo a toda la familia para allá pero eso nos sirvió de experiencia, porque los hijos como que se le revelaron. Delfino les arreglo a los hijos más grandesitos y luego a la Señora y a todos también. Fueron 13 de familia pero como que los hijos se le empezaron a rebelar a Delfino y eso nos sirvió de experiencia, para Rubén que dijo, "no, yo por eso los mios no" y como yo tenía una hermana allá que me decía, "no, no ni se te ocurra venirte a vivir aca es una vida rutinaria, enfadosa."

became a threatening symbol of what men perceived as a more "liberal" society that in essence would allow the rest of the family to gain some power within the family structure challenging his parental authority. Greater control for him ironically meant separation, which allowed women and children left in San Ignacio more autonomy. Don Chuy agreed with Rubén as well, however Don Chuy expressed his decision not to take the family in the context of women's transgressions of gender appropriate behavior. Don Chuy recalled his neighbor Salvador and his daughters who were approximately 16 and 18 years old. In the early 1970s they went out with their boyfriends one night and came home very late. According to Don Chuy, they had been drinking so much that they could hardly stand up. Don Chuy remembered that Salvador was incredibly angry and he gave the young women *una mula* (a very bad beating) so bad that his wife called the police. Salvador was jailed and Don Chuy posted bail for him. Don Chuy recalled that Salvador took all the passports and documentation of his family and burned it all in the park. The next day, Salvador took his family back to Mexico and never returned to Detroit.[8]

---

[8] Don Chuy, 73 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "A mi esposa a ella nunca la lleve, me los iba a llevar por eso compre la casa pero me paso un caso tan chistoso, usted sabe como somos de machistas nosotros. Me hice amigo de un vecino, se llamaba Salvador, era de aqui del pueblo. [...] Tenía dos muchachitas una de 16 y otra de 18 y un día me dice, "Don Jesús venga a platicarme, no hayo con quién cabrones, me siento muy solo. En eso estabamos platicando cuando llego un chaval, "oiga no esta (no me acuerdo como se llamaba la muchachita) ¿esta fulana?" "si si está" "venía por ella," a ¿venías por ella? ¿porque?" "porque vamos a ir al cine yo ando con ella" a entonces le hablo a la muchacha. "Fulana te hablan aquí" ya salió y le pregunta "¿pa que te quiere ese carbon?" ella dijo, "papa pues es que es mi novio" a es tu novio uy chingados yo ni siquiera me puedo agarrar una chucha por ahí en la calle y ustedes luego luego agarran novio cabrón." "¿Me dejas papa? Nomás no vengas noche, saliendo del cine" que estaba por la Vernon. "No papa nomás salimos del cine y nos venimos." Llego otro por la otra chica y salio igual, estuvimos ahí sentados en el porche de esa casa hasta las dos de la mañana y no llegaban las chavalillas y me dice, "Ay ya me esta agarrando el pendiente, pues que pasaría, si siempre salen a las 11 o 12 cuando mucho." Cuando al rato como a las 2:30am yo le dije "sabe que yo ya me voy a dormir ya es muy noche y yo tengo que trabajar mañana domingo," "ay esperese tantito Don Jesús" yo creo que ya presentia algo. [...] Cuando en eso llegan las muchachas con los novios las traían bien borrachas, que no se podían ni parar y luego dijo el "este hijo de la chingada... me esta viendo y con ella bien abrazada que chistoso." Se enojo el Señor [...] y se fué pa dentro y les puso una mula (paliza) que quién sabe si harían caso o no. Y luego salió y quería pegarles a los muchachos pero se escaparon. Yo creo que tanto les pego a las chavalitas que la Señora habló por teléfono y se lo llevo la policía. [..] En la mañana pague la multa. [...] Llego con su esposa y le dijo, "fijate que me dijeron allá en la corte que tenía que llevar los

Don Chuy's and Ruben's fears were very real and serious to them, and offered a panoramic view of how some Mexicanos perceived the U.S. in terms of building a community and raising a family. They also underscored how Mexicanos "protected" their sense of manhood and their power as heads of their families. Even though young sons' rebellions were a serious threat to Mexicanos' power within the family structure, daughters' transgressions were more serious and with that, one can also assume that women's movement within the U.S. was perceived by men as less manageable than in San Ignacio. Mexicanos were absent for long periods of time, and left their wives in charge of family disciplining and survival. It is important to take into consideration the men's fears within the context of migration. Their concerns were not only about moving from one country to another, but also included the movement from the country to the city – rural life versus urban life. Many of these concerns were shared by collective ideas of how life in the country and its values contrasted to life in a city. These collective ideas were not nostalgic or romanticized; they were based on Mexicanos' experiences in San Ignacio and in Detroit.[9] Mexicanos knew that in the town the presence of the church as well as immediate family and the townspeople in general were acknowledged as informal social supervisors and familial disciplinarians. Perceptions of dissimilarities between life in Detroit and life in San Ignacio were not always considered threatening, but they

---

pasaportes" [...] Salimos de ahi al parque los echo ahí en un bote y les prendió fuego, me dijo, "que chingen a su madre me las llevo para México y jamás vuelvo." A mi no me gusto eso y por eso no me lleve a mi familia."

[9] "On the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed: on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times." Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1.

permeated San Ignacians' lives, beliefs, and feelings in Detroit and in San Ignacio throughout the next three decades.

Recollections of how women perceived Detroit also reflected the myriad sentiments that Mexicanas had when building transnational communities. Although contradictory perceptions saturated the oral history interviews, most Mexicanas who moved to Detroit in the early 1970s concluded that they preferred their lives in Detroit to former lives in San Ignacio. Older women who resided in San Ignacio repeatedly commented on how much they would rather be living in Detroit. While they had several reasons for staying in San Ignacio, often it was the deterioration of their health that was the primary reason. They had grown old and some were not physically able to make their sojourns back and forth. Others humored their husbands who liked to go back to San Ignacio during the winter and returned to Detroit when the weather was less harsh. Doña Luna and Don Andrés were a good example. While Don Andrés was alive, he and Doña Luna went back and forth between Detroit and San Ignacio, but once Don Andrés passed away, Doña Luna moved to Detroit permanently to be taken care of by her sons and daughters. The case of Tina and her husband Luis Mercado exemplified this point as well,

> Luis, "Well right now I don't work anymore [in Detroit] so we feel content being here in San Ignacio, when we go back I do odd jobs here and there, but I don't work anymore."
> Tina, "Well yeah we go back and forth and spent time here and there. I come here [to San Ignacio] with *pesar* (sorrow) because of my children [who are in Detroit]."[10]

---

[10] Tina y Luis Mercado, 67 and 71 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001.
Luis, "Pues ahorita ya no trabajo ya estamos agusto aquí por allá solo hago algún remiendo eso hago pero ya no trabajo."
Tina, "No pues allá vamos y venimos duramos un tiempo allá y acá. Pues a donde quiera pero yo me vengo con pesar, por los hijos."

These women demonstrated contradictory feelings about where they wanted to be and how they wanted to spend the rest of their lives. It seemed that older women struggled between staying in their community of origin and Detroit where most of their families resided permanently.

In what is called Mexican Town in southwest Detroit, a thriving community of San Ignacians contradicts recent literature on the impact of the deindustrialization of Detroit. In the 1970s the dismantling of the auto industry and as domino effect closures of the steel industry and meat packing industries led to the abrupt loss of thousands of jobs that devastated the city.[11] There is no doubt that there was an unprecedented fall in the economy of Detroit in general, however, the literature that points to this historical period, generally, overlooks marginal groups such as Mexican immigrants and their establishment of a new, albeit informal and less grandiose, economy that has been flourishing for the past three decades in Detroit and consequently in San Ignacio – with business investments in the town's economy that come from dollars earned by both men and women in Detroit.[12] As one reporter noted,

---

[11] Richard Freeman, "Death of Detroit: Harbinger of Collapse of Deindustrialized America," in *Executive Intelligence Review*, April 23, 2004. "Observing the death of Detroit, as it shrinks into oblivion and its citizens are ravaged, one is struck by a fundamental transformation: In the period 1940 through 1963, Detroit was the greatest manufacturing city in the world, unmatched in real physical productivity. But during the period 1964-2004, Detroit became synonymous with blight and decay beyond imagination."

[12] Dionicio Valdés, in Barrios Norteños points out that Mexicans in Detroit according to the 1990 census were only 13% of Mexicans in Michigan and that "by the late 1990s Mexicans were only 3% of Detroit's population..." (223). Granted that Mexicans are a small minority within the population of Detroit, nevertheless urban studies of Detroit such as Thomas J. Sugrue's seminal work, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996) focus only on African Americans and leave out informal economies and experiences of smaller groups such as Mexicans. It is important to pay attention to all these urban changes triggered by, in this case, a small population of Mexican immigrants, without underestimating the economic realities that Detroit underwent during deindustrialization and all the consequences this brought upon the population of Detroit such as rampant unemployment, housing discrimination and segregation, the changes from manufacturing enterprises to an economic focus on the service sector, etc.

> San Ignacio depends on Detroit, but at least one part of Detroit depends on San Ignacio. Many of the estimated 15,000 San Ignacio immigrants in Metro Detroit live in southwest Detroit, the state's oldest and largest Latino neighborhood, and have helped make it one of the few city neighborhoods gaining population and businesses. [...] San Ignacio natives joined dozens of Mexican immigrants who opened restaurants, grocery stores, record shops and other businesses in the past decade.[13]

This thriving community, was started by Chuy Mercado and the bracero generation, and later was supported and encouraged by Doña Tere and the women who pioneered its creation, by housing thousands of San Ignacians. These circumstances are more often than not neglected by the historiography that focuses on urbanization and marginal groups.

The social networks that the Mercado brothers created first, by bringing the Hernández brothers and followed by a few more men, were only the beginning of what was to become a dynamic transnational community. The men who initiated these networks does not even begin to compare with the large number of San Ignacians who began to arrive in Detroit starting in the 1970s when the first Mexicanas began to delineate and create this transnational community. The bracero generation would have had no impact on the creation of this transnational community had it not been by the women who arrived shortly after. The women who moved to Detroit with their families and contributed with their reproductive and productive labor, opened their homes to welcome large numbers of San Ignacians. Doña Tere moved to Detroit in 1970 and her thirteen children and their respective families joined her and Delfino shortly after. She, like other immigrant women, played a critical role in supporting the arrival of extended kin and townspeople. Doña Tere recalled cooking for large numbers of San Ignacians, of

[13] Louis Aguilar, "Mexicans bolster a corner of Detroit," *The Detroit News*, Sunday, March 6, 2005.

which many were not related to her but were friends of either her husband or her sons and daughters,

> I cooked soup and salad and *carne al horno*, and by the time they came home from work everything was set up because I had prepared everything in advance. I used to get up very early and I made lunches for everyone. Could you imagine that I had up to seventeen people in my house! Because *los muchachos* would bring their friends [from San Ignacio] and they all slept in the basement crowded until I had to say, "I can't have so many people in my house anymore." But my husband and my sons didn't say anything, and we had fun because we would have parties and we all sang. We would celebrate different birthdays in my house, and I had to accommodate, besides my house was big and I was not very *delicada* (strict) about cleanliness. Also, I would think to myself, if I do not welcome *mi gente* (my own people) and let them feel comfortable then they would not feel at home.[14]

This sense of obligation for *mi gente* became the pillar for the foundation of social networks that allowed the mobilization of thousands of San Ignacians[15] in a period of three decades. Reproductive and productive labor by Mexicanas served as the thread to weave and shape this new social fabric informed by transnational ties between San Ignacio and Detroit.

Mexicanas carved spaces both private – the home – and public– the shop floor as well as the church, clinics and hospitals, schools, and commercial stores – where they

---

[14] Doña Tere, 73 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. " Yo les hacía sopa, ensalada y carne al horno y ya cuando venían de trabajar ya estaba todo porque lo hacía antes. Me levantaba temprano y les hacía lunches, fíjese nomás y llegaron a estar 17 personas en mi casa. Porque los muchachos llevaban más amigos de San Ignacio. Dormían en el basement apilados hasta que les dije ya no puedo tenerlos... Pero mis muchachos y mi esposo no decían nada, O sea no decían nada, ahí se hacían muchos relajos cantaban y hacíamos fiestas. Cumpleaños hacíamos de todo en mi casa porque era grande. Y yo no era delicada... Porque decía yo si no recibo a mi gente para andar ay que no me pisen aquí que no me pisen allá, pues las personas no se sienten agusto, como si estuvieran en su casa."

[15] According to *The Detroit News* approximately 15,000 San Ignacians live in Metro Detroit. Louis Aguilar, "Mexicans bolster a corner of Detroit," *The Detroit News*, Sunday, March 6, 2005. In 1970 the U.S. Census reported 27,038 "people of Spanish Language." By 2000 the U.S. Census reported 47,167 "people of Spanish Language," of which 33,143 were Mexicans. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population, 1970-2000 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office). For the 1970 and 1980 Census information, Mexicans were not classified; the census has them listed as part of "General Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language for Areas and Places." These numbers are not accurate considering the thousands of Mexicans that are rendered socially invisible due to their immigration status.

connected a pipeline of information important to the development of transnational social networks. In these spaces Mexicanas shared information related to their health, jobs, families and their new lives in Detroit. These voices traveled transnationally to San Ignacio, where other women planned and experienced immigration if not personally then vicariously. San Ignacio became an integral part of Detroit and vice a versa in Mexicanas' everyday lives.

Women's entry into paid work opened up additional spaces for Mexicanas to expand the development of transnational communities. The shop floor became one more contested arena where women experienced and revisited their cultural and social constructions of gender roles as well as their creations of social networks that would enable other women to enter the labor force.[16] Doña Tere's daughter-in-law, Carmen arrived in Detroit in 1972 shortly after she was married to Javier Hernández, Doña Tere's oldest son, in San Ignacio. After being separated for about a year, Carmen joined her husband and his family in Detroit. While most of the males in the family worked in steel factories, women joined the labor force in auto-parts factories. Carmen worked in a factory sewing auto covers for cars. She remembered how kinship networks created economic and social spaces for Mexicanas,

> I didn't like the job at the beginning; it was very difficult so when I got pregnant with Fabiola, my first daughter, I quit. But, after I had Araceli my second, I started to work there again and I learned better, we sewed car covers with industrial sewing machines. I started working there because my *comadre* recommended me. Right after I started, my friend Aurora, *que en paz descanse* (may she rest in peace) entered the factory and she worked there for almost 27 years. [...] So, at first we were a small group from San Ignacio, only Lola and Aurora, then Elia started after I did and then more people arrived. We would get together after work and visit each

[16] See Appendix C, table 3.1

other all the time. I would run to my aunt Lola's house in the evenings so that I wouldn't be alone.[17]

Carmen's labor at the factory gave her an opportunity to meet other women and share information about the work, and at the same time, her reproductive labor at home allowed more San Ignacians to move to Detroit. When Carmen moved to Detroit, Doña Tere went back to San Ignacio to bring her youngest children to Detroit. Doña Tere stayed in San Ignacio for a year before she went back to Detroit. In that year, Carmen cooked and cared for 14 family members and friends and also worked in the auto plant. Her husband Javier was the first to marry, placing the responsibility on her to provide and care for others. She recalled learning how to cook in Detroit thanks to her *comadre*, but although the workload was very heavy, she commented, "I felt good here [her house now, back then her in-law's] with all of them because I was not alone; 31 years ago there was almost no one from San Ignacio, as there are now."[18]

The complexity of gender relations made it much more difficult to identify whether the effects of women's entry into the labor force was more "liberating" in terms of challenging traditional gender roles. The case of Gel illustrated this plurality of experiences by Mexicans and their ambivalence in terms of defining their position as wage earners vis-à-vis their male peers. Gel commented on her contribution to the household's finances, "Well yes we could definitely support ourselves with what Polo

---

[17] Carmen, 50 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "No me gusto el trabajo primero era bien trabajoso y cuando salí embarazada de Fabiola me salí. Pero después volví a entrar cuando tuve a mi hija Araceli. Cocía lonas con máquinas industriales. Empecé a trabajar ahí proque mi comadre fué la que me metió. Entonces entre yo y luego después entro Aurora que en paz descance, ella duro muchos años como 27 años. Después luego empezo a llegar más gente. Primero eramos muy poquitas, nada más Lola y Aurora, Elia llego después que yo. Nos juntabamos, nos visitabamos mucho porque eramos las únicas. Yo corría para allá con Lola, que viene siendo mi tía, en las tardes para no estar sola."

[18] Ibid., "Yo me sentía bien aqui con todos porque no estaba sola, hace 31 años no había gente de San Ignacio como ahora."

[her husband] makes. So, what I make I use for things that are not necessary, like for clothing, going out, or to put away. So, what I make is for whatever I want to do with it."[19] Gel's perception of her contribution to the household was that of a supplemental income, however Gel had been working since she arrived in Detroit in 1995. Her comment underlined her effort to defend and support her husband's sense of manhood and masculinity as the breadwinner, thus considering her contribution as minor and supplemental. It was clear that her financial contribution was necessary to the survival of the household since her wages covered family's necessities such as clothing, food, and money for their trips to Mexico. Gel's view of her productive labor underlined how women had to constantly navigate within patriarchal assumptions surrounding women's paid work. Most of the women that I interviewed had worked and are currently working in Detroit. Due to their immigration status in Detroit many have had several low paying jobs including: working in auto parts industries, service and food sectors, and other diverse manufacturing enterprises. Women's ambivalence about recognizing their economic contribution to the household also emphasized their efforts to create spaces within racist, hostile and oppressive patriarchal systems.

Some women overtly challenged gender roles by using their entry into the labor force as leverage to reprimand their partners for not being able to support them and their families as traditional gender roles ascribed. Such was the case of Tina who commented, "If men take care of their obligations better [make enough money to support the family] then I don't think women should work, they should care for their families. But if they can not then it is better there [Detroit] because here [San Ignacio] there are no jobs for

[19] Gel, 25 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Si, si nos podríamos mantener con lo que él [su esposo] gana. Per has de cuenta con lo que yo gano lo uso como para cosas que no son... para vestirnos, para salir para guardar has de cuenta que lo que yo gano es para lo que yo quiera."

women."[20] Tina's comment reflected her views on traditional gender roles, however, when I asked her if she enjoyed working she replied, "Yes I did, at first it was hard but now I really like it, it's very nice. You don't have to worry about anything."[21] Tina was laid off and the company offered two years of English lessons, which she was taking and she was eager to look for another job as soon as the lessons were finished. Tina's resentment toward her husband for not "fulfilling his obligations" as breadwinner stem from the fact that she felt guilty that she had not spent much time with her children rather than the fact that she had to work. As a matter of fact she recollected how much fun she had with her friends at work, "I had many friends, it's only been a year that the factory closed, but we still keep in touch and we see each other when we go for our English lessons."[22] These ambiguities about productive labor emphasized the multiplicity of experiences that Mexicanas had as they juggled with socially assigned repressive gender roles and their feelings of control and power as they joined the labor force. Tina's challenging of gender roles became very clear when she complained about her husband's lack of fulfillment of his ascribed gender role as breadwinner in front of me.

Through their labors women gave birth to their transnational community. Even though reproductive labor within a patriarchal system and in most traditional literature on immigrant communities[23] was not considered labor, in immigration studies we can no

---

[20] Tina y Saúl de la Torre, 47 and 52 years of age respectively, interview in San Igancio, January 2003. "Si el hombre atiende a sus obligaciones mejor, que las mujeres ni trabajen, que atiendan a su familia, pero si no cumplen si estan mejor allá [Detroit] porque aquí no hay mucho trabajo para las mujeres."

[21] Ibid. "Si, primero fue difícil pero ahora me gusta, agusto no tienes nada de que preocuparte."

[22] Ibid. "Si tengo muchas amigas apenas tiene una año que cerro [la fábrica] todavía nos hablamos y ahora estamos llendo a las classes de Inglés."

[23] Douglas Massey, Rafael Alarcón, Jorge Durand, Humberto González, *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987). In their seminal work, immigrant women are only an appendix of Mexicanos' immigrant experiences without taking into consideration women's labor; not even reproductive labor.

longer ignore the importance of it. It was women's reproductive labor – and of course other factors such as the migration of the braceros in the 1940s - that allowed for the formation of transnational communities. However, even feminist approaches to the topic of migration downplayed reproductive labor in order to emphasize women's challenges of traditional gender roles when joining the labor force. Nevertheless, it is important to look at reproductive labor as an inherent factor in the formation of transnational communities. Further, the feeling of owning their domestic space gave women some power to make decisions that concerned the well being of not only their family but also the rest of the residents in the household. San Ignacian men like most men in general did not acknowledge reproductive labor as "work", but by listening to their narratives we can dissect and analyze some of the challenges, albeit minor, to traditional gender roles that the immigrant experience triggered.

Don Antonio took his family to Detroit in 1972 and when I asked if his wife worked he said, "no, she was only a housewife, I supported her." Don Antonio and his wife Imelda had nine children. He later added that his wife started to learn English when she moved to Detroit and she also, "worked with a neighbor that fed retired older people, and it was not until she applied for a job in a factory that we realized she had diabetes."[24] Don Gabriel and his son Sergio corroborated the same argument. When I asked about whether their wife/mother worked in Detroit, Don Gabriel very adamantly replied, "no over there she never worked not one minute!" Don Gabriel and his wife Lupe had ten children, which she had to care for prior and after she migrated to Detroit. I asked Don

[24] Don Antonio, 78 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. "No ella se dedicaba a la casa, yo la mantenia." "Trabajaba con una vecina que les daba de comer a unos viejitos pensionados y ahí estuvo y después cuando quizo trabajar en una fábrica, la metio mi hija le hicieron un exámen medico y salió que tenía diabetis."

Gabriel and Sergio one more time if she worked in the house and Sergio responded, "Oh yes she did work in the house, she was a very active woman and even though it was different from San Ignacio because houses in Detroit are different she still had to do the housework. But in Detroit the house had rugs so she didn't have to mop so much, so I think her house work load was less in Detroit."[25]

Don Antonio, Don Gabriel and Sergio did not acknowledge their wife's/mother's reproductive labor and during the interview Sergio also mentioned very matter of fact that at some point there were more than eighteen people living in their house, including his wife and the wives and husbands of his ten siblings.

The case of Don Raúl and his wife Eli illustrated how some women struggled to negotiate their roles as reproductive laborers. Don Rúl arrived in Detroit in 1970 and like other pioneer San Ignacians lived with the Mercado brothers until he was able to rent his own apartment. In 1972 he processed his family's residencies and they joined him in Detroit. According to her son Benjamin, Eli loved Detroit because, "Well over there she had all of us her family and she did not have to work so hard, over there [Detroit] she only had to pick up the house because we helped her vacuum the rug and she was happy to have all of us with her." Don Raúl, however, added that, "we had to buy a house [which was my idea] because the apartment was very small and my wife started to become very *delicada* (touchy) because a lot of people arrived in the apartment and I had them there to help them. So I thought, "let's buy a house" because I wanted to stay there

[25] Don Gabriel and Sergio, 70 and 46 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "No ella nunca trabajo ni un minuto!" "A trabajar en la casa pues ella era una mujer muy activa o sea yo creo que lo mismo, bueno diferente porque las casas allá no son tan grandes y no trapeaba todos los días proque teniamos alfombra, yo creo que era más liviano."

for a long time. It occurred to me to buy the house and then I bought another one four years later that I turned into small apartments to rent."[26]

Eli not only rebelled against having so many tenants in the apartment, she also used this as a leverage to get her husband to buy a house. She was not the only one that complained about having so many people in her house, Doña Alicia also had her husband purchase a house when she complained about the crowded conditions they were living in and all the extra work she had to perform.[27] Tensions and conflicts arose out of these situations where some women were able to negotiate with their husbands for better living conditions on the one hand and on the other hand these negotiations led to settling more permanently in Detroit by purchasing homes, thus, initiating the creation of a transnational community.

As women's social networks expanded through their labor supporting new arrivals, the flow of San Ignacians to Detroit grew more and more from the 1970s through the 1990s. Due in large part to housing segregation in Detroit and also to families' desire to live close to each other, San Ignacians along with other Latinos began to build what is now called Mexican Town. As Louis Aguilar reported, "Some 60.000 people live in the area commonly called Mexicantown, roughly bordered by the old Tiger

---

[26] Don Raúl and Benjamín, 78 and 58 years of age respectively. Interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "Pues es que allá estabamos toda su familia y nbo trabajaba tanto en la casa como aquí. Allá, solo una recogidita a la casa toda la alfombra nosotros se la limpiabamos y le ayudabamos. Allá estabamos todos y pues estaba contenta." "Compramos una casa porque el apartamento era muy chiquillo luego la mujer [su esposa] empezo era medio deicadona porque llegaban otras gentes ahí de San Ignacio y yo los tenía a ellos para ayudarlos. Y les dije pues mejor vamos a comprar una casa, yo pensaba durar más años verdad, porque en realidad si me gustaba, entonces me dió la idea de comprarme una casa y a los cuatro años compre otra que puse muchos apartamentos para rentar."

[27] Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002. "Si se vinieron todos sus hermanos [de mi esposo] ya habían arreglado también a algunos de sus hijos, Pero vivían todos en una casa, viviamos todos bien apilados y mi Viejo [su esposo] todo el que llegaba iba a dar ahí hasta que encontraba trabajo y no le cobraba comida, no les cobraba nada. [...] Todos me ayudaban a hacer el quehacer yo con mis chiquillos ahí revueltos con todos, se me hacía re feo a mi pues yo no estaba impuesta a eso. Al poco tiempo compramos una casa."

Stadium, East Dearborn and the Detroit River. More than 4,000 people have moved there since 1990."[28] The area was surrounded by small businesses that catered to the population of Mexican Town.[29]

However, after the 1960s and early 1970s generation of bracero families the influx of Mexican immigrants into Detroit was largely undocumented. Along with the new migrant stream of San Ignacians a professional, well-organized, exploitative, and clandestine network of smugglers known as *coyotes* developed. Although *coyotes* have been well established since the beginning of the nineteenth century their roles have significantly changed over the years.[30] In the past three decades, smuggling undocumented people and fabricating *papeles chuecos* (forging social security cards and green cards) has been their main focus. They have established a sophisticated network that expands to most of the United States. Consequently, most men and women that migrated after the 1970s and had no family relationships with the bracero generation had to depend on these *coyotes* for their journey to *el Norte*. Due to immigration policy restrictions and growing anti-immigrant nativist rhetoric in the U.S., many San Ignacians migrated with the idea of settling permanently in Detroit to avoid the hardships of crossing the border undocumented. This precarious situation created a new set of gender tensions and rearranged kinship or familial obligations toward newcomers. Despite the

---

[28] Louis Aguilar, "Mexicans bolster a corner of Detroit," *The Detroit News*, Sunday, March 6, 2005.

[29] See Appendix A, tables 1.1 and 1.2.

[30] For more information on coyotes in the early twentieth century, look at Manuel Gamio's path breaking work on Mexican immigrants in 1926-27. "The real forces which move illegal immigration are, first of all, the smugglers or "coyotes" who facilitate illegal entrance to Mexican immigrants, and the contractors or *enganchistas* who provide them with jobs. The smuggler and the contractor are an intimate and powerful alliance from Calexico to Brownsville." Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 11. Coyotes in the earlier part of the twentieth century provided different services of which smuggling Mexicans was the first and foremost but also they would work in conjunction with contractors or *enganchistas* who hired Mexicans and sent them to the fields directly. These two entities in essence worked as a labor recruitment agency.

social networks that have been well established over the years - and these included connections with specific *coyotes* as well – the sense of ethics and obligations toward family and townspeople have become much more serious. In the past two decades, having a vulnerable sense of social invisibility created a more serious position that forced many women and men to tolerate difficult situations. These included taking responsibility for many other San Ignacians outside traditional extended family boundaries. As in previous decades, the meanings of social networks and transnational citizenship evolved to consider these new challenges to anti-immigrant, racist, and hostile environments in the U.S.

One of the many effects of having a precarious immigration status were the numbers of San Ignacians arriving in Detroit and needing help from their co-nationals. These situations led to gendered family dislocations that were for many San Ignacians difficult and unstable. Women who had family members and friends staying in their homes carried the brunt of these dislocations and tensions. It is understandable that young women were not having as many children as their elders did, and it was not due to "traditional religious betrayal" (using contraceptives to enjoy sex for pleasure rather than for reproduction), as Father Ignacio put it when he commented on the issue. Also it was not because of some "sexual liberation" that came with the use of contraceptives.[31] The approach to contraceptives, the family's economic situation, and the acculturation to contemporary U.S. and Mexican ideologies about small families, all brought about the downsizing of large families. I contend that it was also because most women became

[31] See chapter two for how Mexicanas approach the issue of the use of contraceptives. Despite more information and availability, most of them do not. Most of them relied on the *mi viejo me cuida* (my boyfriend or husband takes care of me) argument, which as I discussed is most of the time ineffective, yet Mexicanas keep relying on it.

surrogate mothers, sisters and daughters of large numbers of San Ignacians, whether they were family members, *compadres* or *comadres* and/or their children, or friends.[32]

As women took on different surrogate roles, many lived with a series of moral contradictions about how much they should or should not tolerate when taking care of extended family and/or other San Ignacians. While doing my research both in San Ignacio and in Detroit I had the opportunity to spent time with Gaby 22, her husband Gabriel 28, and their son Leo 6. Leo was born with a muscular disease that debilitated his muscles and impeded his ability to walk. Gaby was advised by a friend to seek accountability from the Ford Hospital in Detroit where her son was born and to file a lawsuit. Gaby didn't speak English and the lawyer that someone recommended did not speak Spanish so they used a friend as an interpreter. Gaby asked me if I could help her fill out the thick questionnaire her lawyer sent her in order to begin the lawsuit. While we were working on the questionnaire, Gaby received a phone call from her oldest brother. In an instant I saw Gaby's attitude change, with that including her tone of voice. She began to complain about her younger brother who had just recently arrived to Detroit from San Ignacio and was living with her and her family. Most of her complaints had to do with the fact that Cam was not paying for his long distance phone calls to Mexico, nor was he contributing for the food that he was consuming and his lack of consideration when he left all his clothes everywhere and she had to pick them up and put them away.

In that instant Gaby appealed to family hierarchies, based on patriarchal social structures in order to discipline her younger brother, by Babis her oldest brother. I asked Gaby why she didn't ask Cam herself and she said, "no, I can't, he's my brother." Yet

[32] See Appendix B, tables 2.1 and 2.2.

while she honored one tradition, as "mother" to her brother picking up after him and enduring his demands on her domestic roles, she asserted her sense of equality through appeals to the family patriarch to impose fairer family roles. So, on the one hand, she was undertaking a huge lawsuit that caused her great insecurity including completing the daunting 300-page questionnaire with limited English skills; and on the other hand she was not able to tell her brother to get his *caca* together. It was this new sense of obligation and caretaking of extended family and friends that supported the continued large flow of San Ignacians into Detroit and which in turn supported transnational social networks.

Tensions from greater burdens on women caused a great deal of insecurity and conflicts within the family. The sense of obligation toward extended family, immediate family and friends provoked gender conflicts that directly affected the females in the household. For example Vivi, Gaby's sister, was married and had two little girls. While interviewing Vivi in her living room in Detroit, another woman came down the stairs with two other little girls. I later found out that Vivi's husband's brother, his wife, and their two daughters were living with them. They had arrived two months earlier from San Ignacio and were planning to reside in Detroit joining most of their family. While Vivi was telling me this, she and Gaby began to whisper so that the other woman who had gone into the kitchen with her daughters could not hear us. Vivi was on the verge of desperation because her sister-in-law never cleaned the top floor, which was completely taken over by the woman's family. On top of that, she never helped her cook or do dishes, and her husband was only working three times a week, which meant it would take them forever to move out and make it on their own. So the list went on and on until we

were interrupted by the woman's return to the living room. On another occasion, when we were on our way to visit Vivi again, Gaby stopped at McDonalds to get a kid's meal for her son Leo, and while we were waiting in the take out order line she said, "oh, we should get one for my niece. She continued, "well should I get two more for the woman's little girls?" and immediately concluded, "no, hell no I'm not responsible for the other two girls, right?" Her commentary revealed resentments about imposed obligations outside the immediate extended family and also it brought to light the difficult tensions and contradictions that women undergo in their everyday lives as they tried to construct their own spaces.

Vivi's frustrations culminated a week later when Gaby got a very distressed call. Vivi was crying uncontrollably and asked Gaby to pick her up. Vivi had repeatedly asked her husband to give his brother a time frame to leave and rent an apartment of his own for himself and his family. Her husband had continuously criticized her about making a big deal out of nothing and remarked adamantly that he could not tell his brother to leave until his brother decided to leave on his own. Vivi's husband allegedly could not ask his brother to leave because it would be an insult. Therefore, Vivi as his wife, had to put up with it. Nevertheless, Genaro, Vivi's husband, was hardly ever home. He and his brother would leave early in the morning and not come back until later in the evening ostensibly to work. Leaving Vivi to deal with the everyday conflicts and tensions that her situation endured. Ultimately Vivi was able to negotiate with her husband a time frame for his brother to leave. This was possible because on the one hand Vivi continued to stand her ground, and on the other because Genaro had more siblings in Detroit with whom his brother could stay. Nevertheless, for four months Vivi and Genaro argued continuously

causing turmoil within the household. Despite this very contested and unfair situation, Vivi commented,

> I don't know how to tell you, but there are many people who have extended their help to us, it is very important that when you come here there are people that help you. I know a lot of people here that don't have where to stay when they come because they don't know many people and they don't have anything to eat until they find a job. Thank God that I was lucky because I had my sister here and she helped me. It is so nice when you have someone to care for you because here life is not easy you have to work hard. This way, if you want to come here then thank God as I was telling you, how do I put it, well that I can help other people because I know what is like because I went through the same thing, *todos venimos a los mismo, todos* (we all come here to do the same and experience the same).[33]

Vivi's comment pointed to the many contradictions that the construction of transnational social networks brought to women's lives. Even though she was having problems with her husband because of his family staying with them, she also felt obligated to do what Gaby had done for her. It is these everyday contradictions and conflicts that I want to draw attention to. Gender relations have been and continue to be shaped and reshaped by the immigrant experience and this in turn makes it hard to locate when and where or how Mexicanas challenge traditional gender relations. I contend that they do, albeit in short strides, as they construct their lives and their transnational communities. Women see themselves as the creators of their transnational communities even though they have to continuously claim contested spaces that are racialized and repressive, and where the division of power is unequal and unfair.

---

[33] Vivi, 28 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Como te quisiera decir, habemos muchas personas que, hay personas que nos dan la mano, eso es lo importante que llegues y haya una persona que te de la mano. Yo conozco muchas personas que no tienen a donde llegar, que no conocen a nadie, que no tienen un lugar ni siguiera para dormir que hasta que tengas trabajo no tienes que comer. Yo gracias a Dios a mi me toco la suerte que yo tenía aquí a mi hermana, [...] pues es bien bonito, así te da mas ánimo poderte venir cuando tienes así un lugar en donde llegar que tu sabes que no es tan fácil aquí la vida. Si no trabajas pues esta más duro, pero asi está bien que tengas familia y gracias a Dios como te digo que uno pueda ayudar a otra gente porque tu ya sabes porque tu veniste lo que tu pasaste, todos venimos a lo mismo, todos."

Unlike the generation of Mexicanas that settled in the 1970s younger women had, to their advantage, the fact that newcomers whether members of their extended family or friends had more options in terms of places of residency. The transnational community in Detroit offered San Ignacians that had recently migrated, more than a handful of places where they could stay. Mexicanas in the 1970s had limited options in terms of accepting the flux of San Ignacians that arrived at the time in Detroit. They were left with a more difficult moral choice of giving their relatives or their townspeople a place to live or have them fend for themselves without a generous hand to help them out while they got on their feet. Recent circumstances, as the transnational community continued to grow, opened up spaces for younger Mexicanas to negotiate and challenge patriarchal dominance by appealing to numbers of San Ignacians and other members of the family already residing in Detroit. Gender relations and patriarchal systems are not monolithic or stable; similarly, negotiations and challenges by women are constantly fluctuating. Women negotiated with their male counterparts issues that affected them and their family's well being. Younger Mexicanas were also influenced by cultural expressions of feminism, individualism and more liberal understandings of relationships than their elders had. This allowed the younger generation to express discontent and to act upon it.

These situations barely begin to touch upon the hardships and struggles that Mexicanas had to contend with while at the same time they supported the very social networks that sustained immigration. Gender tensions and family adjustments caused immigrants to readjust and accommodate new systems of kinship based on the immigrant experience. However, I argue, the brunt of everyday sustainability fell on Mexicanas who in general were the home caretakers even when they worked full-time. Many led the

double-day routine as they worked full-time and performed reproductive labor that included taking care not only of their immediate family but also of the "guests" who might be staying with her family. The deconstruction of the immigrant's social networks underlines and emphasizes the several tensions that develop within the immigrant experience. Moreover they bring to the fore how Mexicanas negotiate and contest the everyday gender struggles that in turn give way to the creation of transnational communities. In as much as migration can bring about financial gain, upward social mobility, and some challenges to gender roles, it also promotes conflict and tension in the family and familial separations that can be very painful.

Some of these challenges were reflected in border crossings. In 1976 Saúl left San Ignacio to find work in Detroit. He and his wife Tina had four children and in 1978 when Saúl asked Tina to join him they had a seven-month baby as well. They decided that being together would be best for the family, and also Tina could join the labor force in Detroit and help the family's economic situation. Tina and Saúl hired a *coyote* to smuggle them into the U.S. Tina remembered, "I took my youngest with me he was only seven months and I left my other four with my family."[34] Tina and Saúl paid $1,100 each and they crossed the border through Tijuana into Chula Vista, San Diego. Although the crossing was very difficult especially carrying the baby, they crossed safely. Saúl borrowed the money to pay the *coyote* from family members who were in Detroit and who were waiting for them to arrive. Tina remembered the anguish she and Saúl went through not being able to see their other four children for 6 months until they saved

[34] Tina y Saúl, 47 and 52 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Me fuí yo con él, me lleve al más chiquito tenía 7 meses y deje a los otros cuatro con mi familia."

enough money to pay for them to cross the border. She described how she struggled to make this happen,

> Within three months I started to work in a hotel doing house keeping and saving every penny to bring my other four children, and once we had the money we could not find anyone that would take them from San Ignacio to Tijuana. So my relatives that are retired and live in San Ignacio agreed to take the children. They crossed with a *coyote* safely but we did not see them for six months. I was going mad, oh my god! I kept telling Saúl, if we don't bring them soon I will leave. At nights I could not sleep, I would go outside and weep for hours until we came up with the idea of who could bring them to us. As soon as they got there [Detroit] I enrolled them in school and we began our new life.[35]

During the several interviews that I conducted, many women's narratives tended to focus more on their success and downplay their struggles. Border crossing in and of itself is a very hard and dangerous undertaking, however, usually the narrators would either recollect this experience as a kind of Nancy Drew adventure – except when mothers residing in San Ignacio would tell the border crossing stories of their children – or they would not talk about it at all.[36] These narratives illustrated women's priorities of being reunited with their families. It also showed how building a community was a difficult undertaking when women's resources were limited and severely dangerous within contested social oppressive spaces.

As one more dislocation, familial separation is one of the most difficult for San Ignacians who go months and sometimes years at a time without seeing their immediate

---

[35] Ibid. "A los tres meses que llegue empece a trabajar en un hotel de house keeping y juntando dinero para traer a los otros cuatro niños. Y ya teníamos el dinero y no hayabamos quién nos los llevara de san Ignacio a Tijuana. Entonces mis parientes que estan retirados, les pagamos el boleto para San Ignacio para que nos llevara a los niños de San Ignacio a Tijuana. Con coyote pasasron, pero duramos 6 meses sin verlos. Yo ya me estaba volviendo loca, dios mio yo le decía a Salvador si no nos los traemos yo me voy. En las noches sin dormir yo me salía a chillar. Y hasta que pensamos quién nos los trajera. En cuanto llegaron los inscribí en la escuela y empezamos a hacer una vida."

[36] This space, border crossing, needs more attention, considering the hundreds of Mexican immigrants that die trying to get across. Due to the focus of my investigation I am not able to provide a detailed analysis of the consequences that crossing the border as an undocumented immigrant might have.

family. Crossing the border for many was a horrible experience and its implications go beyond the scope of this investigation. However, Mexicanas downplayed the seriousness and the dangers of their "crossings" and mostly expressed the emotional anguish that family separation caused. This transnational familial separation also contributed to the constant shaping and reshaping of migrant families in Detroit and in San Ignacio.

On a bright San Ignacian sunny morning in 1988, Goyo and Lola decided that Goyo needed to go back to Detroit to improve the household finances. He had gone to Detroit a few times, but he never stayed longer than a year at a time. The day after Goyo arrived in Detroit he called Lola to let her know that he had made the journey safely and he now was in Detroit with his sister. At that moment Lola turned to her young daughter who was 16 and said, "your father just called to let us know that he is in Detroit so with the money he left we are going to the doctor to run some tests to see why you have not gotten your period yet."[37] Lola was already suspicious of her daughter's pregnancy so Lily opened up and confirmed that she was in fact pregnant and this was her fifth month. Lily had been going to a clinic in Arandas (a town very near San Ignacio) and knew that she was carrying a girl. Even though Lola suspected the pregnancy she was very distressed when she found out that it was in fact true. Lola remembered how she felt,

> I told my daughter, "Why did you have to wait until your father left?" so I started to pray to God to give me the words to tell him and also I prayed that nobody would tell him until I talked to him. So eight days later Goyo called and I said to him, "You know the van broke down." He was very angry because I was unable to pick up the van from where it broke down and he said, "how can you not make arrangements to pick up the van, some of the kids are going to break the windows!" So, I said, "*Uy mijo* I wish all our problems stopped with the breaking down of the

[37] Goyo y Lola, 39 and 51 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio January 2003. "Ya habló tu papa que esta bien, con ese dinero voy a ir a hacerte unos analisis para ver porque no te viene tu regla."

van," but let me tell you, our daughter is pregnant. My husband started to cry and to hit the wall.[38]

Goyo did not speak to his daughter for more than eight months and his first reaction was to blame the father of the child and ostracize his daughter. Months after the child was born, Lily and her older sister announced that they wanted to go to Detroit. Lola advised Lily not to take the little girl until she found a job and felt more stable. Both of the daughters moved into their aunt's house in Detroit and they have been residing there for four years. This situation illustrated the family separations that migration can bring about, but it also emphasized women's support for one another. Despite Goyo's reluctance to speak to his daughter and later his objection to her migrating to Detroit, Lola intervened and, challenging patriarchal authority, supported the emigration of both of her daughters. Women constantly maneuvered difficult situations in order to support the changing positioning of transnational families, which in turn supported their intricate social networks. At the same time they also relied on their social networks to facilitate the movement of female relatives. Lola's family members in Detroit welcomed the young women, alleviating their parents' anxiety about having their young daughters move to Detroit. In this case the mother allowed her daughter to escape her maternal obligations despite the father's discontent. Furthermore, the mother's support gave way to the repositioning of the family roles whereby the grandparents became the parents of the little girl and the older siblings became authority figures vis-à-vis the small child. Family

[38] Ibid. "Yo le dije, "Ay que barabara porque te esperaste a que tu padre se fuera porque no nos dijiste ahora que el estaba aquí." Yo le pedi a Dios que me ponga las palabras. El hablo y le dije, "sabes que se me descompuso la camioneta, se me quebro un fierro, entonces el se enojo mucho porque no la había recogido de donde se me descompuso y ya me dice, "pero como que no la han recogido que por ahí los vagos que le van a quebrar los vidrios," y que quién sabe que. Y yo le dije, "uy mijo si todo parara en fierros que bueno sería," y ya fué donde le dije que Lily estaba embarazada. El se agarro llorando y golpeaba en la pared."

readjustments were not the only phenomenon caused by the politics of movement; familial cultural hybridizations were also common among transnational families.

When I was conducting research in Detroit in 2004, I was invited to Alex's birthday party; she was going to be nine years old. Alex was the youngest of 10 siblings of which all reside now in Detroit. I drove to Gaby's house and from there she, Gabriel, Leo and I walked to Gabriel's sister's house where they were having the party. It was great; Gabriel's sister Mayra had adorned her backyard with a multitude of colored ribbons and a huge sign that read, "*Feliz Cumpleaños Alex.*" They had prepared a big container with *carne en adobo* on a barbecue, *arroz* and *frijoles* and the *pièce de rèsistance* a table full of desserts including an enormous chocolate cake and my favorite *arroz con leche.* There must have been about 30 people of whom many were immediate family and some extended family and friends. Mayra's husband along with Gabriel had thrown a long *cuerda* from one side of the backyard to the other where they hung the *piñata* in the shape of a pink heart with Mini Mouse carrying a present. We all sang as the children took turns breaking the piñata and when it busted open, tons of candies went flying in the air, and the children all struggled to get as many as their hands could possibly carry.

Alex was born a year after her mother moved to Detroit in 1995, along with her older five siblings. Her father had left San Ignacio in 1994 and taken the four eldest children, leaving Sandra, her mother, with the youngest five. The two oldest siblings were able to get a couple of years of schooling since they had to help their father in San Ignacio prior to moving to Detroit. Now, the youngest siblings, Teresita 18, Armando 19, and Juan Pablo 20, are enrolled at Michigan State University, Wayne State University

and University of Michigan respectively. Alex was the only one born in Detroit and she wants to become a doctor when she grows up. The first four children do not speak English and neither does Sandra their mother or Antonio, their father. However, this transnational family continued to construct new meanings of what it means to be a San Ignacian and a Mexican-Detroitian at the same time. As Doña Tere put it at the beginning of this chapter, " I was happy because I had all my family and my husband in Detroit, so one feels happy because you have your family." These families are creating new meanings of kinship systems that are a consequence of the immigrant experience. Second generation San Ignacians have made Detroit their home despite their desire to return every year to San Ignacio for the *fiestas patronales*.

As women continue to create and sustain transnational communities, they develop strategies to navigate contested patriarchal and repressive spaces in order to maintain a sense of identity and dignity. The bracero generation would have had little impact had it not been for the women who ventured north and began to get involved in community formation. Contradicting sentiments reflect these vicissitudes as women conquer little by little public and privates spaces. The creation of these transnational communities allows us to reconsider conceptualizations of gender, familial structures, notions of borders - geographical or political - acknowledging their transparency and fluidity when these are shaped, reshaped, contested, and constructed by transnational families. Furthermore, concepts of identity are expanded through the process of migration and the creation of transnational communities. Narratives of identity and citizenship are imperative in the development of transnational communities and their creations of meanings that are embedded in their everyday lives as they navigate two different, albeit integral,

experiences in San Ignacio and Detroit. It is to these constructions of identity and citizenship that I focus on the next chapter.

Mexico lindo y querido,
Si muero lejos de ti
Que digan que estoy dormido,
Y que me traigan aquí,
Que digan que estoy dormido,
Y que me traigan aquí

Mexico lindo y querido
Si muero lejos de ti,
Que me entierren en la sierra,
Al pie de los magueyales
Y que me cubra esta tierra,
Que es cuna de hombres cabales
Jorge Negrete[1]

Dear beloved Mexico
If I die far from you,
Tell them that I'm asleep
And have them bring me back here
Tell them that I'm asleep
And have them bring me back here

Dear beloved Mexico
If I die far from you,
Have them bury me in the mountain range,
Next to the magueyales (maguey plants)
And let your earth cover me
Which is a cradle for gentlemen

Transnational Identities

The bells jingling from the ice cream cart, the smell of *carnitas* at the nearby *taqueria* La Lupita, and the aroma from the *panaderia,* along with the música ranchera playing from the CD store, awakened for a split second my Mexicaness. Living in the U.S. for so many years makes it difficult for my sense of smell to trigger my appetite the way Mexican food smells have done in the past. Every opportunity that I have to eat "authentic" Mexican food stimulates my day and my palate. Visiting Mexican Town in Detroit made me forget I was in the U.S., and it was interesting to observe how

[1] Jorge Negrete, interpreter, Chucho Monje, author. *Mexico Lindo*, (New York: Betelsmann de Mexico, S.a. De C.V. Manufactured and Distributed by BMG Music, 1959, 1991).

Mexicanized neighborhoods in the U.S. become when there are large numbers of immigrants and/or Mexican Americans living in one particular area. While taking a tour of Mexican Town with my friend Gaby, I was bombarded by images that I recognized very easily on painted murals; the great Aztec pyramid next to a muscular Aztec male holding a very sensuous female wearing a sheer costume outlining her voluptuousness; altars carefully arranged at the entrances of many homes; the Mexican flag serving as a curtain for a small room on a second floor of a house, and young children playing around and cursing in Spanish. For me a piece of Mexico had been transported to Detroit and it tantalized my sense of smell, sight, and sound. In the midst of this pastiche of images, advertisements in Spanish abounded offering services to Mexicans. These services included lawyers, financial services like cash and go and bail bond companies, psychic readings, and all kinds of consumer goods from food to clothing to bracelets that bring you happiness and stop your husband from drinking. Witnessing this display of consumerism offering promises of happiness and fulfillment underlined how Mexican immigrants are recognized for their economic value, but ignored in many other ways.

While driving through Mexican Town and obsessively devouring a *concha con frijoles,* Gaby and I were commenting on the sudden death of Trino's 15-year-old son Manuel. Trino had been living in Detroit for over thirty years and his son was born in Detroit. After the funeral, his body was going to be sent back to San Ignacio and his entire family planned to fly back and bury his body at the local cemetery. I realized that all throughout my investigation of Mexican immigrants there had been at least three deaths in Detroit and all of the bodies were sent back to Mexico for burial. I asked Gaby if she wanted her body to be sent back when she died and her response was, "Hell yes, I

don't want my body to be buried here in Detroit, are you kidding?" *Ni modo que me desparramen aca* (I would not like to be scattered here). No Luz María, I would never want to be *desparramada* here in Detroit" (desparramada literally means something that is broken into little pieces and scattered everywhere). Yet Gaby has been in Detroit for more than five years, and although she was forced to go back temporarily to San Ignacio because of a family illness, she was eager to return to Detroit.

San Ignacians in Detroit oscillated between feelings of permanence and temporality, and their everyday experiences shaped and reshaped the way they saw themselves vis-à-vis their residence in the United States and their notions of citizenship. This precarious situation challenged San Ignacians' sense of belonging. This explained why most San Ignacians made arrangements, or maintained silent understandings amongst the family that upon death, their bodies be buried in San Ignacio so that they would not be *desparramados* in Detroit. As Jorge Negrete's song emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, "if I die far from you [Mexico], tell them that I am asleep and have them bring me back here." However, most San Ignacians remained in Detroit where they constructed their transnational community. These contradictions emphasized the parallel conflict that they lived with everyday of wanting and not wanting to reside permanently in the U.S.

Early literature on Mexican immigration focused on the push-pull theory that centered on the idea that Mexicans migrated to the United States solely in an effort to make money.[2] Present day researchers of immigration recognize that Mexican immigration is more complex than just attempting to improve livelihoods. The literature

---

[2] Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930); Paul Taylor, *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1933).

now centers more on structural differences in both countries as well as the historical labor demand from the U.S. that encouraged large numbers of Mexicans, regardless of immigration status, to cross the border. This "encouragement" included illegal measures according to U.S. law.[3] Social networks have become the center of some academicians' studies recognizing the importance these have in the politics of movement. Along with the creation of transnational communities conflicting sentiments arise about whether to reside in the U.S. permanently or temporarily. Over the last three decades the militarization of the U.S. border has "forced" many immigrants to stay in the U.S. rather than travel back and forth.[4] The U.S.'s denial or recognition of immigrants as "citizens" persecutes the undocumented, yet they are considered highly desirable commodities for low wage work. This situation affects Mexican immigrants' sentiments when considering the U.S. as their new home. Regardless of their immigration status

---

[3] In the late 1940s the labor demand was not met in the U.S., and agricultural growers began to hire undocumented Mexican workers. "In doing so, they incurred no liability under U.S. immigration law: the well-known "Texas Proviso" (named for the congressional delegation that originally wrote it) had explicitly prohibited the prosecution of employers for hiring undocumented workers." Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 36.
In 1954 during Operation Wetback when the INS militarized the border and had thousands of Mexicans deported, "where the U.S. Department of Labor was waiting for them to process them as braceros, and back to the very fields they had been arrested!" Ibid., 37.

[4] In 1986 the U.S. Congress passed the Immigration and Reform Act (IRCA), which granted amnesty to 2.3 million undocumented Mexican workers, but at the same time it allocated $400 million to the Border Patrol for the hiring of more officers. It also severely penalized employers who hired undocumented workers; in 1990 the Immigration Act authorized more funds for the Border Patrol to hire one thousand more agents, it also tightened sanctions for employers who hired undocumented workers, it systematized criminal and deportation procedures, and penalized several other immigration violations; State Initiatives were also launched in the 1980s like Proposition 187 in Los Angeles, California that deprived undocumented immigrants of having access to social services including public schools; in 1993 "Operation Blockade" came into place in El Paso, Texas; in 1994 the INS launched "Operation Gatekeeper" in the San Diego border "which installed high-density floodlights to illuminate the border day and night, as well as an eight foot steel fence along fourteen miles of border from the Pacific Ocean to the foothills of the Coast Ranges;" in 1995 the INS launched "Operation Safeguard" in Nogales, Arizona; in 1997 "Operation Hold-the-Line was extended into New Mexico; in August 1997 "Operation Rio Grande" was implemented along thirty-six miles of border in southeast Texas. Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, and Nolan J. Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002), 90-94.

Mexicanas and Mexicanos define themselves and their lives vis-à-vis these anti-immigrant and hostile environments in the U.S..

This chapter addresses the ideological baggage that Mexican immigrants unpacked as they navigated their new lives within their transnational communities and how they created new understandings of identity in relation to their experiences as immigrants. Within this context, Mexican immigrants have historically created alternative identities to accommodate their experiences both in their sending communities as well as in the communities residing in the U.S.. I explore the complexities of these identity formations and underline the impact of hostile U.S. practices that directly target Mexicans. These practices affect the way Mexicanos and Mexicanas identify themselves as citizens of these transnational communities. Further, I analyze the immigrants' perspectives of what citizenship means both in definitions of residency and permanency in the immigrants' collective imagination. Mexicanos and Mexicanas have defined themselves as San Ignacians and Mexican-Detroitians whether they reside in San Ignacio or in Detroit. Despite these definitions, however, contradictions arise that are symbolic of deeper feelings that inhabit immigrants' constructions of identity.

San Ignacio Cerro Gordo belongs to the *delegación* Cerro Gordo, which belongs to the *municipio* of Arandas in the state of Jalisco in the Western part of Mexico.[5] San Ignacio is a small town with a long tradition of migration to the United States. In 1927, Manuel Gamio, an anthropologist, conducted research on Mexican migration to the United States. He provided an annotated statistical account of all the remittances sent to

[5] Mexico is divided into States and States are divided into *municipios* that in turn are divided into *delegaciones*. Local authorities that control and allocate state funding as well as federal funding are the *cabezas municipales*, meaning the *municipios* where the *presidentes municipales* reside. These *municipios* decide where and how the local budget will be spent.

Mexico from 1927 to 1928 that showed the presence of people from Jalisco in the Midwest.[6] In 2000 with a population of approximately 17,500 residents San Ignacio's economy thrived upon the cultivation of corn and of *agave*, the plant used in the making of tequila. Also adding to the economy were cattle ranching, dairy farming, brick-making industry, and to a lesser degree diverse services including car repair shops, agricultural related services and products that sustained the cultivation of corn and *agave*. Finally, in the last 15 years, the economy spurred from the rapid expansion of small businesses such as construction companies (booming due to the demand on the construction of houses triggered by immigrants' money), bars and restaurants and small retail businesses. To date, there are approximately 350 small retail businesses in the region. In the period of 1999-2000 the *delegación* of San Ignacio Cerro Gordo received approximately $1,683,000 from remittances of family members residing in the United States. However, Trino, who owns a very profitable business in Detroit that facilitates the sending of money to San Ignacio, calculated that San Ignacio received approximately $10,000,000 annually from his store alone. If we were to rely on the "official" amounts, it suggested that families in San Ignacio received an average of $1,053 annually (under the assumption that all the families received remittances in similar amounts). Therefore, partial economic growth in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo has been stimulated and supported with the money sent by San Ignacians living in the Detroit.[7]

---

[6] Manuel Gamio, *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930). In June of 1922, a letter was sent from U.S. authorities to the Mexican Consul in New York and in Laredo, Texas explaining the new requisites that Mexican nationals have to meet in order to enter the U.S. 37-11-110 ARE

[7] María Basilia Valenzuela Varela, Claudia Mónica Sánchez Bernal, "Aportes Para la Formación del Municipio San Ignacio Cerro Gordo. Una Experiencia de Vinculación" in de Vinci (Guadalajara: Universidad de Gaudalajara, Año 3, Num. 6, Abril de 2001).

In 1982, Trino, a long time San Ignacian resident of Detroit, drove from Detroit to San Ignacio with a bulldozer in the back of his *troca* ready to make some changes to the *kiosco* and the town's main plaza. The plaza had been ignored by Arandas and despite pleading from San Ignacians it was very run down. Trino became involved with the committee for the *fiestas patronales* (religious festivities) and collected more than $6,000 dollars to reconstruct the plaza. With the permission of the municipal authorities, Trino and other San Ignacians tore down the old plaza and built a new one. However, in the middle of the project they ran out of money. Therefore, municipal authorities finished the project leaving San Ignacio with "a plaza like over there you know very European-looking that did not look good in front of our church so people were not happy."[8] Three years later, Goyo along with other San Ignacians appealed to the authorities and collected money so they could tear down the "European-looking" plaza and *kiosco,* and they began a project to renovate the plaza. With the help from a long time benefactor of San Ignacio and San Ignacians in Detroit people pulled forces together and worked on rebuilding the *kiosco* and their plaza.[9] Goyo remembered his involvement in the project,

> We started to complain and tell the authorities we wanted to tear it down and rebuild it until they accepted. So before we tore it down I went to Don Alfonso and I asked him if he could help us rebuild the plaza. When he saw the photographs he agreed and said, "that plaza is not for my town." [...] So the next day we started to tear down the *kiosco* and the plaza and we went to Irapuato with Don Alfonso and he gave us the first check that was 11,700,000 pesos so that we could get started then he gave us 50,000,000 pesos for the *kiosco.* [...] The *kiosco* that we have is a replica

---

[8] Goyo y Lola, 39 and 51 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "[Nos hizo una plaza] tipo de allá, Europea pues que no hacía contraste con el templo entoncés la gente no estabamos de acuerdo..."

[9] Trino, 57 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "El kiosko que estea ahí afurea tiene su historia porque yo lo tumbé, yo me lleve de aquí en el 82 una máquina escabadora y como el kiosko estaba muy feo y la plaza muy abandonada my fea y por órdenes de las autoridades de Arandas yo lo tumbé. Entonces fuí delpatronato de las fiestas patrias y jutamos $6,000 [dólares]. [Arandas] se pusieron a hacer una placita y empezamos y nos enseñaron un projecto muy bonito y todo el pueblo acerpto y cuando se nos acabo eldinero nos hicieron para un lado y hicieron una plaza muy diferente de la que nos prometieron m fea y a travéz de 3 o 4 años se tumbo y por medio del Señor Patiño y la gente de aqui se renovo la plaza."

> of the *kiosco* in Chapala, we looked for ways to embellish the plaza and I think we succeeded with the help of the townspeople.[10]

The effort of San Ignacians to have a beautiful plaza and *kiosco* were representative not only of their love and commitment to their town, but it indicated the importance of aesthetics that San Ignacians embraced. They were so proud when it came to their town's appearance. Involvement with construction in the town by immigrants was a recurrent activity and was reflected by the numerous renovations including changes to the church, maintenance of the streets, the construction of two arches at the entrance of the town, the construction of luxurious houses and the development, and improvement of small businesses. Father Ignacio emphasized San Ignacians' commitment to better their town,

> [...] The arches are not there thanks to the authorities, none of them could say "in our administration they were built," the town is witness that those arches at the entrance of the town were built with money and labor donated by the people from San Ignacio here and in Detroit. Whoever wanted to give me a brick or a bag of cement it was welcomed; that's how they were built. And the same goes for the landscaped line of trees that separate the main streets, and the paving of the streets as well. Before then, a dirty stream ran on what is now our main avenue. We thought that it would be worth it to have a main avenue. [...] The same happened with many other streets that are now paved.[11]

---

[10] Goyo y Lola, 39 and 51 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Empezamos a hacer borlote para tumbarla y si nos dieron permiso de tumbarla. Entonces yo antes de tumbarla fui con Don Alfonso Patiño y le dije que si nos podía ayudar en algo y cuando vio las fotos dijo, "esa plaza no es para mi pueblo." [...] Y al día siguiente nos pusimos a tumbar el kiosco y la plaza y luego luego me toco ir a Irapuato con el Don Alfonso y el primer cheque que nos dio fue de 11,700,000 pesos, para que empezáramos y luego nos dio 50 millones de pesos para el kiosco. [...] El kiosco que tenemos es una replica del kiosco de Chapala, buscamos la forma de que se hiciera la plaza bonita, yo pienso que logramos lo que queríamos..."

[11] Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Igancio, November 2001. "[...] Lo de los arcos no es obra de ningún ayuntamiento, ningún ayuntamiento puede decir, "de que en nuestro tiempo nosotros hicimos esos arcos." Nadie lo puede evitar el pueblo es testigo de que esos arcos de entrada se hicieron con un peso que daba la gente de aqui y de Detroit. El que me quiera dar un ladrillo un costal de cal una semana de trabajo, asi hicimos esos arcos y el camellón pues era un arroyo entonces dijimos cale la pena hacer una avenida y hicieron esa avenida...[...] Lo mismo el adoquin y asi siguió pues con algunas otras calles."

It is through this main avenue that all the processions during the *fiestas patronales* parade. They start by the arches proceed to the main avenue that ends at the plaza, and from there enters the church. The *kiosco* in San Ignacio has taken center stage as a religious, cultural, and political platform. *Kioscos* are usually built in the center of plazas in towns and cities throughout Mexico. These *kioscos* are usually placed in front of the church and in the middle of the plaza. Around the plazas one usually finds different small businesses including many restaurants. In San Ignacio the plaza has become an integral part of political, religious and social events such as courting rituals.

As a political platform, the *kiosco* became of extreme importance for the promotion of San Ignacio as a future *municipio*. While collecting interviews in San Ignacio from 2001 through 2004, there were several meetings conducted for the mobilization of the entire town to become a *municipio*. The *comité para un nuevo municipio* (committee for a new *municipio*) had weekly meetings at the plaza using as a platform the *kiosco*. During these meetings the committee hired a band that played after the meeting was adjourned. *Banda* music serves as an entertainment for gatherings whether political, religious or social.

San Ignacians began their efforts to become a *municipio* in the early 1990s but they were continuously turned down by the state's legislature. Because of Mexico's political efforts to centralize power, historically *municipios* were not relied on for local development. It was until 1986 in an effort to decentralize power that the municipio began to be promoted as a local entity to advance change within the different states in Mexico.[12] However, Jalisco resisted this power division and had not created any new

[12] This was initiated in 1983 by a change in article 115 of the Mexican Constitution when "it is recognized the importance of the municipio as an agent of local change." (Cuando se reconoce la importancia del

municipios since 1946; thus making it harder for the citizens of San Ignacio to begin the process to become a new *municipio.*[13] One of the several prerequisites required by state authorities was the demonstration of high population numbers. Although San Ignacio had 17, 530 residents in 2000 and consequently held 0.3% of the total population in the state of Jalisco, they were still denied the right to become a municipio. A study conducted by the University of Guadalajara identified that 45% of the *municipios* in Jalisco had less numbers of residents than San Ignacio making the argument by the authorities invalid.[14]

It was in 2000 that San Ignacians posited a new argument. Immigrants living in Detroit who had historically been active participants in the economy of the *delegación* should be counted within the population numbers to meet the required demographic criteria to become a *municipio.* Through this process, San Ignacians in Detroit began to get involved as citizens of San Ignacio to promote *municipalizacón.* The second criteria required by state authorities to qualify as a possible *municipio* was territorial size, which according to the same study conducted by the University of Guadalajara, San Ignacians were well within the territorial limits that the law called for. Trino recalled how important it was for San Ignacians in Detroit to accomplish the goal of becoming independent from Arandas,

> Now they [regional authorities] want to take away some of our territory so that we do not qualify [to become a *municipio*] but we have already, and they can't just take our territory away from us. Arandas is supposed to govern us this year [2004] and next, but in 2006 the process begins for us to elect a municipal president and by 2007 we will become completely independent from Arandas. Their resistance to let

---

municipio como agente de cambio local) María Basilia Valenzuela Varela and Claudia Mónica Sánchez Bernal, "Aportes para la formación del municipio San Ignacio Cerro Gordo. Una experiencia de vinculación." In *de Vinci* (Universidad de Guadalajara/ Año 3/Núm.6/ Abril de 2001), 40.

[13] Ibid., 41.

[14] Ibid., 41.

> us go was largely because Arandas has had us [San Ignacio] very marginalized. It is believed that we get between 26 and 28 million pesos annually from remittances going into San Ignacio alone. Arandas never gave us anything. Everything went into Arandas and not even to better their public services, it usually went into the pockets of the authorities in Arandas.[15]

Trino exemplified how San Ignacians in Detroit were and presently are very much involved in political, economic and social developments in San Ignacio. Moreover, the way he expressed himself by using pronouns such as "us" to identify with the town of San Ignacio further acknowledged his membership as an active citizen of San Ignacio despite the fact that Trino had been residing in Detroit since 1970. Trino has also been an active participant in the social and economic landscape in Detroit, since he opened the first Mexican *taqueria* and ice cream parlor in the early 1990s in Mexican Town.

Since the 1940s, immigrants have slowly become social and economic protagonists in San Ignacio by making generous contributions to the betterment of their community of origin. Historically, San Ignacian immigration has undergone several economic stages that started out by first satisfying their immediate survival needs. As their transnational community was well established and they began to accumulate capital, they invested in purchasing a house to make sure their families were taken care of. Once they accomplished certain economic stability they became consumers of various goods in Detroit. In San Ignacio, the bracero generation began this complex transformation and through four generations of immigrants they have now taken center stage as important

---

[15] Trino, 57 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Ahora quieren quitar territorio para que no califique San Ignacio pero ya esta calificado. Ya no pueden quitarlo, Arandas todavía nos gobierna este año y el que sigue y ya el 2006 empezamos a votar para un presidente municipal y en el 2007 ya San Ignacio se independiza. Se logro porque Arandas nos ha tenido muy marginados. Se cree que son 26 a 28 millones de pesos lo que debe entrar a San Ignacio de aquí, cuando no nos daban nada. Todo para Arandas y desgraciadamente no era para servicios públicos en Arandas. [...] El dineral que agarra se lo echa a la bolsa el gobierno, los mandamases."

contributors to the political, social and economic structures in their sending community. Exemplifying this new role is the immigrants' involvement in turning San Ignacio into a *municipio.*

Both the church and local authorities- *el comité para un nuevo municipio* (committee for a new *municipio*) - have been strategically aligning themselves to these recent changes in order to manage, discipline and benefit from this new social protagonist: the immigrant. Father Ignacio commented on what he thinks the church's role should be as he recognized the importance of the immigrants,

> I think that by becoming a municipio this town has a lot of opportunities to progress. It has great telecommunication systems, we have a new highway, and we have all the infrastructure to progress. [...] The church has a duty to insure that the immigrants don't loose their Christian moral values, their traditions and their culture. And that is the duty of the priest and to a lesser extent their families [here in San Ignacio].[16]

The church continued to emphasize its role as spiritual leader and "keeper" of "tradition" and moral values. Within the context of recognizing the immigrants as important contributors to the future politics and economics of San Ignacio, José, the president of the *comité para un nuevo municipio,* and most likely a candidate to become the *Presidente Municipal* in the 2007 elections, commented on the benefits of becoming independent from Arandas,

> [The benefit of becoming a municipio] first is that our people or us [local authorities] can decide the future of our town. Secondly, we will be able to rely on the budget that legally belongs to us [dollars from Detroit] and use it to develop

[16] Ibid., "Yo pienso que siendo municipio es un pueblo que tiene muchas perspectives mucho futuro progresista. Tiene todos los medios tiene sus buenas carreteras, tiene teléfono y tiene toda la infraestructura para progresar. [...] La iglesia tiene este sentido de hacerles ver que no pierdan sus valores morales cristianos que no pierdan sus tradiciones y sus costumbres. Eso nos toca al sacerdote y a las familias."

> social and public services such as taking care of our environment. Additionally, we can use this money to strengthen the *cultural* networks with cities in the U.S. [Detroit]. [...] That is why when we become a *municipio* we will create a sister city in Detroit.[17]

Both religious and secular institutions in San Ignacio have recognized the importance of the immigrants' social, economic and political contributions. These attitudes reflected their collective acknowledgement of the Mexican immigrants' affiliation to their local citizenship and their identities as San Ignacians and Mexican-Detroitians.

Transnational citizenship is reflected in this dual affiliation as a Mexican-Detroitian and at the same time San Ignacian. Transnational citizenship is specific to the immigration experience and thus fosters varying conceptualizations of citizenship while offering alternatives to previous ideologies of belonging. Local identity intensifies San Ignacians' membership in the transnational community insofar as their state and country's affiliation is supplanted by their local identity in Detroit. Being Mexican-Detroitians and San Ignacians are much more important to their identity than being a Jalisience or a Mexican or an "American." However, conflicts and contradictions arise when San Ignacians face hostile and racist environments in Detroit. As a consequence, many San Ignacians lack the security and the social and political rights that are imparted to citizens in the U.S. Even though they define their identities very clearly with affiliations and membership in their transnational community, the lack of recognition and efforts by the U.S. to integrate them in the social, economic and political fabric brings

---

[17] José, 44 years of age and president of the committee for a new *municipio*, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "[Cuando seamos municipio] el primer beneficio sera que ya nuestras gentes o nosotros podemos decidir el futuro del pueblo. En segundo lugar contar con ese presupuesto que legalmente corresponde y desarrollarlo en servicios para que tenga más atractivos para cuidar la ecología y para tener más vínculos culturales con ciudades en Estados Unidos [Detroit]. [...] Si somos municipio vamos a emprender una ciudad hermana con Detroit." My emhasis.

about apprehension and anxiety. As the alternate consul in Detroit declared, "[Mexican immigrants develop self defense mechanisms] to survive in this society [Detroit] that provides them with the resources to work and acquire more than just basic necessities, but also discriminates against them."[18] José also corroborated this by narrating his experience while living in Detroit,

> Detroit is a place with a lot of opportunity to grow to prosper, but the legal insecurity makes you feel unstable, it doesn't provide you with a foundation. And that made me feel out of place for my self respect as a person to be in a place that I wanted to prosper but at the same time I did not have the legal right to stay. Nevertheless, I really liked it a lot. [...] I really did not feel that I had the possibility to participate as a citizen.[19]

Despite the many economic, emotional and cultural contributions that San Ignacians deployed in Detroit, their status as "aliens" has never been eroded. Pejorative stereotypes of Mexicans have been embedded in the production of culture in the U.S. and white supremacist ideologies have permeated Euroamericans' imaginations, complicating and aggravating the politics of movement for Mexican immigrants. "Mexican migrants are very commonly the implied if not overt focus of mass-mediated, journalistic, as well as scholarly discussions of "illegal aliens."[...] The figure of the "illegal alien" itself has emerged as a mass-mediated sociopolitical category that is saturated with racialized difference, and moreover, serves as a constitutive feature of the specific racialized inscription of "Mexicans" in general, regardless of their immigration status in the United

---

[18] Oscar Antonio de la Torre Amezcua, 49 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "[Los Mexicanos a su vez usan un mecanismo de seguridad] para poder sobrevivir en esta sociedad que los arropa y los protégé y les ofrece la oportunidad de trabajo pero que también los agreed y los discrimina."

[19] José, 44 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Es un lugar donde da mucha oprtunidad para crecer para prosperar, pero la inseguridad legal lo hace sentir a usted de una forma instable no crea una raíz. Y eso para mi propia persona estar en un lugar donde yo quería prosperar pero a la vez no tenía la legalidad para permanecer en ese país. Pero si me gusto muchísimo. [...] No me sentia con posibilidad de participar como ciudadano."

States or even U.S. citizenship."[20] It is this hostility that strengthens San Ignacians' and their children's orientation to their community of origin, and the identification with their transnational citizenship.

U.S. citizenship, however, was and continues to be a desired commodity by San Ignacians who understand their disenfranchised status in Detroit despite their many social, economic and cultural contributions. Some Mexicanas used their access to citizenship as a leverage to negotiate gender equality and to create a sense of importance and social superiority within their transnational communities. Tina's situation illustrated these efforts,

> A great miracle happened to me, I became a U.S. citizen without speaking English. My husband and I applied through a church in Detroit. We paid $150 for everything and all the questions that immigration is supposed to ask you they tested us on. So we got a call from immigration and my husband went and they asked him what were the three legislative entities in the U.S. and he said, "I don't know" and they told him to wait until he had 15 years of residency status to take the exam in Spanish or until he was 55 years of age. Me, well I got my appointment and I went there on a Monday fasting and putting my fate in the hands of our Lord, "if he wants me to I'll become a citizen or stay as a resident." I answered their questions and I only missed one word when I wrote two sentences in English I wrote "lobe" instead of "love". So the woman from immigration said, "do you believe in the constitution?" and I said, "no" and she replied in disbelief, "what?" so she repeated the question and I said, "yes, yes, yes!" so she said, "ok bye bye."[21]

Tina's situation illustrated how San Ignacians considered it necessary to become recognized as citizens of their new home.

---

[20] Nicholas De Genova & Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 3.

[21] Tina y Saúl, 47 and 52 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Un milagro grande me paso, me hice ciudadana sin saber Inglés. Metimos la aplicación por una iglesia, dimos el test y metimos los papeles. Pagamos $150 por todo y todas las preguntas que hacen en migración nos las hicieron ahí, las contestamos y nos llamaron de migración, fue mi esposo y le preguntaron cuales son las tres ramas y el dijo, "I don't know" y le dijeron que se esperara hasta 15 años de residencia para hacer el examen en español o hasta que tuviera 55 años. Yo me fui el lunes en ayunas poniéndome en las manos del señor, "si quiere me vuelvo ciudadana si no residente". Contestar si solo una no supe puse dos oraciones en ingles y las escribí me equivoque una sola letra puse "lobe" en vez de "love." Y la de la migra me pregunto, "Do you believe in the constitution?' y yo dije que no y me dijo, "¿Qué?" escúcheme y repitió la pregunta y yo le dije, "yes, yes, yes!" Y ella me dijo, "ok bye, bye."

While conducting my research, at the end of all my interviews I would ask the interviewees if they wanted to add anything else and Tina chose to tell her courageous attempt to become a citizen regardless of the fact that she felt she had a major handicap: not speaking the "official" language. Moreover, she used her narrative as an opportunity to emphasize her husband's inability to accomplish the desired goal. In 1979 Doña Luna also became a citizen and her attitude toward her "accomplishment" was more ironic. She commented, "Let me tell you something, I became a citizen and nobody believed me [because I don't know how to read or write] even in immigration they were stunned. When we went to get my passport they asked me how come my certificate of citizenship was not signed and how could it be possible for me to become a citizen without knowing how to read or write so they investigated. Finally, I made them laugh when I signed with an X."[22] This sense of accomplishment of conquering the impossible elucidated how San Ignacians were very aware of the importance of having recognition in the receiving community and that recognition was symbolized by acquiring citizenship.

Other San Ignacians were more cynical of their status knowing that pejorative stereotypes have been used against them in the U.S. "Well you can say that I crossed as a wet pants not as a wetback because I crossed through a tunnel that had water up to my crotch."[23] Nevertheless, affiliation with the transnational community as a form of collective strength enabled San Ignacians to identify themselves as active participants of their community whether in San Ignacio or Detroit.

---

[22] Doña Luna and Don Andrés, 72 and 74 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "Le digo algo que me hice ciudadana y hasta ni lo creen porque ahí mismo me dijeron ahora que cuando fuimos a sacar el pasaporte dijeron qué cómo era posible que me hubiera hecho ciudadana sin saber leer ni escribir, porque no estaba firmado el papel y hasta investigaron. Y no pues ahí los hice reír pues puse la cruz."

[23] Mari and Goyo, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Si pues yo pase de pantalones mojados no de espaldas porque iba en un túnel [tenía agua hasta aquí]."

Since the 1970s when Doña Tere arrived with her family, San Ignacians have been purchasing homes in Mexican Town. Many Mexicanos and Mexicanas remembered how inexpensive their houses were when they purchased them. "We arrived in Detroit on a Monday [in the late 1970s] and by Wednesday we had already purchased a house for $15,000 cash, except they did not give it to us until two months later. We borrowed half of the money and the other half we had."[24] Purchasing a house was one of the most important investments San Ignacians made in Detroit and in San Ignacio. Don Chuy's son Jaime left for Detroit in 1989, brought his family a year later and in 1991 they bought their first house. Jaime and his wife Irma proudly recollected how it happened,

> Jaime, "We bought the house two years after we arrived. It was very expensive [he laughs sarcastically] it cost $5,000 there in Mexican Town where all the San Ignacians live."
> Irma, "Yes we bought the house on a Tuesday, we filled out all the paper work and gave them the money and on Thursday the house next door burnt down. [...] That was on Thursday and on Friday we had to urgently move there just in case. So they took everything and demolished the burnt house and only the lot was left and we bought the lot as well."
> Jaime, "I fixed the house, it was not very pretty, I bought the lot next door very expensive as well [joking] I paid $300. An just a few months ago we had someone from the bank appraise the house and they offered me $70,000."[25]

---

[24] Tina y Saúl, 47 and 52 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003. "Llegamos a Detroit un lunes y para el miércoles ya habíamos comprado una casa en $15,000 al contado, nada más que me la entregaron en dos meses. Conseguimos la mitad del dinero y la otra mitad la llevábamos nosotros."

[25] Irma y Jaime, 47 and 40 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, February 2003.
Jaime, "Compramos casa verdad, a los dos años. Que me costo re cara [se ríe], si me costo $5,000. Ahí en Mexican Town donde estamos todos los de San Ignacio."
Irma, "si comprámos la casa un martes, llenamos los papeles y dimos el dinero y el jueves se quemo la del otro lado, no se quemo toda nada más se derritio todo el plástico. Eso fue el jueves y el viernes nos fuimos de emergencia a vivir ahí. Porque la otra quedo quemada y había mucho peligro de que prendieran la casa quemada. Y quitaron todo derrumbaron la casa y quedo el terreno y él lo compró."
Jaime, "Y la arregle las casa, no estaba muy bonita, compré el terreno de al lado bien carisímo también [se ríe bromeando] $300. Y ahora que fui me hicieron un avaluo en el banco y me ofrecieron $70,000 por la casa.

This situation emphasized their efforts to build a community in Detroit where they could feel safe and where they could construct their sense of belonging by owning the place where they lived. However, due to the historical housing segregation in Detroit since the end of World War II, their choices of space and location were mostly limited to the Mexican Town area. However, the denial of rights to Mexican immigrants also puts them in very vulnerable positions and they become easy prey for predators who are aware of their situation. Nan's situation exemplifies these consequences,

> Well lately we have not had much money because we bought a house from a man and apparently he had taken out several loans on the house and the bank took the house from us. Something was wrong with the finances of the house from the beginning and we didn't know. It was a fraud, and he stole from us $35,000. We went to see a lawyer and we are still battling that, but apparently there is not a lot that we can do.[26]

These are some of the many circumstances that Mexican immigrants are exposed to when they are denied social and political recognition. Several companies in Detroit prey on the immigrant's vulnerability and Nan's case is one. Purchasing homes then is not such an easy enterprise.

Since the 1940s, the City of Detroit began a process of urban redevelopment that generated a systematic process of housing segregation of African Americans and subsequently of Mexicans. This segregation and marginalization of African Americans and Mexicans only worsened in the next three decades. Banks would not consent to any type of mortgage facilities to African Americans or Mexicans and furthermore, banks along with landlords and real estate agents discouraged any investment where African

---

[26] Nan, 26 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "No hemos tenido dinero nos robaron aquí en la casa. Compramos una casa de un guey y el la hipoteco o no se que y nos la quito el banco, porque no estaba, no pues estaba mal esa casa desde un principio, nos hizo un fraude. Fuimos a un abogado y todavía estamos en eso pero parece que no podemos hacer mucho."

Americans or Mexicans lived. The city of Detroit began to decrease basic public and social services to the neighborhoods where these minorities resided. In his book *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Thomas J. Sugrue provided a detailed analysis of the systemic housing segregation and marginalization African Americans (and one can assume Mexicans as well, though smaller in numbers, due to the racist environment that permeates in Detroit) underwent in the decades following World War ll.

Sociologist Norman Daymond Humphrey, who wrote several articles on Mexicans in Detroit during the 1940s, showed Euroamerican attitudes toward Mexicans. In 1946 he published an article entitled, "The Housing and Household Practices of Detroit Mexicans." In his article Humphrey made numerous racist and prejudice assumptions about the way Mexicans lived in Detroit, ignoring completely their lack of access to basic resources needed for the survival of families and also disregarding the housing segregation that both African Americans and Mexicans were exposed to. Instead, Humphrey believed that Mexicans chose to live in deplorable conditions because it was in their nature, "Thus early in the process of change, one segment of the Mexican population is found living in basement apartments which in being lightless and airless, approximate the adobe huts of the peasant village. The likeness of this dwelling to that in Mexico accounts for the persistence with which it is retained by the least assimilated migrants."[27] These Euroamerican sentiments legitimized not only their overt racist attitudes against Mexicans, but also the criminal practices applied to housing segregation and the continuous marginalization of underrepresented groups.

---

[27] Norman Daymond Humphrey, "The Housing and Household Practices of Detroit Mexicans," *Social Forces*, Vol.24, No. 4 (May, 1946), 433.

Housing conditions worsened decades after World War II with the advent of deindustrialization when Detroit went from one of the most important manufacturing cities in the nation to a city that lost more than half of its population in a span of 50 years.[28] While Mexican immigrants were buying houses in Detroit since the 1970s, the process of deindustrialization and de-urbanization triggered a massive white exodus to the suburbs, leaving behind most of the working class African-Americans and Mexican immigrants. This exodus along with the economic downfall that the city was enduring, caused public and social services such as health care access, education, maintenance of street lights, police security, garbage collection among others to seriously diminish increasing the decay of many neighborhoods in Detroit.[29] More recently, Farrell-Donaldson, Detroit's ombudsman, remarked in 2004, "Right now, we have streets with one person living on them, yet you still have to provide streetlights for that street. You still have to provide police protection. You still have to provide fire protection. We should move those people out."[30] Many Mexicanas who arrived in the early 1970s were first hand witnesses of the effects of deindustrialization and de-urbanization imbued with racist ideologies regarding Mexicans in the U.S. However, many were unaware of the general economic situation of the city and therefore, they tended to blame the arrival of more Mexicans to the slow decay of their neighborhoods. Doña Tere commented on the changes she noticed since her arrival in Detroit,

---

[28] In 1950 Detroit's population was 1.85 million people, by 2000 the population had seriously decreased to 951,270, 48% below that of 1950. "In 2000, Detroit's African-American population constituted 81.6% of the city's total population. Many whites had moved to the suburbs." Richard Freeman, "Death of Detroit: Harbinger of Collapse of Deindustrialized America," *Executive Intelligence Review* (April 23, 2004), 9.

[29] "The process of close-down of hospitals, and insufficient beds to treat people, has been exacerbated in Detroit. [...] During the last three decades, Samaritan Hospital, Holy Cross Hospital, and Saratoga Hospital, all located on Detroit's East Side, have closed down, leaving only one major hospital still open in Lemmons' district." Ibid.. 12.

[30] Farrell-Donaldson, Detroit's Ombudsman as quoted in Richard Freeman, "Death of Detroit: Harbinger of Collapse of Deindustrialized America," *Executive Intelligence Review* (April 23, 2004),

> Well, people play soccer in Patton Park rather than in Clark Park, which is much closer to us, but since some young people were killed there now they only play on one side. It is not very safe to be there anymore. Before it was safe when we lived there it was mostly *Americanos* [Euroamericans] there were not a lot of Mexicans very few. It was so much prettier back then, the street was very nice and they never discriminated against us, on the contrary they were nice. But then they left and more Mexicans arrived.[31]

Doña Tere's comment emphasized her own class bias toward her fellow townspeople, but more importantly it signaled to her internalization of pejorative and racist stereotypes of Mexicans that was and continues to be inherent in the U.S. collective imagination. Unaware of the outside forces affecting the slow decay of her neighborhood, Doña Tere condemned her fellow Mexicans for "worsening" her neighborhood. Her daughter-in-law corroborated these sentiments by emphasizing how Mexicanos have made this neighborhood much more dangerous.[32]

The decline of city services compounded by the impact of Euroamericans' flight of economic investments and contributions from the city to the suburbs severely affected the city of Detroit and consequently its residents, African-Americans and Mexican immigrants. A good example of the city's reluctance to provide public and social services in Mexican Town was the park that Doña Tere mentioned, Patton Park. This park was where I began to do my research five years ago. The park, however, was not documented as a park by the city of Detroit, which meant that Mexicanas/os who attended soccer

---

[31] Doña Tere, 53 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "Ahora juegan football en Patton Park porque el Clark que le dicen esta más cerquita de la casa, pero como ahí mataron a unos muchachos ya ahora nada más se ponen de un lado. No es muy recomendable, antes no antes no era tanto. Antes que nosotros vivíamos casi había pura gente Americana no había muchos Mexicanos muy pocos y estaba más bonito por la calle donde estaba más bonito nunca nos hicieron discriminación más bien se hacían amistad con nosotros. Pero después se fueron muchos y llegaron más Mexicanos."

[32] Cárla, 50 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Yo no se si los Latinos nosotros mismos lo estamos canbiando [el barrio]. Yo pienso que si lo hijos, los muchachos [los cholos]. No había lo que hay ahora estaba más bonito. No habían casa quemadas."

games on Sundays in the summer, had to provide and pay for garbage collection, portable toilets and security.

Despite the economic hardships and changes that the city of Detroit underwent in a matter of 60 years, Mexican immigrants slowly constructed a very dynamic transnational community. Through this process, San Ignacians developed a sense of identity that reflected their personal affiliations with both their sending and their receiving community. These affiliations became stronger as they constructed meanings for the different social circumstances of both places and these strengthen their recognition of a transnational citizenship. Nevertheless, these meanings and changing identities and senses of belonging brought about conflicting feelings reflected in San Ignacians' desire to reside either in Detroit or in San Ignacio. In 2001 Doña Tere went back to San Ignacio permanently because her health had slowly worsened after residing in Detroit for 31 years. Nevertheless she acknowledged,

> I really liked being there [Detroit] if it was because of me I would have stayed there, but one of my daughters wanted to come back. I was very comfortable there; I even worked here and there cleaning houses and office buildings. I also worked in a restaurant in the kitchen. [...] Now everything is so big here in San Ignacio because of all the people that live in Detroit. [...] Whole families are now in Detroit, young women also leave and they make money and buy a house. You can tell by the prices of the houses in Detroit, they are so expensive now when they were so cheap back then. I want to go back, I have a daughter-in-law that keeps telling me to move in with her, "come and live with me there are many bedrooms in the house," the house that used to be mine and yes I think I will go back.[33]

[33] Doña Tere, 53 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001. "Ya está todo muy grande aquí en San Ignacio porque la cantidad de gente que hay en Detroit de aquí. [...] Se van familias enteras de aquí y también muchachas se van y ya se quedan y compran casa y bueno carísimas de baratas que estaban. Yo me quiero ir tengo una nuera que me ha dicho, "véngase conmigo, hay muchos cuartos en la casa," que era mía. Y si yo creo que me voy a ir ahí, si voy."

Doña Tere's conflicting sentiments about residing permanently in Detroit and her views about the deterioration of the neighborhood illustrated how Mexicanas have undergone a process of identity formation that was rooted in how they saw themselves as citizens of San Ignacio and Detroit. It was this transnational identity that allowed Mexicanas to find ways to counter attack hostile environments in Detroit such as the lack of public and social services in the Mexican Town neighborhood. Her sense of community was rooted in the immigrant experience and her reliance on her family served as a defense mechanism to enable her to live with dignity and a sense of accomplishment in Detroit.

Mexican immigrant's identities have radically changed since the bracero generation with the accumulation of capital. In the 1940s and 1950s, braceros mostly continued to labor on similar tasks they had in San Ignacio, and their priorities were to support their families in San Ignacio. In the 1960s, when they moved to Detroit, they became respectable industrial workers and in the 1970s, with the arrival of Mexicanas to Detroit they became active economic participants by purchasing homes in Detroit. By the 1980s, San Ignacians in Detroit were important social, economic and political contributors in San Ignacio and in Detroit. And finally, in the 1990s, San Ignacian immigrants became heroines and heroes in the eyes of their co-nationals not only for their contributions to their town, but also through the accumulation of capital that enabled them to invest their capital both in San Ignacio and in Detroit.

Older men from the bracero generation preferred to go back to San Ignacio permanently in their old age. The Hernández brothers for example, all went back to live in San Ignacio when they retired. Delfino, Rubén, and Jesús have all passed away;

however, Don Gabriel is still alive and resides in San Ignacio. He stated why he made that choice,

> My intention since I left to work [in the U.S.] was to try and save, to try and earn enough to come back to rest. I said, "life is too short and it has extended too much. I didn't think that I was going to be alive past my 50 years of age, but I am close to 70. I say that life is too short and to work every day until the end of your days is not worth it, it's not worth it.[34]

Don Gabriel's comment reflected the braceros' initial attitudes toward *el Norte*, as San Ignacians, their only purpose to leave home was to make a better living and provide for their families. Their identities remained rooted in their sending communities and *el Norte* was a place that provided them with better opportunities for work. Unlike his children who all reside in Detroit, he preferred to go back and enjoy his accomplishments along with the respect given by the townspeople. Like Don Gabriel, another pioneer of the transnational community, Don Chuy moved to San Ignacio in 1974 permanently due to his ill health. Along with Don Chuy and Don Gabriel, Don Manuel and Don Raúl all from the bracero generation have moved back to San Ignacio; however, their families all reside in Detroit. Most of their wives have passed away, but those who are still alive that are in San Ignacio expressed their desire to go back to Detroit. Older men seemed to look at San Ignacio as their final resting place whereas older women looked at Detroit as their final resting place mostly because they all wanted to stay with their families. Older men also seemed to be content with their status as heroes in the town since they were all well respected due to their success as

---

[34] Don Gabriel and Sergio, 70 and 46 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001. "Mi intención desde que me fui, tratar de ahorrar, tratar de ganar lo suficiente para venirme a descansar. Yo dije, "la vida es muy corta' ya se me largo mucho pero yo no pensaba durar más de los 50 años pero ya ando en los 70. Y digo la vida es muy corta y trabajar todos los días, hasta el ultimo día no tiene caso no tiene caso."

immigrants. Moreover, a lot of younger San Ignacians consult them when they want to journey north. This situation also brings about questions of citizenship where older men, despite the fact that they had constructed lives in Detroit, never felt a sense of belonging whereas their citizenship in San Ignacio becomes overwhelming with social recognition and benefits from their townspeople's admiration. This sense of worth would not be the same in a big city such as Detroit. Older women, on the other hand, had as a priority to stay with their families in Detroit and they enjoyed the collective strength that made them feel secure and safe, their transnational citizenship.

As opposed to older women's contradictory sentiments about temporal or permanent residency, younger Mexicanas are very motivated by the idea of owning their home in the Mexican Town neighborhood and, like their elders, to be close to family members revealing how their community of choice is in *el Norte*. Younger women, however, are also more aware of the shortage of public and social services and the lack of quality provided by the few health care providers that are left near the neighborhood. One of the young women I interviewed whose child was born with cerebral palsy was in the process of suing the hospital where her child was delivered. Despite the long and arduous process involved in a suit of that magnitude, this young woman was determined and driven by her maternal obligation to ensure that her child's future was provided for. She was driven by a conscious acknowledgement that the doctor on call at the time of her delivery was responsible for the birth defect of her child. She remembered how the resident on call deliberately tried to delay the birth of her child. The recognition of being mistreated by the medical staff on the day of her childbirth, her child's wellbeing and her husband's emotional support were the impetus for her to seek justice and accountability.

These attitudes underlined how this younger generation continued to rely on their collective recognition of their transnational citizenship. Elena and most of her family members are rendered socially invisible "aliens" in Detroit; nevertheless this situation did not stop her from seeking justice.

The difference in opinions related to the idea of the neighborhood between these two generations has to do with many factors, of which one is a nostalgic view of the past "when things were better." However, the difference in opinions also marked the influence generated by a hostile and racist environment where Mexicanas navigated in Detroit. For the older women the presence of Euroamericans "made the neighborhood better," when in fact most of it had to do with de-urbanization and marginalization. Yet, their view also underlined the tensions between the older generation's and the younger generation's attitudes toward their residence in the United States and their imagined hopes that living in the U.S. was and will continue to be better than living in Mexico. Younger Mexicanas are more cynical about residing in Detroit and they recognize the reality of living in a harsh and racist environment. Additionally, younger women have found that being rooted in their transnational community gave them a stronger sense of identity based on their shared immigration experience. They have also recognized the denial of a fair distribution of resources and a powerful oppressive nation-state due to Euroamericans' narrow-minded definitions of citizenship. Furthermore, women like Gaby and Elena are initiating an ideology of accountability to institutionalized racism in social structures in Detroit.

While taking me on a tour of the neighborhood Gaby showed me the school where most of the students are of Mexican origin, and we both joked about the fact that

the school proudly flaunted over 15 flags of different countries by the main entrance, none of which was the Mexican Flag. Our sarcasm, however, did not ignore how racialized institutions in Detroit systematically continue to discriminate against Mexicans despite the large Mexican and Latino population in the neighborhood. Continuing on the tour, we passed several burned houses, not uncommon in the neighborhood, and piles of garbage in what used to be front and back yards. I had my video camera on while Gaby gave me the tour and when we were passing by deteriorated and abandoned houses, Gaby turned to me and said "no, Luz María don't tape that" and I asked "why not?" and she responded, "because people who watch the video (both Euroamericans and Mexicans) will think that all the neighborhood is like that." This statement underlined her acknowledgement of the lack of public services and her rejection of the idea that Mexicanos/as are responsible for this abandonment or deterioration, and more importantly, what she viewed as a "real" community. This attitude also emphasized how San Ignacians wanted to take a more active role in shaping their identity and how others would see them. Her comment also acknowledged at some level the pernicious stereotypes that they have to deal with while living in Detroit as "aliens." Cultural productions of Mexicans in the U.S. have continued to recycle negative images of Mexican immigrants and they are very much aware of them, thus affecting the way they identify as citizens of their transnational community. In their research, Nicholas De Genova and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas emphasized the oppressive measures that the denial of social recognition, in this case citizenship has,

> Insofar as the institution of U.S. citizenship is commonly presumed to differentiate subjects in relation to the power of the nation-state, differences, divisions, and inequalities are elaborated in terms of "citizenship" and "immigration": Who is a

> U.S. citizen? Who is a "foreigner," or an "alien"? Who is eligible for citizenship? Who is deportable? And moreover, who is a "real American"?[35]

Consequently, Mexican immigrants will always exist in many Euroamericans' minds as "aliens," - regardless of the Mexican immigrants' status. They view Mexicans as deportable and thus deny them any opportunity or equal access to resources. Through this process they validate their historical racist and oppressive practices against Mexican immigrants. Furthermore, these attitudes are absorbed and internalized by Mexican immigrants denying them the right to occupy the very spaces that they own and work, and construct their lives. The denial of citizenship and of social recognition moves San Ignacians to develop and constantly redefine their transnational citizenship.

On the other hand, San Ignacians become heroes and heroines when they continue to invest in their sending community's economy by constructing enormous houses that flaunt their success as immigrants. Contrary to their limited social positioning in Detroit, in San Ignacio immigrants gain upward social mobility and respect from their fellow townspeople when they flaunt their monetary success by parading luxurious cars, clothing, jewelry, cell phones, etc. One of the most important and symbolic commodities that emphasized the immigrant' success and prestige is the construction of new and elaborate homes. When I arrived in San Ignacio for the third time on October of 2002, I began to look for a place to rent. My intention was to stay for at least six months to conduct my research. Two weeks went by and to no avail; I was still paying for a room in the only hotel in San Ignacio, which charged up to $50 a night. I would ask women where I might find an apartment or room to rent. Most responded that there were not such

---

[35] Nicholas De Genova & Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 2.

accommodations in San Ignacio. An older woman, however, kept repeating that it was a pity that her house was not finished because if it were she would allow me to live there for free. And as she was mentioning the construction of her house she was taking me for a walking tour of San Ignacio.

The first stop we made was at the construction sight of her new house. She gave me a thorough tour of the incredibly luxurious house and then she proceeded to show me two other houses that belonged to her brothers who were residing in the United States. Her brothers' homes were as luxurious as hers, but to add pain to injury she let me know that both of her siblings' houses were empty most of the year since her family only came to San Ignacio during the patron saint's festivities in January. I realized that she was not going to offer to rent a room, but rather she was showing off her family's success within their immigrant experience. This was my first encounter with what San Ignacians call "*las casas solas*" (the empty houses). I had heard about these houses while I was in Detroit listening to Mexicanas talk in Patton Park. The houses became a symbol of economic success and upward social mobility. Mexicanas would compete with each other showing off how much money they had spent in laying down the floors, building the doors, designing the kitchen cabinets, and so forth while at the same time consulting with each other what colors would be best for the different bedrooms and what pictures would look good on the walls.

Investing in the construction of a house and investing in numerous renovations to their existing houses in San Ignacio were some of the most important goals of San Ignacians. Furthermore, the process became a gender negotiation between couples that involved traveling back and forth to the community of origin in order to supervise the

construction or the renovation of the house, and to contribute to the design and the furnishing of the house. Most of these houses were exact replicas of residences in the United States. Immigrants chose from real estate magazines pictures of the houses that they liked best seeking the architects in Mexico for reproduction. This left San Ignacio with a very eclectic aesthetic look. The construction of new homes was a family project involving the women that reside in San Ignacio as the caretakers of the "*casas solas*". When I walked by the empty houses I got the impression that they were not really "*casas solas*" because most of the time the doors were open, the curtains were drawn, and the plants and yards were perfectly landscaped and cared for.

For Mexicanos and Mexicanas their citizenship as San Ignacians in San Ignacio stood in opposition to their negation of citizenship status in Detroit. However, their investments in housing, their social participation in U.S. social structures, and the creation of transnational communities affiliated them more closely to their transnational citizenship and reclaimed this sense of belonging. As heroes and heroines in San Ignacio they became center stage and that, in a way, alleviated their marginalization in Detroit. Somewhere between their positioning from center to periphery, from heroes and heroines to "illegal aliens," Mexicanos and Mexicanas developed different notions of what it meant to be a citizen of a transnational community. However, in their collective imagination, most of them fantasized on returning to San Ignacio to retire in their newly renovated or constructed homes. The contested terrain in Detroit, then, is seen as integral to laboring for a better future.

Not many San Ignacians returned to San Ignacio as they had planned when building or renovating their houses. The *casas solas* remained, for the most part,

uninhabited except when immigrants returned for the *fiestas patronales* during the fall and winter months. These luxurious homes became symbols of how San Ignacians constructed their notions of citizenship and thus of belonging. Since most Mexicanos and Mexicanas will make arrangements to have their bodies sent back to San Ignacio when they die, these homes, in a way, become giant tombs that will house them if not during at least at the end of their lives. Nevertheless, during their lives, San Ignacians in Detroit will continue, to the best of their abilities, to risk – those who are rendered socially invisible – going back to San Ignacio and continue to celebrate their status as heroines and heroes as they stand in the endless line of the *hijos ausentes* (absent children) procession during the *fiestas patronales.* They line up patiently in the procession awaiting for the children's school band to advance followed by the Aztec dancers. As Gel put it, "Yes, next year we will risk [crossing the border again for the fiestas]. No matter, *todo el mundo* (literally all the world, in this case everybody) crosses, *sea como sea* (no matter what)."[36] They will march proud and tall and with dignity while the band plays in the *kiosco* and as their fellow San Ignacians stand aside and acknowledge the immigrants' success and courage in constructing a life in Detroit. It is this recognition that provides San Ignacians both in San Ignacio and in Detroit with a citizenship that recognizes their efforts, their struggles, their endless courage, and their tolerance for hostility, racism, and discrimination in the U.S.: their transnational citizenship.

[36] Gel, 25 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004. "Si y asi para el otro año si nos aventuramos también. Al cabo todo el mundo pasa oye sea como sea."

Que Vivan Los Mojados	Long Live the Wetbacks
Porque somos los mojados siempre nos busca la ley porque estamos ilegales y no hablamos en inglés el gringo terco a sacarnos y nosotros a volver.	Because we are the wetbacks the law is always looking for us because we are "illegals" and we don't speak English obstinate gringo wants to remove us and we always come back.
Sí uno sacan por Laredo por Mexicali entran diez si otro sacan por Tijuana por Nogales entran seis, ahí nomás saquen la cuenta cuántos entramos al mes.	If they deport one from Laredo In Mexicali ten cross back If they deport another through Tijuana In Nogales six more cross back So make your calculations How many of us come in per month.
El problema de nosotros fácil se puede arreglar que nos den a una gringuita para podernos casar y ya que nos den la mica volvernos a divorciar.	Our problem is easy to solve give us a gringuita so that we can marry her and when we get the green card, we can divorce her.
Vivan todos los mojados los que ya van a emigrar los que van de vacaciones los que van a casarse para poder arreglar.	Long live the wetbacks The ones that are going to immigrate the ones that enter as tourists the ones that will marry so that they can fix their status.
Los Tigres del Norte[1]	

Conclusions

In history, the end is the beginning of a new chapter. With this in mind, I hope that my research encourages a more egalitarian and fair investigation into Mexican immigration to the United States. As the global economy expands and continues to displace thousands of international migrants, we need to understand the politics of movement that are integral to this economic system. International trade agreements such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) signed in 1994 by Mexico, the U.S., and Canada, that stipulated the encouragement of free trade of information, technology,

[1] Los Tigres del Norte. "Vivan los Mojados." *Colección de Oro* (México, D.F: Ciscos Musart, S.A. DE C.V., 2000).

consumer goods, and communications between these three countries have continued to exploit underdeveloped countries. Despite the continued outsourcing from the U.S. to Mexico, the U.S. has continued to reject and ignore the obvious historical movement of Mexican labor legitimizing its oppressive, racist, and xenophobic attitudes toward Mexican workers in the U.S.

White supremacist nationalistic ideologies in the U.S. have walked a thin line between presenting the U.S. as a strong powerful and very masculine nation "fighting" passive, lazy and backward Mexicans that endanger the cultural "integrity" of the country and presenting the U.S. as an emasculated and defenseless nation-state trying to deter the "invasion" of Mexican immigrants who decrease wages, deplete the welfare system, and take jobs Euroamericans. This image of the nation-state as very masculine and capable of fighting against undocumented lazy, backward, and apathetic Mexican immigrants, and at the same time unable to stop the "invasion" of dangerous economic Mexican immigrant predators, emphasizes the schizophrenic and criminal attitudes that the U.S. has historically adopted against Mexican immigrants. Aggressive recruitment of Mexican labor at the end of the nineteenth century and continued through the twentieth century set the stage for a massive movement of Mexicanos and Mexicanas to *el Norte*. Gendered bilateral agreements such as the Bracero Program in 1942 encouraged approximately 400,000 to 450,000 Mexicanos to cross the border annually to labor for the U.S.[2] As a result, the formation of transnational communities has continued to enrich the social, cultural, economic, and political fabric of the United States.

---

[2] Douglas S. Massey, Jorge Durand, Nolan J Malone, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 36-37. Furthermore, the authors state that: "Nearly 5 million Mexicans entered the United States during the program's twenty-two-year history – a figure that dwarfs the combined total of legal and contract labor between 1900 and 1929 –

My investigation has historically traced the lives of Mexican immigrant women and men as protagonists of demographic, social, cultural, economic, and political changes in their own histories as they constructed their transnational community in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, Jalisco in Mexico and Detroit, Michigan in the United States from 1942 to 2000. I began my study with the inception of the Bracero Program and its effect in initiating the flow of Mexican labor and the beginning stages of the formation of their transnational community. As Mexicanas joined the braceros in Detroit they laid the foundation to what was to become one of the most dynamic transnational communities in Detroit. I have argued that Mexicanas are the main protagonists in weaving and supporting the social networks that are inherent in the construction of transnational communities. Furthermore, I asserted that Mexicanas in San Ignacio began to cross translocal borders by becoming heads of households that facilitated their immigrant experience. I focused my work on the intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality, and citizenship that construct new meanings that are fluid and permeable.

The immigrant experience needs to be analyzed through different lenses that look at the various ways that Mexicanos and Mexicanas construct their lives in their transnational community. In the case of Mexican immigrants and the creation of transnational communities, sexuality has been constantly informed, shaped and reshaped by the immigrant experience. As gender historians of immigration we need to reconsider the meaning of transnationalism so that the experience of immigrants is not fragmented into two different spaces – their community of origin and the receiving community. I

---

but this massive movement remained out of the public eye." This statement questions the politics of immigration during the tenure of the Bracero Program particularly during Operation Wetback in 1954 when thousands of Mexican immigrants were deported to satisfy McCarthyism and to ameliorate civil society's concerns raised by the supporters of such politics.

argue that both are integral to their everyday lives and therefore we need to consider them as one. Within this context I introduced the concept of "transnational sexualities" that emphasizes the social constructions on sexuality informed by both experiences; and how these in turn create new meanings and understandings of sexuality, social, cultural, economic, and political realities that apply to Mexicanas' and Mexicanos' everyday lives in San Ignacio and in Detroit.

I have looked deeper into the social networks that are inherent in the sustainability of transnational communities arguing that it is through Mexicanas' productive and reproductive labor that these networks are maintained. Through the deconstruction of these networks one can understand how Mexicanas created a community by being exposed and participating in U.S. social structures such as schools and hospitals, through church related activities, and through kinship. Kinship systems have been expanded to accommodate the immigration experience and thus reconfigurations of family hierarchies and structures have continuously changed and adapted to the needs of the transnational community. Mexicanas challenge traditional gender roles while they navigate within the contested spaces they create despite oppressive and patriarchal systems. Everyday processes affect social networks and gender struggles and tensions that derive from them. These tensions in turn affect notions of "femininity" and "masculinity," "motherhood," and "fatherhood," domesticity, and workers' identities.

Feminist approaches to Mexican and Latin American immigrant communities in the United States have emphasized the gains secured by immigrant women along the process in terms of gender awareness, reproductive rights and separation from patriarchal structures in the traditional society. However, these analyses have failed to recognize

both the fluid nature of traditional patriarchal structures and the patriarchal nature of U.S. institutions. Moreover, they have failed to recognize that the immigrant experience for Mexican women has been both liberating and repressive. The roots of such misconception lay on the uncritical adoption of "zero sum" general approaches towards women immigrants, by which two opposite spaces (origin and receiving communities) struggle for the control and domination in social values and culture among immigrants.

The trajectories of women from San Ignacio prove that gender dynamics expand and create new and complex social spaces where the dominant patriarchal values are permanently renegotiated and readjusted by women's agency. Far from conforming into a "zero sum" model, the immigrant experience multiplies and expands the gender dynamics between men and women to create a new matrix of networks where these two groups interact and bargain.

In deconstructing such interaction, my research suggests that the women's participation in the formation of transnational communities can simply not be understood without analyzing the pivotal role of female reproductive labor. As I discussed in chapter three, the creation of permanent and organic transnational ties between San Ignacio and Detroit has its foundations in the network activated and maintained by women's reproductive labor. While current scholarship on immigrant women rightfully insists on the ramifications of female incorporation to the productive force, its inability to identify and analyze the effects of reproductive labor on the immigrant experience have had a negative impact on our understanding of transnational communities.

The stories of San Ignacian families from the 1940s to the present illustrate the extent to which female reproductive labor was the key element in the activation of a

transnational network and the subsequent formation of a permanent community in Detroit. In this process my study places a new emphasis on the significance of domestic and recreational spaces created by immigrant women and the ways in which they use these so called "traditional" areas to create the conditions for a permanent network between San Ignacio and Detroit, first, and a permanent life in Detroit with permanent ties to San Ignacio.

Mexicanas gain power to negotiate gender relations by claiming ownership to their domestic space where they were responsible for the caretaking of not only their immediate family but for all the "guests" that might be staying with them. Furthermore, these responsibilities, as it were, turned Mexicanas into surrogate mothers, daughters, and sisters of extended family, friends and *comadres* or *compadres*. By expanding and readapting this "traditional" gender roles, women not only empower themselves in the migrant experience, but also create the conditions in which families can better navigate between San Ignacio and Detroit, and ultimately, between Mexico and the United States.

My research shows that this fluid expansion of gender roles cannot be conceptualized as a "natural" decision to preserve or maintain values from the rural Mexican pueblo. Instead it is only understood against the background of San Ignacio women's agency and crucial participation in the immigrant experience.

The analysis of reproductive behavior among San Ignacio immigrant women showcases the complex and vibrant dynamics between gender and immigration. Despite constant moral vigilantism by the religious authorities in both San Ignacio and Detroit, despite patriarchal behavior displays by San Ignacio men, and despite the socio-economic pressures of their incorporation to the job market in the U.S., women from San Ignacio

have turned their reproductive practices into a highly contested terrain and have managed to find ways to reduce their fertility rates and the number of pregnancies in comparison to previous generations. While women in reproductive ages in the 1940s and 1950s had traditionally large families, new generations in the 1980s and 1990s significantly reduced the number of children.[3]

By adopting an eclectic approach, from which they select information from Planned Parenthood programs in Mexico and the U.S, Spanish language media talk shows, and by choosing not to abide by religious prescriptions, women have found venues to reduce fertility rates while complying with marital expectations. My research data strongly suggests that this considerable negotiating power vis-à-vis the church and the family traditional values, and especially vis-à-vis the husband's authority, highlights the women's new enhanced position regarding reproduction and family planning. This female agency through which women have successfully renegotiated the implementation of different contraceptive methods (patch, rhythm, *mi viejo me cuida*) exemplifies the way in which they have used the immigrant experience to enhance their position inside the bed, the household and the church.

My research shows the ways younger women have developed a new ability to negotiate with their partners by manipulating patriarchal power and praising men's notions of masculinity and allowing them to "take care" of them. On the other hand, women from the past generations were unable to negotiate such situations due mostly to the overwhelming patriarchal and ecclesiastic controls, plus the positive value placed on children as potential contributors to family labor.

---

[3] See Appendix A table 1.3 and Appendix B, tables 2.1 and 2.2.

In the immigrant experience, younger generations of women have created new ways to construct womanhood values that don't necessarily include a large number of children. While motherhood values have been expanded to include surrogate members or "guests", womanhood standards are no longer associated with having *los hijos que Dios me mande*, (as many children as God wants me to). These two elements: expanded motherhood roles and reduced fertility rates, provide defining characteristic of the Mexicanas' transnational sexualities, a concept introduced in my study as a crucial feature in our understanding of transnational communities.

Transnational sexualities certainly include premarital sex and new courtship patterns, all based on strong ideological changes based both in Mexico and in the U.S., and most importantly, on the circumstances developed within the immigrant experience. Constructed in their everyday lives in San Ignacio and in Detroit, transnational sexualities cannot be separated as two opposing and distinct experiences in the community of origin and in the receiving community; it is a new creation that informs Mexicanas' and Mexicanos' concepts of masculinity and femininity and these in turn inform gender negotiations that shape and are shaped by the immigrant experience. Immigration is not only a social process it is a subjective conceptualization of living experiences that include agency and resistance within contested terrains in Mexico and in the United States.

My research shows that women in San Ignacio responded to the immigration trends by creating and reshaping courting rituals that better mirror their mate-choosing expectations and enhance their bargaining power before and during marriage. Using, but not necessarily playing by, the social spaces created by local church and local authorities to celebrate the immigrant experience, local women have generated new

venues to meet and select their potential life partners and accommodate to the time restraints on young male immigrants by Detroit's job market.

Perhaps unintentionally, the church has become an important influence in this process by enhancing and glorifying the return of the immigrants as part of the religious rituals during the *fiestas patronales*. These rituals have come a long way from courting through holes or cracks on doors or walls to a more intimate contact and to a more elaborate ritual of showing off material possessions to prove a successful immigrant experience. Within this context, both men and women have expanded their range of choices on how to choose partners for either temporary pleasure or potential marriage candidates.

While Mexicanas' transnational sexualities no longer attached a positive value to virginity, nor a negative content to premarital pregnancy, there is still a strong identification between love and marriage, and between sexual intercourse and lifetime commitment. Notwithstanding, self-awareness and body exploration of sexual identities are certainly becoming more important issues for younger generations.

Transnational sexualities have not only reshaped the life cycle of young women in San Ignacio but, not less importantly, also had a profound impact on the local institutions. Local church officials, for instance, no longer refuse to marry pregnant women nor to chastise them from the pulpit. The traditional stigmatization of single mothers, according to senior women, has also loosened up, while local officials had recently started to marry people in the civil court to expedite the process, curbing the ecclesiastic hegemony on marriage.

The life around the *kiosco* during the immigrants' seasonal return has become a new central feature of local courtship rituals, replacing the traditional *serenatas* and summer dating practices. Moreover, the church has reshaped the traditional festivities calendar to accommodate the schedule of returning immigrants while allowing young "marriageable" girls to use the celebration to showcase their attributes and charm.

Traditional festivities associated with harvest and civic celebrations have been challenged and in some cases replaced, by "American-style" female beauty contests, where physical attributes, current U.S. fashion styles, truck platform carnival parades, are common currency. Women's beauty becomes a precious commodity that allows men to satisfy rivalries among nearby towns that intertwine with economic success due to immigrant's monetary contributions both in the form of remittances and in the increase of small businesses. Historically, towns such as San Ignacio have followed traditions of crowning women in parades or processions, however, the young women represented the Spring or a successful harvest and so on. It is from cultural influences from the United States that these parades or processions have turned into beauty pageants. For the immigrants in San Ignacio, the beauty pageants are intrinsically a part of the January religious festivities. As women display their femininities via these pageants, they in turn acknowledge the importance of possible empowerment. San Ignacio's young queen for the January festivities in 2004 was born and raised in Detroit, making her participation in the pageant an important symbolism of second-generation San Ignacians' adherence to their traditional cultural and social mores.

Despite the fact that young and immigrant women are constantly bombarded by critiques of their sexualities by elderly women and church officials, claiming that the

immigrant experience tends to "loosen" women if not watched closely by their parents, it is their bodies that have come to represent the progress of the town, the success of the immigrant community in Detroit and the new era of prosperity that separates, at least in local eyes, San Ignacio from the rest of Mexico.

Along with the construction of a transnational community appears the formation of a transnational set of values and principles regarding memory, identity and citizenship. As the process of creating translocal and transnational ties between San Ignacio and Detroit (and between Mexico and the United States) has only accelerated in the last decades of the twentieth century, new forms of constructing civic values, ethnic identities and translocal concepts of citizenship have emerged.

Civic memory surely provides an example of the realignment of traditional values in the new framework set by the immigrant experience. While the constitution of San Ignacio as an independent municipality with full autonomy from Arandas seems inevitable in the immediate future, it will be possible only because of the Detroit immigrant community's active involvement in local political affairs. As the Detroit's San Ignacians achieve a never-seen-before prominent status in the village, and as the *delegación politica* increases its connections with the Michigan immigrants' group, the association between success abroad and "local pride" seems more consolidated. The more success the "children of San Ignacio" experience in Detroit, the stronger the chances for a viable and autonomous political entity for San Ignacians in Jalisco.

It would be a mistake, however, to identify local pride sponsored by Detroit immigrants as the only source of San Ignacian identity in both Mexico and the United States. For the participants in the immigrant network, ethnic identification as San

Ignacians, Jaliscienses and Mexicans, is also the result of their interactions in the U.S. with other groups from Jalisco, other Mexican states, and especially, other non-Mexican groups in the Detroit area. As long as the urban conditions of the Mexican community in Detroit continue to reflect a pattern of political disenfranchisement, racial segregation, police brutality and economic exploitation, the incentives to "become" "American" and forge a new "American" identity will be outperformed by the "Mexicanness" provided or constructed against the background of the immigrant experience.

Therefore, transnational citizenship is a concept that mirrors both the conditions of identification with San Ignacio as successful immigrants and the conditions of struggle against oppression by other groups in Detroit. As I discussed in chapter four, older men find satisfaction in identifying with their "heroes" status in San Ignacio, thus choosing as their final destination San Ignacio. Contrary to this decision-making process, women find their strength in their collective transnational citizenship in Detroit. The younger generation, however, align themselves with older women by seeing themselves as both, San Ignacians and Mexican-Detroitians.

Political life in San Ignacio centers on men as protagonists, unlike Detroit where women establish transnational families and thus create community where they can consolidate their leadership as the dynamic leaders of culture, tradition, and family union.

The immigrant experience and the transnational identities generated along gender lines could be visualized better in the shapes of some of the "Fiestas of the Absent Children" parade protagonists on the January's celebrations: The Aztec dancers with their intricate costumes as the reminders of a proud heritage side by side with the Miss

Universe fashion-stylize Mexicanas and the elaborate procession of immigrants behind them representing the present successes and interchangeable identities of a promising future.

Appendix A

Persons of Spanish Language in Detroit

Table 1.1

Year	Total Population	People of Spanish Language	Mexican
1970 (a)	1,511,482	27,038	
1980	1,203,339	28,466	
1990 (b)	1,012,427	28,280	17,650
2000	951,270	47,167	33,143

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population, 1970-2000 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

a) For the 1970 and 1980 Census information, Mexicans were not classified; the census has them listed as part of "General Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language for Areas and Places."

b) In 1990 the census began to classify Mexicans alone.

Persons of Spanish Language in Detroit: Men and Women

Table 1.2

Year	People of Spanish Language	Women	Men
1970 (c)	27,038	13,726	13,312
1980	28,466	14,567	13,899
1990(d)	28,280	14,189	14,091
2000	47,167	23,280	23,887

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population, 1970-2000 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

c) For the 1970 and 1980 Census information, Mexicans were not classified; the census has them listed as part of "General Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language for Areas and Places."

d) In 1990 the census began to classify Mexicans alone.

Population Numbers in Mexico and Jalisco

Table 1.3

Year	Total Population Mexico	Total Population Jalisco	National Percentage of Growth	Percentage of Growth in Jalisco (a)
1940	20,807,128	1,418,310	N/A	N/A (b)
1950	25,791,017	1,746,777	3.2	3.3
1960	34,923,129	2,443,261	3.0	3.4
1970	48,225,238	3,296,586	3.4	3.2
1990	81,249,645	5,302,689	2.6	2.0
2000	97,483,412	6,322,002	1.8	1.8

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadistica Geografía e Informática (INEGI) VII al XII Censos de Población y Vivienda, 1950-2000 (VII to XII Population Census, 1940-2000).

(a) Per ten years

(b) Not Applicable

Population Numbers in Jalisco: Men and Women

Table 1.4

Year	Total Population	Percentage Women	Percentage Men
1940	1,418,310	51.6	48.4
1950	1,746,777	51.6	48.4
1960	2,443,261	50.6	49.4
1970	3,296,586	50.5	49.5
1980	4,371,998	51.2	48.8
1990	5,302,689	51.6	48.4
2000	6,322,002	51.4	48.6

Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadistica Geografía e Informática (INEGI) VII al XII Censos de Población y Vivienda, 1950-2000 (VII to XII Population Census, 1940-2000).

Mexican Population Residing in the U.S. and Percentages: Mexican Men and Women

Table 1.5

Year	Mexican Population in U.S.	Percentage of Women in U.S.	Percentage of Men in U.S.
1970	760,000	51.1	48.9
1990	4,766,000	44.9	55.1
2000	8,527,000	46.1	53.9

Source: Mexican Ministery of Foreign Affairs-U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform Washington, D. C. Mexico-United States Binational Migration Study. Migration between Mexico and the United States. Austin, U.S.A., 1998."
U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census. Census 2000.

Appendix B

Percentages of Fertility Rates in Mexico and Women's Knowledge of Contraceptives

Table 2.1

Year	Fertility Rates	Married Women	Women of Fertile Age
1976	5.7	30.2	89.0
1981	4.4	N/A (a)	N/A
1987	3.8	52.7	92.9
1992	3.2	63.1	94.9
1996	2.8	68.4	96.6
2000	2.4	N/A	N/A

Source: For 1976: SPP-IISUNAM. Encuesta Mexicana de Fecundidad, 1976. México, D.F., 1979.
For 1987: SSA. Encuesta Nacional sobre Fecundidad y Salud, 1987. México, D.F., 1989.
For 1992: INEGI. Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica, 1992. Aguascalientes, Ags., 1994.
Para 1997: INEGI. Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica, 1997. Aguascalientes, Ags., 1999.
(a) Information not available

Percentages of Fertility Rates in Jalisco and Mexico

Table 2.2

Year	Fertility Rates Jalisco	Year	Fertility Rates Mexico
1960	7.3	**1976**	5.7
1970	6.8	**1981**	4.4
1980	4.9	**1992**	3.2
1990	3.7	**1996**	2.8
2000	2.9	**2000**	2.4

Source: For 1976: SPP-IISUNAM. Encuesta Mexicana de Fecundidad, 1976. México, D.F., 1979.

For 1987: SSA. Encuesta Nacional sobre Fecundidad y Salud, 1987. México, D.F., 1989.
For 1992: INEGI. Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica, 1992. Aguascalientes, Ags., 1994.
Para 1997: INEGI. Encuesta Nacional de la Dinámica Demográfica, 1997. Aguascalientes, Ags., 1999.
(a) Information not available

Appendix C

Occupation of Employed Spanish Origin Persons in Detroit

Table 3.1

Year	Total Employed	Women of Spanish Origin	Mexican Women
1970 (c)	8,703	2,871	
1980	8,302	3,379	
1990	6,957 (d)		2,777
2000	13,565		4,286

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, United States Census of Population, 1970-2000 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office).

e) For the 1970 and 1980 Census information, Mexicans were not classified; the census has them listed as part of "General Characteristics of Persons of Spanish Language for Areas and Places."

f) In 1990 the census began to classify Mexicans alone.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archives

AHGE Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Mexico City
Departamento de Archivo de Concentración

AGN Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City
Fondo Lázaro Cárdenas

ARE Archivo de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City
Fondo de Braceros: Contratación de Trabajadores Agrícolas en EU.
Departamento de Contrataciones.

NARA National Archives of the United States
NARA – Great Lakes Region (Chicago)
7358 South Pulaski Road
Chicago, IL 60629-5898
RG 211 re: Bracero Program
RG 184 re: Bracero Program
(923296), box 1:
Claims for Annuities and Death Benefits in Mexico, March 1, 1944
Distribution of Pamphlets, July 5, 1944
(923297), box 2:
Mexican Contract Laborers, August 24, 1944;
Mexican Importation: State Department of Translation of Draft, Benefits under the RA of 1937, August 25, 1944;
Mexican Importation Program, October 4, 1945;
Mexican Payroll, October 15, 1945.
((923303), box 19:
Proposed Refund to Mexican nationals, June 19, 1953
(919738), box 13:
Validation Study of Mexican Proofs Conducted by SSA, August 3, 1973
(919752), box 17:
Mexican Nationals re: Retirement Benefits, June 14, 1978
RG 211, War Manpower Commission, Region 5
RG 184, Railroad Retirement Board (re: braceros)
RG 228, Fair Employment Practice Committee
RG 202, National War Labor Board
Naturalization Records, 1837-1998
Declarations of Intention, 1856-1989

Newspapers and Local Pamphlets

The Detroit News (Detroit, Michigan).

El Informador (Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico).

El Arandense (Arandas, Jalisco, Mexico).

Noti-Arandas (Arandas, Jalisco, Mexico).

Boletin Municipalista (San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, Jalisco, Mexico).

La expresión de la palabra: Panorama Alteño, (San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, Jalisco, Mexico).

Noticias Notimex, (31de mayo del 2005, Mexico, D.F.).

Interviews

Don Antonio, 78 years of age, interview in San Ignacio Cerro Gordo, November 2002
Doña Ana, 62 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.
Ana, 18 years of age, interview in San Ignacio 2003.
Doña Anita, 70 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002.
Alejandro, 34 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2002.
Alex, 30 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, February 2003.
Doña Alicia, 69 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, November 2002.
Carla 50 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.
Carmela, 54 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.
Chava, 52 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, February 2003.
Don Chuy, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001.
Don Cosme Martínez, 83 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001.
Gaby and Gabriel, 22 and 28 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2002.
Don Gabriel and his son Sergio Hernández, 70 and 46 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001.
Gel, 25 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.
Gilberto Arias, *Delegado de San Ignacio Cerro Gordo*, 26 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.
Jorge Díaz Pérez, Presidente Municipal de Arandas, interview in Arandas, January 2003.
Father Ignacio Ramos Puga, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001.
José, 44 years of age and president of the committee for a new *municipio*, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.
Lola, 50 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.
Doña Luna and Don Andrés, 72 and 74 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, November 2001.

Mari and Goyo, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.
María, 49 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.
Nan, 26 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.
Oscar Antonio de la Torre Amezcua, 49 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.
Irma y Jaime, 47 and 40 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, February 2003.
Don Raúl and Benjamín, 78 and 58 years of age respectively. Interview in San Ignacio, December 2001.
Reyna, 15 years of age, Mónica, 15 years of age, Bianca, 13 years of age and Elena, 14 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, January 2003.
Rogelio, 55 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, February 2003.
Sonia y Francisco, 43 and 44 years of age respectively, interview in Detroit 2004.
Doña Tere, 73 years of age, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001.
Doña Teresa and Luis Mercado, 67 and 71 years of age respectively, interview in San Ignacio, December 2001.
Susana, 50 years of age, interview in Detroit, July 2004.
Tina y Saúl de la Torre, 47 and 52 years of age respectively, interview in San Igancio, January 2003.
Trino, 57 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.
Vivi, 28 years of age, interview in Detroit, June 2004.

Books and Articles

Acuña, Rodolfo. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. Fourth Edition. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.2000.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Arrom, Silvia Marina. *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1985.

Altman, Ida, Cline, Sarah, Pescador, Juan Javier. *The Early History of Greater Mexico*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.

Baca Zinn, Maxine, Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette, Messner, Michael A. eds. *Gender Through the Prism of Difference*. Boston : Allyn and Bacon, c2000.

Behar, Ruth. *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.

Berlant, Lauren. *Intimacy*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Blea, Irene I. *La Chicana and the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender.* New York, Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 1992.

Bliss, Katherine Elaine. "The Sexual Revolution in Mexican Studies: New Perspectives on Gender, Sexuality, and Culture in Modern Mexico." *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2001), 247-268.

Burkholder, Mark A. *Colonial Latin America.* New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Butalia, Urvashi. *The other side of silence: voices from the partition of India.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

Carrillo, Héctor. *The Night is Young: Sexuality in Mexico in the time of Aids.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Castañeda, Antonia. "Women of Color and the Rewriting of Western History: The Discourse, Politics, and Decolonization of History." *Pacific Historical Review* 61:4 (November 1992).

_____. "Sexual Violence in the Politics and Policies of Conquest: Amerindian Women and the Spanish Conquest of Alta California" in Beatríz Pesquera and Adela de la Torre, eds. *Building with Our Own Hands: New Directions in Chicana Scholarship.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Castillo, Ana. *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994.

Castles, Stephen & Miller, Mark J. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World.* New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1993.

Caulfield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil.* Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000.

Corwin, Arthur F. "Mexican Emigration History, 1900-1970: Literature Research." *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 8, Issue 2 (Summer, 1973), 3-24.

Cotera, Martha P. *Diosa y Hembra: The History and Heritage of Chicanas in the U.S.* Austin, Texas: Special Consultant University of Texas Mexican American Library Project, Dissertation, 1976.

Davalos, Karen Mary. *Ethnic identity Among Mexican and Mexican American Women in Chicago, 1920-1991.* Ann Arbor: U-M-I Dissertation Services, 1995.

Denton, Nancy A., Massey, Douglas S. "Racial Identity Among Caribbean Hispanics: The Effect of Double Minority Status on Residential Segregation." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54, No. 5 (Oct., 1989), 790-808.

De Genova, Nicholas, & Ramos-Zayas, Ana Y. *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship.* New York and London: Routledge, 2003.

De León Arnoldo. *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.

Deutsch, Sarah. *No Separate Refuge: Culture, Class and Gender on an Anglo-Hispanic Frontier in the American Southwest 1880-1940.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Durand, Jorge, Arias, Patricia. *La experiencia migrante: Iconografía de la migración México-Estados Unidos.* Mexico:Altexto, 2000.

_____. *La Enfermera Eterna: Mujer y exvoto en México, siglos XIX y XX.* Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara El Colegio de San Luis, 2002.

Durand, Jorge, Massey, Douglas S. "Mexican Migration to the United States: A Critical Review." *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 27, Issue 2(1992), 3-42.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, Hochschild, Arlie Russell, eds. Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy. New York: A Metropolitan Book, Henry Holt and Company, 2002.

Elaine Bliss, Katherine. *Compromised Positions: Prostitution, Public Health, and Gender Politics in Revolutionary Mexico City.* University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968.

Fernández-Kelly, María Patricia. *For We Are Sold, I And My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Volume 1.* New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, Inc.,1978.

Freeman, Richard. "Death of Detroit: Harbinger of Collapse of Deindustrialized America." Executive Intelligence Review (April 23, 2004).

Gabaccia, Donna R. "Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Immigration Historians." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 84, Issue 2 (Sep., 1997), 570-575.

Gamio, Manuel. *Mexican Immigration to the United States: A Study of Human Migration and Adjustment.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1930.

_____. *The Mexican Immigrant: His Life Story.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Garcia, John A. "Political Integration of Mexican Immigrants: Explorations into the Naturalization Process." *International Migration Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Winter, 1981), 608-625.

García, Juan R. *Mexicans in the Midwest 1900-1932.* Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996.

Gaspar de Alba, Alicia. *Chicano art inside/outside the master's house: cultural politics and the CARA exhibition.* Austin : University of Texas Press, 1998.

Gilmore, David D. *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity.* New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990.

González, Soledad, Ruiz, Olivia, Velasco Laura, y Woo, Ofelia. *Mujeres Migración y Maquila en La Frontera Norte.* El Colegio de La Frontera Norte y El Colegio de México, 1995.

González, Deena J. *Refusing the Favor: The Spanish-Mexican Women of Santa Fe, 1820-1880.* New York, Oxford. Oxford University Press, 1999.

González, Juan. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America.* New York, Penguin Group, 2000.

Gonzalez Gutierrez, Carlos. "Fostering Identities: Mexico's Relations with Its Diaspora." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, No. 2, (Sep., 1999), 545-567.

González-López, Gloria. "De madres a hijas: Gendered Lessons on Virginity across Generations of Mexican Immigrant Women." In Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette, ed. *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999.

Griswold, Daniel T. "Willing Workers: Fixing the Problem of Illegal Mexican Migration to the United States." *Executive Summary, Cato Institute* No. 19, (October 15, 2002): 1-26.

Gutiérrez, David G. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity.* Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995.

_____, ed. *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States.* Washington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc. Imprint, 1996.

Gutmann, Matthew C. *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1996.

Hartshorne, Richard. "Racial Maps of the United States." *Geographical Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Apr., 1938), 276-288.

Harzig Christiane, ed. *Peasant Maids: City Women From the European Countryside to Urban America.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Hayes-Bautista, David E. *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Hernandez Alvarez, Jose. "A Demographic Profile of the Mexican Immigration to the United States, 1910-1950." *Journal of Inter-American Studies*, Vol. 8, Issue 3 (Jul., 1966), 471-496.

Hirsch, Jennifer S. *A Courtship After Marriage: Sexuality and Love in Mexican Transnational Families.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2003.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette, ed. *Gender and U.S. Immigration: Contemporary Trends.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999.

_____. *Dómestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence.* Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001.

_____. *Gendered Transition: Mexican Esperiences of Immigration.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1994.

_____. "Overcoming Patriarchal Constraints: The Reconstruction of Gender Relations among Mexican Immigrant Women and Men. *Gender and Society* Volume 6, Issue 3, (Sep., 1992), 393-415.

Humphrey, Norman Daymond. "The Canging Structure of the Detroit Mexican Family: An Index of Acculturation." *American Sociological Review* 9 (December 1944): 622-626.

_____. "The Detroit Mexican Immigrant and Naturalization." *Social Forces* 22 (March 1944): 332-335.

_____. "The Education and Language of Detroit Mexicans." *Journal of Educational Sociology* 17 (May 1944): 534-542.

_____. "Employment Patterns of Mexicans in Detroit." *Monthly Labor Review*,68 (November 1945): 913-924.

_____. "Ethnic Images and Stereotypes of Mexicans and Americans." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 14 (April 1955): 305-313.

_____. "The Housing and Household Practices of Detroit Mexicans." Social Forces 24 (May 1946): 433-437.

_____. "The Integration of the Detroit Mexican Colony." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 3 (January 1944): 155-166.

_____. "The Mexican Peasant in Detroit." Ph.D dissertaion, University of Michigan, 1943.

_____. "Mexican Repatriation from Michigan: Public Assistance in Historical Perspective." *Social Service Review* 15 (September 1941): 497-513.

_____. "The Migration and Settlement of Detroit Mexicans." *Economic Geography* 19 (July 1943): 357-361.

_____. "Some Marriage Problems of Detroit Mexicans." *Applied Anthroplogy* 3 (December 1943): 13-15.

_____. "The Stereotype and Social Types of Mexican-American Youths." *Journal of Social Psychology* 22 (1945): 69-78.

Joseph, Gilbert, Rubenstein, Anne, & Zolov, Eric, eds. *Fragments of a Golden Age: The Politics of Culture in Mexico Since 1940.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001.

Massey, Douglas S., "Understanding Mexican Migration to the United States." *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 92, Issue 6 (May, 1987), 1372-1403.

Massey, Douglas S., Alarcón, Rafael, Durand, Jorge, González, Humberto. *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of International Migration from Western Mexico.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987.

Massey, Douglas S., Goldring, Luin, Durand, Jorge. "Continuities in Transnational Migration: An Analysis of Nineteen Mexican Communities." *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 99, Issue 6 (May, 1994), 1492-1533.

Massey, Douglas S., Durand, Jorge, and Malone, Nolan J. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002.

McWilliams, Carey. *North From Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States.* New York, Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 1990.

Martinez, Ruben. *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail.* New York: Picador USA A Metropolitan Book Henry Holt and Company, 2001.

Nakano Glen, Evelyn. Issei , *Nisei, war bride : three generations of Japanese American women in domestic service.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.

Nye, Robert A., ed. *Sexuality.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Nodin Valdés, Dionicio, *Barrios Norteños: St. Paul and Midwestern Mexican Communities in the Twentieth Century.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.

Orozco Orozco, Zócimo José. *San Ignacio Cerro Gordo: Un pueblo de Jalisco, con su hacienda, su gente y su historia.* México: Universidad de Guadalajara, 1983.

Pedraza, Silvia. "Women and Migration: The Social Consequences of Gender." *Annual Review of Sociology*, Volume17 (1991), 303-325.

Peiss, Kathy, ed. *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality.* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.

Perez, Emma M. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

_____. "Speaking from the Margin: Uninvited Discourse on Sexuality and Power," in Beatríz Pesquera and Adela de la Torre, eds. *Building with Our Own Hands: New Directions in Chicana Scholarship.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Pescador, Juan Javier. The New World Inside a Basque Village: The Oiartzun Valley and Its Atlantic Emigrants, 1550-1800. Reno & Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2004.

Pesquera, Beatríz and de la Torre Adela, eds. *Building with Our Own Hands: New Directions in Chicana Scholarship.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Phillips, Kim M. and Reay, Barry. *A Reader: Sexualities in History.* New York, London: Routledge. 2002.

Pilcher, Jeffrey M. *¡Que vivan los tamales! Food and the Making of Mexican Identity.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998.

Purnell, Jennie. *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacan.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999.

Preciado Martin, Patricia. *Songs My Mother Sang to Me: An Oral History of Mexican American Women.* Tucson and London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992.

Quezada, Noemi. *Sexualidad, Amor y Erotismo: México Prehispánico y México Colonial.* Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Aurónoma de Meexico y Plaza y Valdés, S.A. de C.V.

Reimers, David M. *Unwelcome Strangers: American Identity and the Turn Against Immigration.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Rouse, Roger. "Mexican Migration and the Social Space of Postmodernism." In Gutiérrez, David G., ed. *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States.* Washington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc. Imprint, 1996.

Ruiz, Vicki L. *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Ruiz, Vicki L. & DuBois Ellen Carol, eds. *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History.* New York, London: Routledge, 2000.

Ruiz, Vicki L. and Tiano Susan, eds. *Women on the U.S. - Mexico Border: Responses to Change.* Boston, London, Sydney, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987.

Salazar-Parreñas, Rhacel, *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001.

Saldívar-Hull, Sonia. *Feminism on the Border: Chicana Gender Politics and Literature.* Berkeley/ Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2000.

Sánchez, George J. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Sánchez Susarrey, Jaime, Medina Sánches, Ignacio. *Jalisco: Desde la Revolución 1940-1975.* Gobierno del Estado de Jalisco y La Universidad de Guadalajara, 1987.

Sassen, Saskia. *Globalization and Its Discontens: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money.* New York: The New Press, 1998.

_____. "US Immigration Policy toward Mexico in a Global Economy." In Gutiérrez, David G., ed. *Between Two Worlds: Mexican Immigrants in the United States.* Washington, Delaware: A Scholarly Resources Inc. Imprint, 1996.

Siems, Larry. *Between the Lines: Letters Between Undocumented Mexican and Central American Immigrants and Their Families and Friends.* Tucson & London: The University of Arizona Press, 1992.

Suarez Findlay Eileen J. *Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999.

Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996.

Taylor, Paul. *A Spanish-Mexican Peasant Community: Arandas in Jalisco, Mexico.* Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1933.

Thelen, David. "Rethinking History and the Nation-State: Mexico and the United States." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (Sep., 1999), 438-452.

Twinam, Ann. *Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Vargas, Saragoza, *Proletarians of the North: A History of Mexican Industrial Workers in Detroit and the Midwest, 1917-1933*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

_____, ed. *Major Problems in Mexican American History*. Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Wasserman, Mark. *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century: Men, Women, and War*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 2000.

Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973

Woo Morales, Ofelia. *Las mujeres también nos vamos al Norte*. Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara, 2001.