

The University of Arizona Press  
www.uapress.arizona.edu

© 2017 by The Arizona Board of Regents  
All rights reserved. Published 2017

Printed in the United States of America  
22 21 20 19 18 17 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN-13: 978-0-8165-3626-9 (cloth)

ISBN-13: 978-0-8165-3515-6 (paper)

Cover design by Leigh McDonald

Cover art: *Borrada* by Ana Teresa Fernandez; courtesy of the artist and Gallery Wendi Norris, San Francisco

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Vélez-Ibáñez, Carlos G., 1936– editor. | Heyman, Josiah McC. (Josiah McConnell), 1958– editor.

Title: The U.S.-Mexico transborder region : cultural dynamics and historical interactions / edited by  
Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez and Josiah Heyman.

Description: Tucson : University of Arizona Press, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016046796 | ISBN 9780816536269 (cloth : alk. paper) | ISBN 9780816535156  
(pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Mexican-American Border Region. | LCGFT: Essays.

Classification: LCC F787 .U67 2017 | DDC 972/.1—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016046796>

 This paper meets the requirements of ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper).

# CONTENTS

Introduction JOSIAH HEYMAN	3
PART I. TRANSBORDER PROCESSES AND SITES: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS	
1 Continuity and Contiguity of the Southwest North American Region: The Dynamics of a Common Political Ecology CARLOS VÉLEZ-IBÁÑEZ	11
2 Contributions of U.S.-Mexico Border Studies to Social Science Theory JOSIAH HEYMAN	44
3 Exceptional States and Insipid Border Walls MARGARET E. DORSEY AND MIGUEL DÍAZ-BARRIGA	65
4 Of Borders, Bridges, Walls, and Other Relations, Historical and Contemporary: A Commentary ALEJANDRO LUGO	81
PART II. SOUTHWEST NORTH AMERICAN LANGUAGE DYNAMICS AND THE CREATION OF BORDERING	
5 Proto-Uto-Aztecan: A Community of Cultivators in Central Mexico? JANE H. HILL	91
6 The Hegemony of Language and Its Discontents: Spanish Impositions from the Colonial to the Mexican Period CARLOS VÉLEZ-IBÁÑEZ	134
7 Spanish-English Bilingualism in Uneven and Combined Relations JOSIAH HEYMAN AND AMADO ALARCÓN	157
8 Southwest North American Language Dynamics and the Creation of Bordering: A Commentary ROBERT R. ALVAREZ	169

VI CONTENTS

PART III. PEOPLES, POLITICAL POLICIES, AND THEIR  
CONTRADICTIONS

- 9 The Ethics of Culture and Transnational Household Structure and  
Formation Revisited 177  
ANNA OCHOA O'LEARY
- 10 Neoliberal Policies and the Reshaping of the U.S.-Mexico Border:  
The Case of Arizona 198  
JAMES GREENBERG AND LUMINIȚA-ANDA MANDACHE
- 11 Beyond Il/legality: Persistent Inequality and Racialized Borders of  
U.S. Citizenship 228  
RUTH GOMBERG-MUÑOZ
- 12 Where Is "the Border"? The Fourth Amendment, Boundary  
Enforcement, and the Making of an Inherently Suspect Class 244  
LUIS F. B. PLASCENCIA
- 13 Peoples, Political Policies, and Their Contradictions: A Commentary 281  
ROBERT R. ALVAREZ

PART IV. TRANSBORDER ECONOMIC, ECOLOGICAL, AND  
HEALTH PROCESSES

- 14 Co-producing Waterscapes: Urban Growth and Indigenous  
Water Rights in the Sonoran Desert 287  
LUCERO RADONIC AND THOMAS E. SHERIDAN
- 15 Neoliberal Regimes, Research Methods, Local Activism: Border Steel,  
Environmental Injustice, and Health in a Texas-Mexico Border Colonia 305  
KATHLEEN STAUDT
- 16 Diverted Retirement: The Pension Crisis Among Elderly  
Migrant Farmworkers 322  
SARAH HORTON
- 17 Portraits of Food Insecurity in Colonias in the U.S.-Mexico Border  
Region: Ethnographic Insights on Everyday Life Challenges and  
Strategies to Access Food 342  
GUILLERMINA GINA NÚÑEZ-MCHIRI, DIANA RIVIERA,  
AND CORINA MARRUFO
- 18 Transborder Economic, Ecological, and Health Processes: A Commentary 370  
JUDITH FREIDENBERG
- Conclusion 376  
CARLOS VÉLEZ-IBÁÑEZ
- Contributors* 383
- Index* 389

# 9

## THE ETHICS OF CULTURE AND TRANSNATIONAL HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE AND FORMATION REVISITED



ANNA OCHOA O'LEARY

### INTRODUCTION

WHILE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS afford us a deeper understanding of the geopolitical and economic processes by which regions evolve and nation-states are connected, showing how these translate into opportunities and inequalities “on the ground” is fundamentally an anthropological endeavor. And, while social science research may be imperfect, it is also known for its patient inquiry into patterns of human interaction that deepen our understanding of the sweeping meta-narratives of our times, not the least of which is the asymmetrical integration of what were parts of Mexico into what is now the U.S. Southwest or, as suggested in this volume, is the Southwest North American (SWNA) region and the resulting incorporation of Mexican-origin populations into the U.S. side of the regional social fabric (see chapters 1 and 2).<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the ensuing, dramatic demographic shifts on both sides of the region—primarily due to migration—is a story of emerging inequality, poverty, hunger, and insecurity (Acuña 2007; Zavella 2011). In this chapter, contemporary struggles to overcome these, the actions taken, and justifications articulated continue to trace and put a human face on one of the most remarkable demographic developments of the modern age.<sup>2</sup>

In recent years, immigration has become a highly contentious issue in the United States. An unprecedented number of anti-immigrant measures—numbering in the thousands—have been passed in state legislatures since 2005 (Harnett 2008).

Depending on the state or federal government's interpretation of these laws, immigrants living in the United States may be denied a license, a bank account, and access to social welfare services as if they did not exist or have families to worry about (Wilson 2000). The term "living in the shadows" has popularly been used to refer to the relative invisibility of the estimated 11.1 million undocumented immigrants that these measures are intended to control. Moreover, because they are always at risk of deportation, this presents a paradox because by any other definition their settlement in the United States is real, and permanent. Counter-narratives thus make their permanence visible and shed light on the glaring asymmetries that they contend with on a daily basis (see also chapters 3, 11, 12, and 16). Immigrant stories also reveal meaningful dialogues about values and value systems—systems that articulate and make palpable, among other things, a reliance on households and familiar mores: duty, obligation, and reciprocity, in what might be collectively referred to as an ethical commitment to others. And, as Zavella (2011) has argued, these dialogues take place regardless of whether they are "here" in the United States or "there" in communities of origin, serving to transmit the societal expectations of both. Outside the work of scholars of the Southwest or those engaged in Chicana/o, Latina/o, and ethnic studies, the infusion of this ethos into the United States from outside our nation's borders has remained largely ignored or devalued. However, the extent of its influence on the nation's social tapestry—the nation immigrants increasingly call "home"—cannot be overestimated.

How does this infusion occur? For this chapter, I rely on research conducted from 2006 to 2007 to provide some insight. After a brief description of this study, consisting of interviews with recently repatriated migrant women, I use a selection of narratives to illustrate various patterns of social organization that have given rise to the transnational household structure. Transnationalism refers to the long-term maintenance of cross-border ties between immigrants and their communities of origin that allows for their influences on behavior, practices, and identity to move in both directions (Mouw et al. 2014). Following Mouw and colleagues, I contend that the transborder practices, ideas, and relations that make transnationalism real and visible influence even those who have never migrated (those left behind in the community of origin) and *even if* those who have migrated return home infrequently. This last point becomes particularly salient in discussing the transnational movement of migrants in spite of the increased militarization along the U.S.-Mexico border (chapter 3) intended to dissuade and control the unauthorized crossing of migrants into the United States.

Border enforcement notwithstanding, I argue that patterns of thought and action continue to center around a range of cooperative spheres of activities essential to household form and structure. These include productive, distributive, and reproductive activities (including care of the young, the sick, and the elderly and those activities that transmit values) and co-residence (Netting, Wilk, and Arnould 1984). Migration also imparts important gendered changes with respect to how these activities are

carried out and how they are thought about (Hirsch 2002; Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008). Hirsch (2002) argues that some of the changes in gender roles reflect a greater emphasis on cooperation between men and women (*ayudar* [helping]) that erodes traditional roles for men and women in both sending and settlement communities (see also Wilson 2009). In this chapter, my goal is to use a gendered perspective to further make visible how such changes are manifested through the transnationalization of household forms, within which women play key roles:

- For many migrant women, economic production has become rooted in the United States, but this productive activity continues to be tied—through mores, affect, and function—to the support of households left behind. In other words, while parental or spousal ties may be stretched across borders and across great distances, these ties do not necessarily break.
- Transnational household ties also contract when those left behind (children or spouses) leave their home communities to follow in the footsteps of those who have left for the United States.
- Migrant women, many with U.S.-citizen children, have settled in the United States, although they themselves remain undocumented. The threat of deportation inherently transnationalizes their U.S. households.
- For those settled in the United States, various responsibilities related to household function continue to tie them to their communities of origin.

## THE RESEARCH

The narratives and examples used in this chapter come from research<sup>3</sup> conducted at a migrant shelter, Albergue San Juan Bosco, in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Nogales, a Mexican border city fifty-five miles south of Tucson, Arizona, lies within a major migration corridor for those in their quest for the opportunities that lie in the United States. Like other migrant shelters along the border, Albergue San Juan Bosco is dedicated to the humanitarian aid of repatriated migrants who have been released from the custody of U.S. authorities and often find themselves alone and vulnerable in a strange city.

Data were gathered using rapid appraisal (RA) techniques (Beebe 2001), which included a semi-structured questionnaire for interviewing recently repatriated migrant women. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and, with the interviewees' approval, were tape-recorded. RA techniques also included the use of triangulation to establish validity, which is particularly useful when gathering data from highly mobile and hard-to-reach populations or those engaged in clandestine or extra-legal activities where there are incentives to deny them (O'Leary, Valdéz-Gardea, and Sánchez 2013). Triangulation consisted of the comparison and contrasting of information

provided by a variety of sources (migrant women, shelter administrators, volunteers, and community leaders) about a range of activities known to impact the migratory experiences. RA also entails a process in which data collection is punctuated by periodic reflection about the data. In this manner a total of 129 repatriated women were interviewed between September 1, 2006, and June 30, 2007. The recorded interviews were transcribed and entered into SIL Fieldworks, a qualitative data analysis software program. Content analysis was performed by searching keywords to identify patterns of thought and action as related by the women interviewed.

One of the objectives of the research was to use the data to theorize cultural transformation subsequent to the migratory experience. A review of the literature indicated that contemporary migration by women may be less motivated by the desire to join husbands than before (Donato 1994; Cerrutti and Massey 2001; Woo Morales 2001). For example, the growing research on domestics, one of the fastest-growing labor sectors and one that undocumented women are most likely to engage in, shows that more Latina women are increasingly migrating as primary wage earners (Wilson 2009). By caring for families in the United States, they often leave their own children behind in the care of others (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). In addition, once women begin migrating, they are virtually assured of migrating again, replicating established patterns of circular migration of their male counterparts (Donato 1994).<sup>4</sup> However, my asking women about their migration experience involved more than inquiring about their decisions. It also aimed to understand what their thoughts were during the perilous journey and how those thoughts might have empowered them, strengthened their resolve, or helped them reason and cope with the isolation, fear, and possible death that comes with the migration journey (Marroni and Meneses 2006; O'Leary 2008, 2009a). A section in my field notes devoted to these insights, "Theorizing the Intersection," was used to collect my reflections about these narratives so that I could review them later. For example, my interview with Guadalupe<sup>5</sup> on March 22, 2007, prompted me to write:

An important dimension of being temporarily suspended in the intersection is poverty, as the present case shows. Another dimension . . . is binationality (for lack of a better term). Take for instance how Guadalupe who, in spite of her U.S. legal residency (and in spite of her twenty years of living and working in the U.S.), has very real connections to Mexico still . . . there is motherhood, family ties, and "things" that need to be taken care of there . . . and the need, desire to belong to both worlds.

Later, an interview with Maria brought out a similar observation, when the topic turned to how she schooled her children about their duties, obligation, and "love" of their culture:

Upon hearing her children say in English that they hated Mexico, she lectured them on how they can say that if in fact their own mother is Mexican and their father is also Mexican (he lives in Guanajuato). This for now seems to parallel other discussions with other women whose children are U.S.-born (or who have children from both nations) about identity and nationhood, leading me to think that the intersection zooms in one's sense of dividedness and resistance to it. The nature of border identity is represented here by the need and desire to belong to both places, and in fact, the ability to do so, thus facilitating the physical and psychological negotiation of the different sides. Thus, although lines and legal definitions attempt to split bodies and individuals from each other, there may be a counter-sensibility that sees the opposites as reconcilable. Maria, in attempting to now belong to Mexico [as the result of her husband's deportation], in spite of her never having lived there, may be incomprehensible for many people.

In this way, the narratives thus helped identify the social and economic contexts that drove women north to cross the U.S.-Mexican border in search of greater opportunities (the mechanics of migration), as well as their thoughts and reasoning. In the sample of 129 women who were interviewed, 125 were women originating from Mexico. Among these 125, there were 73 examples that reflected patterns of thought and deed (shown in table 9.1) that I contend are consistent with how households are theoretically formed and structured, even in the face of the profoundly disruptive and separating process of migration. Each of these patterns will be discussed and illustrated in turn.

TABLE 9.1. Number of Women Reflecting Selected Features of Transnational Households

FEATURE	NUMBER
Economic production, rooted in the United States, is tied to the support of households left behind.	37
Household ties contract when those left behind (children or spouses) leave to join those who now live in the United States.	17
Migrant women, many settled in the United States and with U.S.-citizen children, remain undocumented.	12
For those settled in the United States, various other responsibilities continue to tie them to their communities of origin.	7
Total	73



## THE HOUSEHOLD

In the seminal volume by Netting, Wilk, and Arnould (1984), the household is described as the most basic of social units. It operates at the most primordial level of social aggregation larger than the individual. As a strategic social grouping of individuals who may be, but not necessarily are, co-sanguinely related, households are task orientated and the most fundamental of decision-making structures. As such, individual decisions inevitably impact the entire unit. As a well-established sociological unit of analysis, households are theorized as having four continuously operating primary spheres of activity that help delineate the behaviors of its members and give the household its form and structure.<sup>6</sup> These spheres of visible behavior (listed below) allows for the empirical research of actions, values, and symbols that surround this group (Wilk and Netting 1984):

- Production: human activities (remunerated and unremunerated) that increase the value of resources
- Distribution: the movement of material from producers to consumers
- Reproduction: not limited to the sexually pairing of household members, marriage, and the bearing of children but including the socialization and enculturation of younger household members
- Co-residence: evidence of individuals living under one roof or, where this is lacking, the degree of cooperation in production

To this last point, Wilk and Netting (1984, 19) note:

That a household can operate effectively with some members who are not coresident for extended periods of time is a tribute to the moral imperatives of kinship and reciprocal obligation that flourish in the household context . . . Those emigrants who send back more money than they expend on themselves at the work place often consider themselves members of the household and expect eventually to return for full-time residence there. . . . households must be examined for the presence of *intermittent coresidents* whose economic contributions adapt local productive and reproductive units to the demands of larger, money-based exchange systems.

In keeping with this theoretical outline of the household, it is necessary to lay claim that a transnationalized form of the household exists due to migration, and in spite of migration. To illustrate, an example of a household where all spheres fundamental to household form and function can be seen operating, but which has not yet become “transnationalized,” is illustrated by the following narrative obtained on April 5, 2007:

Rosalva (18), came from a farming village in Oaxaca, Bajos de Coyula, in the *municipio* of Hautulco. She had finished the *secundaria* and perhaps because of this education had been able to find a job at a pharmacy where she received some more training. She worked for two years at the pharmacy in Oaxaca to help support her family. Her mother worked from the home processing the nopales<sup>7</sup> from her cactus garden and some of the fruit from her trees. She sold her products, for income. Some of the products included *licuado de nopal*, *nopales a la mexicana*, and *ensalada de fruta*. The mother was also away from the home a lot when she had to go to sell her products. For many years, Rosalva helped her mother take care of the younger siblings. These younger children were now 14, 12, and 7. There were six children in all in their family. Several years ago, Rosalva's father became ill. She did not know what his illness was but only that he had undergone four operations and was unable to work. This is why her mother became essentially the sole support of the household, until Rosalva began working at the pharmacy. However, the pharmacy did not pay well, which is why she saw herself compelled to try something else. Hardship had thus befallen Rosalva's household. To pay for her father's operation they sold some land that had been used for farming, two goats, some of their furniture, and a car. They had been left with only their house. Her older brother had left school to work to help the family. Rosalva thus decided to migrate, despite her mother's opposition.

In its "transnationalized form," Rosalva's household will come to experience the benefits of productive activity ("resource enhancement") that takes place in the United States by way of remittances. In fact, production is enhanced with greater opportunities and higher wages. With the arrival of remittances, household distribution functions (the paying of medical bills and feeding the children) are possible. Rosalva is also fulfilling and transmitting the "moral imperative" of a producer. There is evidence that while women may earn less than men and therefore remit less overall, they are likely to remit more regularly (Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008). In Oaxacan communities, remittances were shown to go towards the costs of living in the sending household, home construction or renovation, education expenses, and consumer goods (Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008).

## TRANSNATIONAL HOUSEHOLD FORM AND FUNCTION

### STRETCHING HOUSEHOLD TIES

At the migrant shelter, it was common to find migrants with family members already working in the United States. Some of those interviewed had in fact been encouraged by these family members to join them in the United States, where they were promised

help in finding jobs. If they succeeded in crossing into the United States, the households of these migrants are likely to become transnationalized. A good illustration of this comes from my interview of Paula (18) from San Francisco Tlaloc, Puebla, in April 2006. She was five months pregnant when I met her at the shelter. Her plan was to go to California to join her husband, who had been working there for eight years. With the money her husband had been sending from the United States, they were able to build a house in their hometown, and they planned to return there eventually.

However, the process by which economic production becomes firmly implanted enough to help maintain households in distant places begins with poverty and the “necessary evil” to leave loved ones behind in search of work (Hirsch 2002, 371). For many, this was an emotionally painful experience, such as for Veronica (26) from Guerrero, a soft-spoken woman who was present at the shelter in May 2007. When I first saw her she had a rather large gash on the right side of her forehead. While it is not unusual to see women with many scratches on their faces and arms (the result of plowing through thick brush as they go through the desert, often in the dark, and as they run from agents), this gash was unusually long and deep. There was a small blood clot still caked on the lower end of the gash. She related to me why she had migrated:

I have three girls. One is 3 years old, and the others are 4 and 5, and my son will be 7 soon . . . my husband earns very little and I sell chickens in the streets. I don't have a home. If I sell a chicken, I have money to buy something to eat. If not, I have to find something to fill the stomachs of my children. We are living in my mother's house and she doesn't want us there. I had to take my daughter out of school because the teacher says I need to get her shoes. Well, I couldn't buy them for her.<sup>8</sup>

With her last utterance, Veronica broke into a tearful sob.

Veronica's situation contrasts with that of Paula's (above) because hers is a household not yet transnationalized with economic production in the United States. Once rooted in the U.S. economy, return migration becomes a driving force, such as in the case of Juana (24), who had come from San Pedro Conchutla, Oaxaca. Of athletic build and engaging personality, Juana considered it her good fortune not to have been robbed by the bandits who routinely prey on migrants and not to have been mistreated by the apprehending U.S. Border Patrol officers. This was her second attempt at crossing, and of the conditions in San Pedro Conchutla, she said there was everything there except prosperity. Economically, there is nothing and not enough for her family. She left her four children with her ex-mother-in-law. The children's father migrated to the United States four years ago but abandoned Juana for another woman. Juana had already worked in the United States. She had merely returned to

Oaxaca because she had become pregnant and wanted to give birth there. After a year, she was ready to return to the United States and to her job in construction putting up sheetrock, an occupation that might be considered by many Oaxacan communities as threatening to the idealized notions of womanhood (Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008). However, she was well paid in this job, earning between \$18 and \$20 an hour. When she first started, she earned \$10 an hour. But as she improved, she earned more. She was obviously proud of this accomplishment and confident in her abilities. She was jovial and laughed while saying:

Soy muy vaquetona y en donde sea pues yo no me rajo. Ya ahorita cuando cruce la segunda vez y ya no pude, dije que la tercera vez . . .

[I am very hardy and where ever I may be, well, I don't give up. Like now, having failed to cross on my second attempt I said (to myself), on the third . . .]

Juana, similar to some of the working migrant women in Atlanta, Georgia, interviewed by Hirsch (2002, 365) was a woman who had achieved a measure of autonomy, "*valerse por si misma*" (roughly translated as "having self-worth").

As for many others, Juana's rationale for reaching the United States in spite of the risks is essentially economic in nature: most of the women interviewed at the shelter were migrating because there were few opportunities in their home community to help them support their children (see also Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008), and their children were suffering as a result. In contrast, the continued economic growth of the United States economy and its demand for labor have attracted migrants, beckoning them to cross the border. In this way, and perhaps with some measure of determination and persistence, economic production becomes embedded in the United States. Above all, these examples illustrate how this process is fundamentally linked to the provisioning of households left behind and show how parental ties may be stretched across borders and across great distances, while not necessarily breaking.

### IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE

There is no reason to believe that those left behind will stay behind indefinitely. In Hirsch's research (2002), migrant women living in Atlanta were daughters and granddaughters who had worked picking cotton in Texas, and in this way, Mexican communities had been integrated into the orbit of the U.S. economy and influenced by its culture. In the research by Cohen and colleagues (2008), 60 percent of the migrant

women interviewed who were bound for the United States followed a relative who had already migrated there. Similarly, in the sample of women I interviewed, there was evidence of women migrating north to join their husbands, adult children migrating to join their parents who are living and working in the United States, and to a lesser degree, parents migrating to join their adult children living in the United States.<sup>9</sup> These examples provide further evidence that parental and kinship ties—for however long and however far—are being kept intact.

Keeping households intact can be sustained for years with the help of sheer will and determination. In some cases, years go by before wives and husbands entertain plans to be together. Yadira (23) was mother to a young son, Adrian, age 4, who was with her at the shelter. They had come from a small agricultural town in Chiapas. She was migrating to the United States to join her husband who had been away for five years and did not even know his son. Although she could not remember what the name of their destination was, her objective was clear: father and son would be reunited and know each other. The boy had been very brave and remarkably strong in keeping up with his mother in a group of around twenty-four migrants. They had traveled on foot for two days and two nights before they were arrested by enforcement agents.

Children migrating north to be with parents—both unaccompanied and with other adults—is a common pattern in this process of transnationalization (Heidbrink 2014). In 2013, the number of unaccompanied youth from Central American nations surpassed the numbers coming from Mexico (figure 9.1) (U.S. Customs and Border Protection 2015). Up until then, the percentage of Mexican children dominated this pattern (figure 9.2). Among the adult women interviewed for the study, several were bringing adolescents with them to join mothers. For example, Esmeralda (20) from Jalapa, Veracruz, was bringing with her a younger family member, Margarita (16), who was not her child. Also interviewed was Lucila (18), who had plans of reaching Chicago after delivering her young cousin, Alva (9), to her mother. Alva had not seen her mother since she was 3 years old. Alva's older brother (15) had managed to cross into the United States earlier. In another example, Rosita, interviewed in February 2006, was an 18-year-old mother of a seven-month-old infant. She, her husband, and her child were part of a larger group apprehended by the U.S. Border Patrol, which included a cousin, a couple with three children (ages 2, 3, 5), and a childless couple. Rosita was on her way to Oregon where the rest of her family lived. Her parents had left their children in Paracho, Michoacán, ten years ago when they migrated to the United States when Rosita was 9 and the oldest of four children. The children were left with Rosita's grandmother and aunts and Rosita helped raise her younger siblings. At that time, the youngest was a little over 1 year old. Over the years, Rosita's parents had made arrangements with a trusted *coyote* to bring the children to the United States to be with their parents. Rosita was the last of the siblings to make the journey.

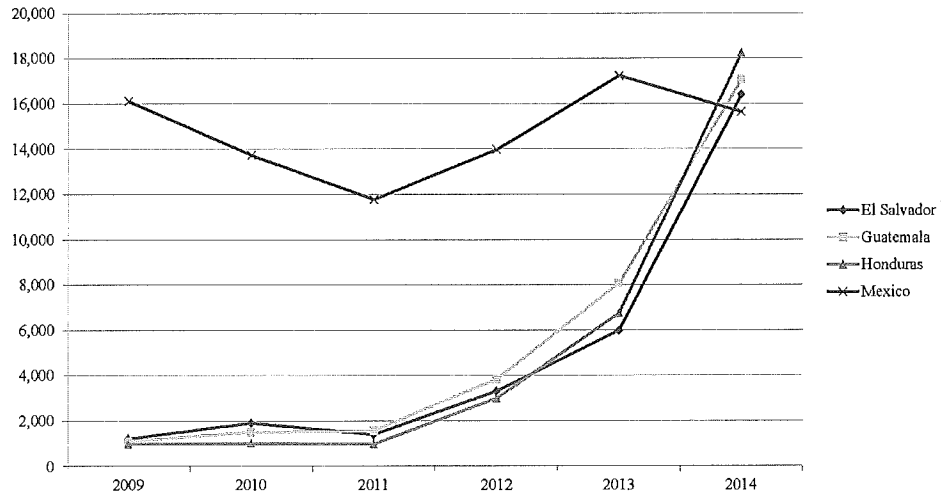


FIGURE 9.1. Unaccompanied children apprehended FY 2009–2014 by country of origin.

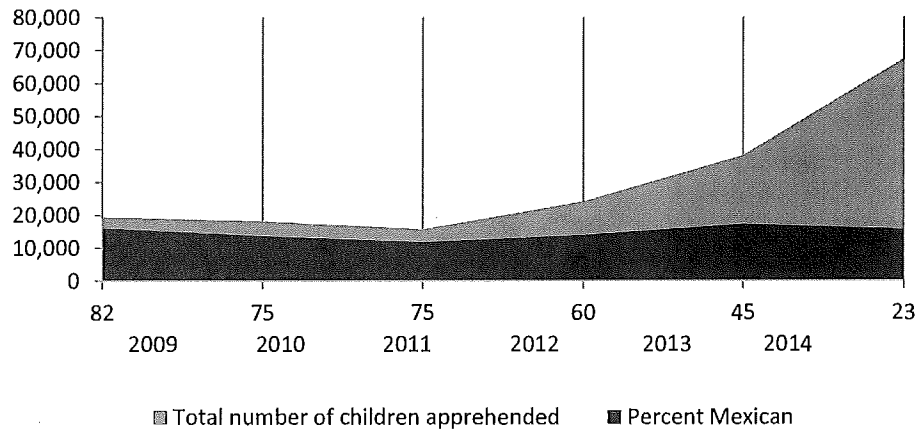


FIGURE 9.2. Unaccompanied Mexican children apprehended as percent of total by fiscal years 2009–2014. Source: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (2015).

Through this course by which households are transnationalized, immigrant stories of family reunification and commitment to each other also articulate culturally meaningful dialogues about values and value systems—systems that articulate and make palpable among other things a reliance on a sense of duty and obligation to care for and protect those less vulnerable from the ravages of poverty (also see chapter 17). This ethical stance is arguably a safeguard against the consequences of losing household members to the trappings of materialism, to new freedoms from the constraints of traditions—the values that undergird a capitalist society premised on individualism and consumerism. These values compete with those that call for sacrifice and familial devotion, and the expectations that ultimately socialize children, who may someday migrate also. About this process, Hackenberg, Murphy, and Selby (1984, 188) have argued:

The state needs a skilled and disciplined work force to man its industries in the formal economy of modern capitalist firms and enterprises. These needs are met through recruitment of members from households of the poor . . . The households of the poor which lose their members also lose their battle for economic betterment . . . Sometimes the household wins, and through the combined efforts of . . . generations of kinfolk or grown children living together and working for the common good they are able to rise from destitution to a tolerable level of poverty and to achieve the beginnings of a decent life for all the members.

What is to prevent those who have migrated from abandoning the common, collective goals that define the household? Cohen and colleagues provides some insight that addresses this question that comes from his research in Oaxacan communities. His research shows that migrants typically follow family or friends to the United States, and these resources help cover the costs of migration once they settle in the United States and translate into material benefits for sending households by way of remittances (Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008). These innately social networks of support represent the social resources necessary for migration, including the networks needed to facilitate migration (Singer and Massey 1998; Granberry and Marcelli 2007; Wilson 2009). Household members who migrate and invest their time and energy to assure the welfare of their domestic groups are rewarded with additional resources, including the much-needed “trust” and “access” that has the potential to cut across kin and non-kin ties and transcend borders and geographical distances (O’Leary 2012). On the other hand, those who neglect their commitments, and hoard their resources as their economic status rises, limit the strength, prestige, and visibility of their family—both for those who remain at home and for those in settlement communities—risking a withering away of social resources (Cohen 2001).

## UNDOCUMENTED, AND (UN)SETTLED IN THE UNITED STATES

The intensification of border enforcement in recent years, and especially since 9/11, has disrupted cyclical migration (Hines 2002), through which kinship ties are renewed and strengthened (Cohen, Rodriguez, and Fox 2008). Migrants who succeed in finding jobs in the United States are thus more inclined to settle into what resembles a permanent residency there, were it not for their undocumented status, which predisposes them to deportation if apprehended by law enforcement agents. The quasi-permanent state of living in the United States has resulted in a growing number of children who are born in the United States and are therefore U.S. citizens. Inherent contradictions thus result from the incorporation of undocumented immigrants into the United States in this way (Ngai 2007). As early as 1988, Chavez drew scholarly attention to this phenomenon by pointing out that undocumented immigrants often form families in the United States, resulting in children who are U.S. citizens within what he referred to as “binational families.” Thus, measures directed at controlling undocumented immigrants who are also parents of children living in the United States—measures that may in fact result in their removal from the country—logically impacts all those who are household members regardless of immigration status (Fix and Zimmermann 2001; Romero 2008; O’Leary and Sánchez 2011; Castañeda and Melo 2014) and in particular those who are economically dependent on those parents for support. Contending with the possibility of being forcibly returned to Mexico brings out the transnationalized nature of such households.

In the sample of women interviewed, there were 12 women who had U.S.-born children, but the phenomenon may be more widespread. In research by Slack and colleagues, half of the respondents (deported migrants) reported having left U.S.-citizen children behind in the United States (Slack et al. 2013). Here I briefly summarize the narratives of 3 women that best illustrate the transnationalization of their households, even after families have settled in the U.S. side of the border. In the first interview, with Lucia, I learned that she had been living in the United States for twenty years, after having entered through the Mexicali area as an undocumented immigrant. She now had two daughters, ages 20 and 3. She and her husband had returned lately to Mexico to visit her husband’s ailing mother. She was at the shelter alone, wondering where her husband was. She sobbed at the thought that perhaps he was still detained because presently she did not know where he was. He had not shown up at the shelter. She shared with me that she hoped that her older daughter, who is a U.S. citizen, could help her get a permit to re-enter the United States. Her own mother, also living in the United States, was taking care of the younger daughter.

I also interviewed Sara, a U.S. citizen who was at the shelter because her husband, an undocumented worker, had been deported. She was visibly upset and hardly



interacted with the other women there. She stated that she and her husband lived in New Mexico, where they had three children together. He was arrested crossing the border in the Douglas area after visiting his family in Mexico, and now she had spent all of the money they had to come to Nogales to pick him up. She would be here at the shelter until her husband could cross over again. He had plans to try to cross the border wall as soon as he could from a place there in Nogales. But Sara had suggested to him that they instead all move to Agua Prieta where his family has a house. From there, she could send her children to Douglas (right across the border from Agua Prieta in Arizona) to attend school. She did not want to continue to live in fear that he would risk arrest and face extended jail time.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, I interviewed Maria who was at the shelter not because she had been apprehended but because her husband had been arrested and deported two days ago. After this event, Maria brought her two children with her from Phoenix in the family van. They were at the shelter attempting to resolve their predicament. Maria did not want her husband to attempt to return to the United States without authorization because she was afraid that if arrested, he would be sentenced and imprisoned. The children were not happy about their situation but appeared to be trying to make the best of their situation. What is interesting about Maria is that her mother is a U.S. citizen and all of her siblings were born in the United States. Maria, for reasons that are unclear, was born in Mexicali. Her mother took her to the United States when Maria was two months old. Therefore, Maria was not U.S. born and she had never lived in Mexico. Just before the interview, Maria had just learned that her husband had found work in Nogales, Sonora. Now Maria was planning on settling here (in Mexico) along with her children so that she can be with her husband and keep her family together.

In these narratives, both separation and reunification can be seen as different sides of the same coin (O'Leary 2009b; also see chapter 2). The rival tensions are reconciled in what may be described as transnational household forms, which are the basis for the cross-border organization of household functions, upon which migrant mobility systems, family ties, and settlement depend.

### OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES RELATED TO HOUSEHOLD FUNCTION

In the sample of 125 Mexican migrant women interviewed, there were 7 who had voluntarily left their homes in the United States to return to their home communities. When I interviewed them, they were attempting to return to the United States after a

brief stay in their communities of origin. Hirsch (2002) explains that in periods when the U.S. economy was strong, women could quit their jobs in November to return to their home communities to celebrate the Christmas season with family, confident that upon their return, they would easily find another job (Hirsch 2002). Among the women interviewed, there were other, non-celebratory reasons that the women had for returning to Mexico. For example, Elizabeth took her children from their home in Mississippi to flee her alcoholic and abusive husband. She returned home to recuperate her health and reassess her situation. Juana returned to her home community to give birth, and Lucia had gone with her husband to visit her ailing mother-in-law. Minerva had returned after years of living with her family in the United States to finish her education back in her community of origin in Puebla. What is important to note is that very often the different spheres of activities related to a transnationalized household overlap, as the following example illustrates:

Catalina and Angeles were present at the shelter when I arrived on October 12, 2006. The women had attempted to cross three times. The conversation was quite animated, punctuated with frequent laughter as the women reflected on their experiences and the comedic nature of the Border Patrol agents in hot pursuit of migrants in the desert in the dark. They intended to reach "las Carolinas" where they had friends working in agriculture. They were unclear about whether or not they would attempt to cross again, although Angeles stated that on a previous occasion she had been deported three times before making it through on the fourth attempt. Both had children who had been left in Mexico with grandparents. Angeles had family, including her father, who lived in New York. She had lived in New York and in Los Angeles for several years, having come to the United States at age 14. She had lived there twelve years. During those years she worked as a housekeeper and live-in nanny to children of a Jewish family. Angeles had been living in Mexico now for several years . . . She has three children. The youngest is a little girl that was born in the United States.

To a lesser degree, my subsample of Mexican migrant women indicated that a few returned periodically to their communities of origin to attend to any one of several life cycle events and rituals (such as funerals) known to fulfill symbolic functions of household organization. This may have been due to the economic downturn of the time, from 2006 to 2007. However, Cohen (2001) has documented the periodic return of Oaxacan migrants, many of whom belong to peasant indigenous communities, averaging two or three trips over their career in fulfillment of obligations related to the ritual life of their communities. Many of the funds needed to support these community rituals come from wages earned by migrants in United States.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In the various ways described in this chapter, transnationalized households defy borders and are maintained across geographies. The different but often-overlapping spheres of household activity help make visible a range of behaviors and values that infuse this domestic group with purpose and tenacity.

These narratives show that women are central to household form and function, so an examination of their roles is an opportunity to identify these activities that may not otherwise be considered essential to integration and nation-building. The idea that women contribute to these macro-level processes, through their roles in household formation and function, is thus key to reconceptualizing schemes of analysis that have made the quotidian invisible. Moreover, conventional approaches to understanding migration often erroneously assume the enforceability of political boundaries and also often assume that processes taking place within national boundaries can be easily separated from those outside (Wimmer and Schiller 2003). That increased border enforcement traps migrants in, making the immigrant household a quasi-permanent feature of U.S. society, is only but one factor in a multifaceted process that starts with poverty. Growing inequality (chapter 10) and weakened confidence that household members will ever be fully absorbed by the existing economic order reinforce important ideological components intrinsic to households, among which are the ethical commitments to keep members close, safe, protected, nurtured, and buoyed with hopes for a better future. Ultimately, basic principles of household organization strengthen the linkages and systems of migrant mobility, and this undermines the state and its authoritative structures (O'Leary 2009b).

Deepening economic instability in Mexico has heightened the importance of migration, and with the increased migration of women, women's roles also become elevated in importance. Hirsh (2003) has argued that for women, migration has been a natural extension of household responsibilities. In acknowledging the importance of their roles, agency is restored to them and they become more than mere reflections of the macro-structural. Instead, they are shown as instrumental in contesting and giving shape to the relations of power and dominion that impinge on their lives. For example, for some immigrant women working as eldercare providers, the workplace provides an important place where humane ideals about the care for kin, assistance, respect for elders, and the presence of others—the “ethics of care”—is played out. This set of culturally and historically circumscribed behaviors offer Mexican immigrant women the opportunity to model behavior and to teach others the “right” way of being human (Ibarra 2003). Just as important in this regard, the roles of migrant women coalesce with the broader trends of working women in general, trends that

reflect how women who are also caregivers strategically and simultaneously accommodate economic production activities (Romero 2000). This situates the household—regardless of the borders and distances that stretch its resources and ties—as the site of re-orientation: a central node from which the production, maintenance, and diffusion of an ethos emerge and which holds promises for influencing the nation's identity and attitudes, especially with regard to the impoverished, the destitute, the young and vulnerable, the sick and elderly, and the foreigner and newcomer. Despite the drop in the fertility rates among immigrant (primarily Mexican) immigrant mothers in the United States, foreign-born women still represent a significant portion of all mothers giving birth in this country (Livingston 2012). The ethics of their cultural formation—or at least some version of it—thus follow. Together with the declining birthrates of the non-immigrant population in the United States, this demographic shift will provide structural opportunities for immigrant populations and their descendants. In the end, the shift assures that a re-thinking about certain societal values around family, household, and belonging will take place and will work to challenge and reconstitute political spheres in years to come.

## NOTES

1. For example, well-researched histories such as that by Acuña (2007) document how Mexican workers routinely toiled in the United States for starvation wages, suffering discrimination and humiliation in the process. Resistance to such inequities was kept at bay throughout the U.S. Southwest through violence, policing, unjust laws, residential segregation, and occupational segregation and discriminatory wage systems (the “adobe ceiling”) in principal sectors of employment such as mining and agriculture (Acuña 2007, 171).
2. Between 1990 and 2005, the increase in the number of migrants in the North America region grew at an average rate of 3.2 percent per year, faster than in any other region in the world (United Nations 2006). Within this region, the United States was destination to more migrants than any other nation—for an estimated 44.1 million (in 2010)—four times higher than for any other country in the world (Connor and López 2016). Over the past four decades, the single largest group of Latin American immigrants in the United States has been from Mexico, topping out at 40 percent of all immigrants in this country today (Gonzalez-Barrera and López 2013).
3. Funding for this research was provided by a Fulbright Garcia-Robles award, 2003–2007.
4. Donato (1994) points out that recent policy changes intended to curb migration have proven ineffective because they are unable to curb the ties between migrants and their U.S. employers that institutionalize and make self-sustaining the cyclical nature of migration.

5. All names of the women interviewed have been changed to pseudonyms to protect their identities.
6. A fifth, "Transmission," is mentioned and considered less relevant for this paper, and is defined as a node in the household history related to the intergenerational transmission of wealth and property, and patterns of authority that defend and confer inheritance rights to property.
7. Nopales are the pads from the prickly pear cactus. These pads are plucked from the plant, scraped clean of their small splinters, and then diced and sold in bags for cooking. The raw diced nopales can then be cooked in water and mixed with other ingredients (such as chiles or eggs) for a savory dish.
8. Her words are translated from the Spanish.
9. This research did not include interviewing minors under the age of 18. According to U.S. immigration enforcement authorities, unaccompanied migrant children who are apprehended are to be turned over to consulate authorities for removal to appropriate agencies in Mexico not to non-governmental shelters such as where the interviews for the research took place.
10. With each successive arrest, immigrants face longer jail time (Alvarado 2004).

## REFERENCES

- Acuña, Rudolfo F. 2007. *Corridors of Migration: The Odyssey of Mexican Laborers, 1600–1933*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Alvarado, Jeanette E. 2004. "The Federal Consequences of Criminal Convictions: Illegal Reentry After Removal." Unpublished manuscript prepared for the State Bar of Arizona.
- Beebe, James. 2001. *Rapid Assessment Process: An Introduction*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Castañeda, Heide, and Milena Andrea Melo. 2014. "Health Care Access for Latino Mixed-Status Families: Barriers, Strategies, and Implications for Reform." *American Behavioral Scientist* 58(14): 1891–1909.
- Cerrutti, Marcela, and Douglas S. Massey. 2001. "On the Auspices of Female Migration from Mexico to the United States." *Demography* 38(2): 187–201.
- Cohen, Jeffrey H. 2001. "Transnational Migration in Rural Oaxaca, Mexico: Dependency, Development, and the Household." *American Anthropologist* 103(4): 954–67.
- Cohen, Jeffrey H., Leila Rodriguez, and Margaret Fox. 2008. "Gender and Migration in the Central Valleys of Oaxaca." *International Migration* 46(1): 79–101.
- Connor, Phillip, and Gustavo López. 2016. "5 Facts About the U.S. Rank in Worldwide Migration." <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/05/18/5-facts-about-the-u-s-rank-in-worldwide-migration/>.

- Donato, Katherine M. 1994. "Current Trends and Patterns of Female Migration: Evidence from Mexico." *International Migration Review* 27(4): 748–72.
- Fix, Michael, and Wendy Zimmermann. 2001. "All Under One Roof: Mixed-Status Families in an Era of Reform." *International Migration Review* 35(2): 397–419.
- Gonzalez-Barrera, Ana, and Mark Hugo López. 2013. "A Demographic Portrait of Mexican-Origin Hispanics in the United States." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. [http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/05/2013-04\\_Demographic-Portrait-of-Mexicans-in-the-US.pdf](http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2013/05/2013-04_Demographic-Portrait-of-Mexicans-in-the-US.pdf).
- Granberry, Phillip J., and Enrico A. Marcelli. 2007. "In the Hood and On the Job': Social Capital Accumulation Among Legal and Unauthorized Mexican Migrants." *Sociological Perspectives* 50(4): 579–95.
- Hackenberg, Robert, Arthur D. Murphy, and Henry A. Selby. 1984. The Urban Household in Dependent Development. In *Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group*, edited by Robert McC. Netting, Richard R. Wilk, and Eric J. Arnould, 187–217. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Harnett, Helen M. 2008. "State and Local Anti-Immigrant Initiatives: Can They Withstand Legal Scrutiny?" *Widener Law Journal* 17:365–82.
- Heidbrink, Lauren. 2014. *Migrant Youth, Transnational Families, and the State: Care and Contested Interests*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hines, Barbara. 2002. "So Near Yet So Far Away: The Effect of September 11th on Mexican Immigrants in the United States." *Texas Hispanic Journal of Law and Policy* 8(37): 37–46.
- Hirsch, Jennifer S. 2002. "'Que, pues, con el pinche NAFTA?' Gender, Power and Migration Between Western Mexico and Atlanta." *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development* 31(3/4): 351–89.
- Hondagnu-Sotelo, Pierrette. 1994. *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ibarra, Maria de la Luz. 2003. "The Tender Trap: Mexican Immigrant Women and the Ethics of Elder Care Work." *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 28(2): 87–112.
- Livingston, Gretchen, and D'Vera Cohn. 2012. "U.S. Birthrate Falls to a Record Low: Decline Is Greatest Amongst Immigrants." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center. [http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2012/11/Birth\\_Rate\\_Final.pdf](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2012/11/Birth_Rate_Final.pdf).
- Marroni, Maria da Gloria, and Alonso Meneses. 2006. "El fin del sueño americano: Mujeres migrantes muertas en la frontera México-Estados Unidos." *Migraciones Internacionales* 3(3): 5–30.
- Mouw, Ted, Sergio Chavez, Heather Edelblute, and Ashton Verdery. 2014. "Binational Social Networks and Assimilation: A Test of the Importance of Transnationalism." *Social Problems* 61(3): 329–59.

- Netting, Robert McC., Richard R. Wilk, and Erik J. Arnould. 1984. Introduction to *Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group*, edited by Robert McC. Netting, Richard R. Wilk, and Eric J. Arnould, xiii–xxxviii. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ngai, Mae M. 2007. "Birthright Citizenship and the Alien Citizen." *Fordham Law Review* 75:2521–30.
- O'Leary, Anna Ochoa. 2008. "Close Encounters of the Deadly Kind: Gender, Migration, and Border (In)Security." *Migration Letters* 15(2): 111–22.
- . 2009a. "In the Footsteps of Spirits: Migrant Women's Testimonios in a Time of Heightened Border Enforcement." In *Violence, Security, and Human Rights at the Border*, edited by Kathleen Staudt, Tony Payan, and Z. Anthony Kruszewski, 91–112. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- . 2009b. "Mujeres en el cruce: Remapping Border Security Through Migrant Mobility." *Journal of the Southwest* 51(4): 523–42.
- . 2012. "Of Coyotes, Cooperation, and Capital." In *Political Economy, Neoliberalism, and the Prehistoric Economies of Latin America*, edited by Ty Matejowsky and Donald C. Wood, 133–60. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.
- O'Leary, Anna Ochoa, and Azucena Sánchez. 2011. "Anti-immigrant Arizona: Ripple Effects and Mixed Immigration Status Households Under 'Policies of Attrition' Considered." *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 26(1): 115–33.
- O'Leary, Anna Ochoa, Gloria Ciria Valdéz-Gardea, and Azucena Sánchez. 2013. "Reflections on Methodological Challenges in a Study of Immigrant Women and Reproductive Health in the U.S.-Mexico Border Region." In *Uncharted Terrains: New Directions in Border Research Methodology, Ethics, and Practice*, edited by Anna Ochoa O'Leary, Colin M. Deeds, and Scott Whiteford, 184–205. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Romero, Mary. 2000. "Bursting the Foundational Myths of Reproductive Labor Under Capitalism: A Call for Brave New Families or Brave New Villages?" *Journal of Gender, Social Policy and the Law* 8:177–95.
- . 2008. "The Inclusion of Citizenship Status in Intersectionality: What Immigration Raids Tells Us About Mixed-Status Families, the State, and Assimilation." *International Journal of the Family* 34(2): 131–52.
- Singer, Audrey, and Douglas S. Massey. 1998. "The Social Process of Undocumented Border Crossing Among Mexican Migrants." *International Migration Review* 32(3): 561–92.
- Slack, Jeremy, Daniel E. Martinez, Scott Whiteford, and Emily Pieffer. 2013. "In the Shadow of the Wall: Family Separation, Immigration Enforcement and Security: Preliminary Data from the Migrant Border Crossing Study." Tucson: Center for Latin American Studies, University of Arizona.
- United Nations. 2006. *United Nations International Migration Report 2006: A Global Assessment. Part I: International Migration Levels, Trends and Policies*. New York: Population Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

- U.S. Customs and Border Protection. 2015. "Southwest Border Unaccompanied Alien Children Statistics FY2015." <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-border-unaccompanied-children/fy-2015>.
- Wilk, Richard R., and Robert McC. Netting. 1984. "Households: Changing Forms and Functions." In *Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group*, edited by Robert McC. Netting, Richard R. Wilk, and Eric J. Arnould, 1–28. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wilson, Tamar, D. 2000. "Anti-immigrant Sentiment and the Problem of Reproduction/Maintenance in Mexican Immigration to the United States." *Critique of Anthropology* 20(2): 191–213.
- . 2009. *Women's Migration Networks in Mexico and Beyond*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Woo Morales, Ofelia, 2001. *Las mujeres también nos vamos al Norte*. Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico: Universidad de Guadalajara.
- Zavella, Patricia. 2011. *I'm Neither Here Nor There: Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.