

CROSSING THE LINE: THE IDENTITY OF AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO LIVE IN
MEXICO AND ATTEND U.S. BORDER TOWN SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

This case study explored the negotiation of identities of American-born Mexican descent high school students in a US-Mexico border region. These students resided mostly with their parents and families on the Mexican side, and having legal American status, crossed the border daily to attend high school on the U.S. side. This qualitative study was informed by social and historical perspectives, and emphasized the identity of border crossers, examining the question of how they positioned themselves when faced with Americanization on the U.S. side and Mexicanization on the Mexican side.

The study included a total of 19 participants: 3 students of primary focus, and 16 secondary participants (6 other high school students, 6 educators and 4 parents.) This sample of convenience was recruited at Isler High School, the researcher's place of work. Interviews were conducted with each participant, and the three focus students kept a month-long journal. Finally, some students in the secondary group provided valuable information through focus group discussion.

Using Gee's (2001) theoretical framework that proposes four perspectives for viewing identity (Nature, Institution, Discourse and Affinity), the researcher found that the focus participants, each one bilingual, considered English an instrument to become American and be recognized as such. However, each "confessed" to code-switching, but preferred to avoid it. The three focus students self-identified as either Mexican or Mexican and American. One strongly rejected the possibility of being ascribed the identity of a Chicano.

The study showed that student border crossers are perfectly fluent in both English and Spanish, contrary to commonly held belief, and that they identify with Mexico, but also with the United States.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore and explain the negotiation of identities of American-born Mexican descent high school students in a US-Mexico border region. These students reside mostly with their parents and families on the Mexican side and, having legal American status, cross the border daily to attend high school on the U.S. side. This qualitative study is informed by social and historical perspectives and inspired by identities. This research emphasizes the identity of border crossers and how they position themselves when faced with Americanization on the U.S. side and Mexicanization on the Mexican side.

In this chapter, I briefly introduce the United States border town of Isler (a pseudonym) and the researcher I then explore the following aspects: the formation and evolution of the U.S.-Mexico border, today's politicized border, school attendance on the border, life and identity on the border, and finally the study. I also briefly introduce the theoretical framework Gee proposes to deconstruct and rebuild identities, framework that I used in this research to analyze my data. In qualitative studies it is important to utilize a theoretical lens to guide research and to give it direction. "The lens becomes an advocacy perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, inform how data are collected, and analyzed..." (Creswell, 2009; p. 62).

Isler: An Overview

Isler, a rural town of less than 50,000 inhabitants lies on the border with Mexico. In Mexico, its sister city, Delicias has a population of at least four times that of Isler. A visitor entering Isler from the north will see a sign that reads: “Isler, home of the Coyotes”. The Coyotes is the name of the high school football team, the pride of the town.

Like most small American towns, Isler has its main street bordered with a hotel or two, restaurants, bars and little shops of various sorts. Some closed stores are boarded up as a reminder of the time when people would shop in corner stores; continuing down the main street leads to the fence that separates Isler from Delicias. The side streets first open to older neighborhoods where houses from the 1900’s are quite common; then, as one gets further away, newer neighborhoods with more modern houses emerge.

Small, locally owned restaurants and shops are still common in Isler, but fast food chains have taken over with McDonald’s and Dairy Queen being the meeting spots for youngsters on weekends. And of course, there is Walmart, *the* place in town where one is almost sure to meet a neighbor, a colleague, or a friend. It is also where Mexicans from Delicias come to shop. It is common to see people pushing their Walmart cart up to the border –which is actually very close- and dropping it at the entrance into Mexico.

Upon arriving in Isler, a large green sign indicates “To Mexico.” Then, a long and straight road leads to the Port of Entry. On each side lies the fence that separates Mexico from the United States. It is a sturdy metal barrier about 12 feet high that goes for miles. If those Isler and Delicias residents who live on the street bordering the fence sit on the

front porch of their houses, they can see their neighbors on the other side of the metal bars. Along the border as far as one can see, Border Patrols are posted at regular intervals watching over the fence with football field lighting (Ganster, 2008).

The Border Patrol is part of the landscape in the Isler area. Day and night the Border Patrol in their green and white vehicles roams the peripheral streets of Isler looking for suspicious activities. They are also posted along the side of the highway as one exits town, a tire behind their vehicle to wipe out all marks of tires or feet on the dirt road that borders the highway, to better notice new tracks.

Isler is a comfortable small town although quite isolated from the action of the large cities in the state. In the words of O. Ferguson, a teacher whose family has lived in Isler for generations:

Isler is a magnificently tight knit community. We care about each other, we support each other, we support people who need help. We support our children's sport teams. It's a very caring, nurturing community and people go away and they want to come back. That's one half. The other half is people who cannot wait to leave town and you can't force me to put my foot back into that backwoods hole.

The fact that Isler is quite isolated or a "backwoods hole" as O. Ferguson describes it, does not make it attractive for people to come and settle down there; therefore, the population of Isler is mostly made up of people whose families have been there for generations and have ties to the Isler and Delicias communities.

The Researcher

I am a native of France who emigrated to the United States and chose to teach French in a public high school on the U.S. side of the border with Mexico. In many ways, I am a border crosser myself, living in my adopted country but spending my working days teaching my heritage language and culture. I speak Spanish which has helped me to better integrate into life on the border.

My desire to study border crossers was initiated by a love for traveling and discovering other people's cultures and way of life, and by my experience with the immigration process. Anytime I get off a plane, a bus or cross a border I wonder what the place is going to be like. The discovery of a different food, architecture, monuments, or people living, or dressing differently from my customs is exhilarating.

After many years in close contact with the Mexican border I still find myself smiling joyfully when I see a *vaquero* (a Mexican cow boy) with hat and boots, or when I see a group of high school students riding the streets of town in the back of a pick up truck, listening to Banda music.

These concepts of crossing a border and the intermingling of nations and cultures are fascinating. I see and hear with a European cultural background. I was raised in Europe before immigrating to the United States as an adult. What makes me joyful may make a native of the United States bored, annoyed, or uninterested. My reactions are based partly on my background. My identities are naturally different from the ones of a person who was born and raised in this part of the country. Had I stayed in France I

would have been a different person than I am now as an immigrant to the United States. Moving to the United States has influenced by identities.

It took six years to receive my permanent resident status in the United States. During this time, I would become quite annoyed when I would hear politicians, talk show hosts, or anyone commenting on how illegal immigrants should do like everyone else, get in line and go through the legal process. I do not contest that everyone should come legally, but these comments suggested that the speakers assumed that legal status could be obtained in a few months. Their ignorance about the immigration process and their harsh talk about immigrants were aggravating.

So, when I started teaching in Isler, Arizona, I became intrigued by the students dropped off at school by a car licensed in Mexico. The idea that maybe the students were crossing the border illegally always kept me ambivalent about the issue: I could understand and empathize with what I assumed was Mexican parents' desires for American opportunities for their children, but at the same time I would wonder why I had to go through all the trouble of legal immigration when they did not! Curiosity and fascination took over, however, and my initial reaction was based on my identity as a French woman from a small town where almost everyone was white and of French descent. Anyone who was not White was assumed to be a foreigner. From my perspective, however, being a foreigner, or a different skin color, or ethnicity –not that I knew what ethnicity meant- was also being exotic. In the southwest, I see the students

coming from a country to another to study and cross back the border to go home as an exciting confluence of cultures.

Then, I started concentrating a little less on that crossroad and began wondering who those students were. Were they students of upper middle class Mexican families, or the stereotypical poor Mexicans whose parents would manage to send their child to the United States? Who were they? Did my colleagues or parents of Isler children ask themselves the very same questions I did? I assumed they were Mexican nationals, as they were crossing from Mexico, but I did not know it for a fact. How did they identify themselves? How did others identify them? I needed to know.

Consequently, even before engaging myself in this research, I started observing more and asking questions to understand the life on the border to get a more accurate picture of who the student border crossers were. I am not always able to reference what I have learned through conversations with students and some adults. However, the information I gathered, is very valuable as it reflects the facts that lie beneath the surface of the border crosser life.

Formation and Evolution of the U.S. – Mexico Border

The Spanish-language minority did not come from Spain and Mexico; they were already very much a part of the landscape when the Anglo-Americans came to the Southwest....The Spanish-speaking have an identification with the Southwest

which can never be broken. They are not interlopers or immigrants but an indigenous group. (McWilliams, 1949; p. 7-9)

Long before the Europeans settled in the Southwest, the region was already inhabited by Indians and Mexicans. “Several hundred thousand Indians lived in the area that would eventually become the U.S.-Mexico borderlands” (Martinez, 1999; p. 2). The Spaniards had settled in parts of the Caribbean and in the American continent under the leadership of New Spain. By 1763, New Spain included present Mexico and more than half the United States of today. Already in the 16th century, the present borderlands were part of New Spain (Martinez, 1999). While they created settlements in the Southwest, the Spaniards fought Indian tribes who did not want to be conquered and dominated by the colonists. Eventually, the Spaniards left when Mexico won its independence in 1821. So, for a period of about 300 years the Southwest has been influenced by the language, culture and religion of Spain and then Mexico.

“After the establishment of the 1819 boundary, tens of thousands of Anglo Americans immigrated into Texas, a province ruled by Spain until 1821 and thereafter by Mexico following independence” (Martinez, 1999; p. 14). The 1819 boundary was established by the Adams-Onís Treaty between New Spain and the United States. The modern states of Arizona, Nevada and California as well as some parts of Colorado and Wyoming were also under the authority of Mexico under that treaty. It was shortly after that Texas became a site of turmoil. European American immigrants got along well with the local Mexicans until the early 1820’s. This changed as they grew in numbers: “In

Texas where European Americans outnumbered Tejanos/as by six to one by the end of the decade, assertiveness gave way to aggressiveness as the European Americans constantly expressed resentment toward Mexican rule and contempt for the Mexican way of life” (Martinez, 2006; p. 80). A cultural and ethnic divide between the two groups (Anglos and Mexicans) had already started.

The Texas people fought for their independence from Mexico –going through almost a civil war within Texas- and a few years later the Republic of Texas was annexed to the United States in 1845 (McWilliams, 1949). During its fight for independence it is not only the Texans but also many “Tejanos/as” as differentiated by Martinez (2006), who wanted to be free from Mexico politically. Mexico was not happy to lose Texas and to have Mexicans fight with the Anglo Americans, so the war between Mexico and the United States was declared in 1846 (Martinez, 1999; Martinez, 2006; Archer, 1973). American soldiers were better equipped than their Mexican counterparts, but Mexico was also in a bad economic situation due to political instability (Martinez, 2006). In 1848 Mexico was defeated and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed allowing the annexation of Texas and other territories to the United States.

The agreement confirmed the annexation of Texas and fixed the Rio Grande once and for all as its southern border. It also forced Mexico to give the United States all of Arizona north of the Gila River, most of Western New Mexico, Alta California, Nevada, Utah, and portions of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma –about two thirds of Mexico’s prewar territory. In return the United

States agreed to pay Mexico 15 million dollars and assume around three million dollars worth of legal claims made by U.S. citizens against Mexico” (Campbell, 1998; p. 58).

A few years later in 1853, with the Gadsden Purchase (known as El Tratado de Mesilla in Mexico) the United States made its last major territorial acquisition. The purpose of the Gadsden Purchase was for the United States to establish a transcontinental railroad through a southern route (Campbell, 1998; Martinez, 2006; Trimble, 1977). The U.S. needed more land to build its railroad route through the south, but Acuña (1972) contends that the real reason for more land acquisition laid in the mines that were in the Mexican states “...a prime motive was the desire of the United States to obtain the area for its mineral wealth” (p. 81). The territory included lands south of the Gila River (in modern Arizona) and west of the Rio Grande with some specific limits. Through this new land acquisition, the Texas borders were now clearly marked, whereas a few years earlier with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the delimitations were a little sketchy.

The new delimitation between the two countries created a new ethnic make up for the United States. People who had previously been citizens of Mexico now were U.S. citizens. The families had not emigrated up north, the border had moved south.

The new international boundary divided the local Mexican and Indian population in two. Those who lived south of the Rio Grande remained in Mexico, but those who resided on the north bank became part of the United States. Approximately 10,000 people lived along the Rio Grande from San Elizario to Mesilla in 1848.

Half that number resided on soil that would remain in Mexico (Martinez, 1999; p. 21)

Although the war between the United States and Mexico was over, the border area was far from peaceful. There were conflicts of various sorts happening regularly, particularly on the Texas-Mexico Border. And between the years 1848 and 1880 “Indian raids, cattle rustling, trans-border raids, filibustering expeditions, runaways slaves, smuggling, protection of political dissidents, Anglo violations of property rights of Mexicans, and racial hatred were main sources of conflicts” (González-Quijoga, 2010; p. 36). As part of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican citizens were given one year to take U.S. citizenship, or “to return to the interior of Mexico” (Acuña, 1972; p. 29). I suppose it would be more accurate to say that they had to “move” to the interior of Mexico rather than to return, as the territory annexed to the United States was their home. Under the treaty, Mexicans were also guaranteed the right to maintain Spanish as their legal language and to keep ownership of their property: “The treaty also provided specific guarantees for the property and political rights of the “native” population and attempted to safeguard their cultural autonomy, that is, they were given the right to retain their language, religion and culture” (McWilliams, 1949; p. 51).

However, these rights were not respected, and Mexicans were often forced off their land through schemes by savvy Anglos who knew how to manipulate the laws, whereas Mexicans did not as clearly define the concept of ownership (McWilliams, 1949). Furthermore, the Mexicans were usually poor and could not afford the services of

an Anglo lawyer and the expenses fighting for one's land created (McWilliams, 1949). As far as the Spanish language was concerned, its use became "prohibited in public schools" (San Miguel and Valencia, 1998) and different "English-only laws" (San Miguel and Valencia, 1998) were passed in various states; the rights received by Mexicans through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo were, therefore, negated.

The situation did not seem to improve with time as exposed in *'El Corrido de Gregorio Cortez* a folk song relating the story that happened in 1901 between the Cortez brothers and law enforcement. The *corrido*, a type of Mexican ballad is commonly used to tell a story depicting local events. Gregorio Cortez and his brother Ronaldo worked as helpers on a Texas Ranch when they met with a local sheriff and his deputies who were after some horse thieves. After various misunderstandings, mainly related to Spanish being badly translated into English, the Sheriff thought Gregorio Cortez was lying, so he tried to arrest Cortez who told him "'*No me puede arrestar por nada*" (You can not arrest me for nothing)", which was translated to the sheriff as "No white man can arrest me." The sheriff drew his gun and a gunfight ensued. Cortez ended up shooting and killing the sheriff. He fled but was eventually arrested (Rodriguez, retrieved April 30, 2012). "The Cortez incident quickly came to symbolize the ongoing border conflicts ... Cortez personified the spirit of the border strife" (Rodriguez, Retrieved April 30, 2012). The Texas Rangers were involved in his capture, as their role was originally to "protect against hostile Indians....[and] to protect against outlaws and Mexican bandits" (www.texasrangers.org/ retrieved May 12, 2012).

A decade later, at the time of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 “... the border population increased significantly as many [Mexicans] moved across the border seeking refuge” (Cadaval, Retrieved April 30, 2012) in the United States, away from Mexico’s turmoil. Many were sent back to Mexico during the Great Depression of the 1930’s as U.S. jobs were scarce and were given to Americans.

However, during World War Two the Braceros Program (1942-1965) was created by the U.S. Immigration Services to supply U.S. farms with agricultural workers from Mexico (www.uscis.gov /retrieved April, 20, 2012). Mexicans were employed doing usually menial jobs in ranches or farms, picking up fruits, or vegetables, but they also were used to replace American men who were at war. Because of the shortage of manpower immigrants were in demand to do the job nobody else was available to do and at lower wages (McWilliams, 1949). However, when American men were back from war the Mexican people were viewed as a danger. In 1950, there was

Public alarm over illegal aliens [that] result[ed] in strengthening border controls and launching targeted deportation programs, most notably operation wetback [derogative nickname often given to illegal entrants from Mexico]. Concern about criminal aliens prompt[ed] investigation deportation of communists, subversives and organized crime figures” (www.uscis.gov/ retrieved April 20, 2012).

Interestingly, the situation is about the same 60 years later when Mexican immigrants are perceived as a danger for the economy, or for the security of Americans and of the United States. In the 1950’s the deportations were concentrated on criminals

and undocumented individuals. Mexicans were dismissed when their help was no longer needed. “The United States has only wanted the Mexican in time of need and then only to exploit his labor” (Acuña (1972; p. 211). Mexicans, as a group, had been of great service to the United States, helping run the country through its manpower during World War Two or on the front fighting with Anglo-Americans. In fact “the percentage of Chicanos who served in the armed forces was disproportionate to the percentage of Chicanos in the general population” (Acuña, 1972; p. 198). It is also around the same period, that raids were conducted in some Hispanic neighborhoods to find “illegals” and deport them in a race to get rid of Mexicans. Unfortunately, U.S. born “Mexicans” were also detained:

In 1954, 1,035,282 [Mexicans] were deported, after which the operation was considered a success...It was a victory, but at an immeasurable price to the Chicano community. During the raids, U.S. born Mexicans and legally immigrated Mexicans were searched just because they looked Mexican. Homes were illegally searched and U.S. citizens illegally detained” (Acuña, 1972; p. 213).

Martinez contends that the constant conflicts at the border have their origins in the creation of the boundary between the two countries. “Boundary troubles also left a legacy of hatred, bitterness and suspicion between the two neighbors. Mexicans deeply resented the pressure tactics and crude behavior of some U.S. representatives who were obsessed with “adjusting” the boundary” (Martinez, 2006; p.28). He adds that because of the loss of part of their territory “Mexicans found themselves dangerously close to losing their

nationhood. Little wonder that Mexicans came to lament their geographic position, “so far from God, so close to the United States,” and hardly surprising that many felt that between Mexico and the United States “the best thing is the desert” (Martinez, 2006; p. 29).

In the last decade or two the border has been the scene of constant drug and people smuggling with tunnels built between border towns. In 1990, a very elaborate drug tunnel was discovered in a warehouse in Arizona. “The 5-foot-tall passage linked a luxury home in Agua Prieta, Mexico, to a warehouse across the border in Arizona, where tractor-trailers and other rigs apparently were loaded with thousands of pounds of cocaine and dispatched to delivery points elsewhere in the United States” (LA Times, 1990). Quite recently, in Nogales, Arizona a few drug tunnels have been discovered, each one leading to Nogales, Mexico. In 2010, a rancher from Douglas, Arizona was found shot to death on his property after reporting helping an individual whom he thought to be an illegal immigrant. Because “(...) the footprints and heavy drug and illegal immigrant trafficking in that area, investigators are working on the assumption that he encountered a smuggler, possibly heading back to Mexico” (New York Times, 2010). In 2010, a Border Patrol agent from the Tucson sector was killed in an ambush with drug smugglers a few miles from the border. The incidents presented are not marginal; loads of drugs, people smuggling and tunnels are constant occurrences.

As I work on the border, I hear about these types of events. It is common knowledge in border towns that these events happen. Of course, nobody on the border really wants the media to comment on them as the media have a tendency to present facts with a twist of subjectivity and exaggeration. Still, the first time I had a real visit to Delicias was with a Mexican-American colleague who knows each side of the border well. He showed me where one tunnel between Delicias and Isler was found. I have also heard colleagues laugh while commenting on the brand new car some students –from either side of the border- had when it was clearly beyond the financial means of the family.

Years have passed since the new delimitations of the U.S.-Mexico border, and yet the conflicts have not stopped. They may sometimes be of a different nature, but they still exist. There is a market for illegal drugs and there are eager providers, and they influence the populations and their attitudes toward Mexicans and Hispanics in general. The conflicts also affect border crossers and the perceptions they have of their own cultural heritage and of where they stand in U.S. society.

A Politicized Border

According to Customs and Border Protection, in 2011 the agents seized almost 4 million pounds of drugs along the U.S. southwest border, about 50 million dollars in

(undeclared) currencies, apprehended 327,577 individuals and refused admission to the United States to 82,492 people.

Table 1

Enforcement actions

Enforcement Actions	Arizona	Texas	New Mexico	California
Apprehensions	129,118	118,911	6,910	72,638
Drug Seizures	1.2M pounds	1.5M pounds	55,264 pounds	332,134 pounds
Currency Seizures	\$13.3M	\$19.9M	\$2M	\$15.9M
Inadmissibles	6,794	37,013	594	38,091

(Source: Custom and Border Protection, 2011 data at www.cbp.gov)

The apprehensions of illegal immigrants have gone down 61% between 2005 and 2010 (www.dhs.gov), due in part to a weaker U.S. economy and to a tougher enforcement of illegal immigration by an increase of Border Patrol agents (www.cbp.gov).

In 2005, the Arizona Chapter of the Minuteman Project was created. This private organization's goal was (and still is) to "monitor the United States-Mexico border's flow of illegal immigrants" (www.senatebill1070.com/ retrieved July 19, 2012). In an address to his followers, the president of the organization observed that they had to be "bringing national awareness to the illegal invasion" (www.minutemanproject.com/action_article.php?id=2/ retrieved July 19, 2012).

Although the Minutemen are not present anymore alongside the road, in 2005 they could

be seen everyday in their camp chairs binoculars in hand, waiting for the “illegals” to come by. “The night of April 3, armed vigilantes camped along Border Road in a series of watch posts set-up for the Minuteman Project, a month-long action in which revolving casts of 150 to 200 anti-immigration militants wearing cheap plastic “Undocumented Border Patrol Agent” badges mobilized in southeastern Arizona,” comments Holthouse (2005) from the Intelligence Report, a magazine that advocates social justice and a fight against hate. The Minuteman militia had as their ultimate goal alerting the federal government about immigration “issues.” According to Chavez (2006; p 1):

These modern-day volunteers [whom he compares to Wyatt Earp’s men in Tombstone] came in search of another confrontation, another example of cowboy justice, only this time the scofflaws were “illegal” immigrants. These volunteers came to be part of the Minuteman Project, a name with immediate appeal because it called forth the patriotic volunteers who fought against British rule of the American colonies. The Minuteman Project’s ostensible goal was to monitor the Arizona-Mexico border in the hopes of locating clandestine border crossers. However, this surveillance operation also had a larger objective, which was to produce a spectacle that would garner public media attention and influence federal immigration policies.

It seems that Washington did not hear them, but the state of Arizona did. In an effort to enforce the law and prevent illegal immigrants from remaining in the United States, the state of Arizona passed the Senate Bill 1070 which intends to “discourage and

deter the unlawful entry and presence of aliens and economic activity by persons unlawfully present in the United States” (SB 1070; p.1). To implement it, the bill requires any law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of anyone they suspect to be illegally in this country. The bill insists that the officer must have reasonable suspicion. However, for many in Arizona, the term is vague. Does being a Hispanic make someone look suspicious; does having an accent imply an illegal presence in the country? Regarding police involvement in immigration matters, Waslin (2010; p.106) argues that “millions are affected when law enforcement officers, who may be untrained in immigration law, stop and question Latinos and other Americans who “look” or “sound” like they might be foreign.” SB 1070 was the answer for the people of Arizona who thought that illegal immigration takes a toll on the local economy; some border towns – such as Isler- had to close their maternity ward for countless illegal entrants, and legal visitors from Mexico would deliver their child on the U.S. border town but would not pay for the service. Arizonans, particularly those living away from border towns wanted the government, federal or state to take charge and deal with the situation. Although some parts of the bill have been challenged in the Supreme Court, the bill was signed by the Governor of Arizona. In late June 2012, the Supreme Court reached a decision, rejecting part of the bill, but allowing the provision that allows law enforcement to ask proof of citizenship from any individual suspected to be in the country illegally.

In recent years, the border has become a ‘hot’ topic in politics –particularly in Border States. Politicians usually denounce the use of public services designated for U.S.

citizens, by illegal immigrants (Varsanyi, 2010; Furuseth and Smith, 2010). Lawfully documented immigrants and American-born citizens of Mexican heritage feel besieged and targeted by laws such as SB 1070 ostensibly aimed at undocumented immigrants.

School Attendance on the Border

The political border between the two nations has been moving in its history. People became citizens of the United States without emigrating; the United States came to them and made them part of this land. Families have been split because they did not live in the same town, one remaining Mexican the other one not. Consequently, the border is not really a cultural line, the Mexican and the American cultures overflowing on each side. The border and its fence separate two nations and two people but their culture does not stop at the line.

At this date most of the population on the U.S. side of the border still has family ties in Mexico even if they go back a few generations (Martinez, 1994; Pugach, 1998). People cross back and forth for business, or to attend family events. Those who live on the U.S. side will attend the *quinceañeras* (a celebration of the 15th birthday of girls and their entrance in the world) of nieces, or daughters of cousins in Mexico, or they celebrate their own daughter's *quinceañeras* south of the border. Regardless of where the celebration will be much of the shopping related to the event will have been done in the United States. Parking lots of shopping malls and major retailers in American border towns as well as large cities within fair distance of the border are packed with vehicles

licensed in Mexico. Garage sales held in communities around the border are very strongly attended by Mexican families.

The history between the two countries partly explains the constant intermingling of the communities. American and Mexican people going about their business on either side cross the border between the two countries daily. Among them are high school students.

However, politicians who live far away, and even some local Anglos, often misunderstand the history of the border and the life in borderlands. The most recent local political topic regarding immigration was about the students who live in Mexico, but attend school in the United State - like many children in Isler. The phenomenon is common in border towns and often these children are United States citizens. Contrary to popular belief, however, being a U.S. citizen does not guarantee the right to attend a public school in the United States. Students can only attend a U.S. school if they have residency within the state boundaries; otherwise, the students, even those who are U.S. citizens, are expected to pay tuitions since public schooling is largely paid for by state and local property taxes. The idea is that families pay taxes to support the schools their children attend. Consequently, foreign students who live in the United States are permitted to attend K-12 schools as long as their parents can provide a proof of state residency. To comply with the requirement, most U.S. born border crossers have a legal guardian on the U.S. side usually a family member, or a family friend (oral

communication with students and school counselor). Until this year, however the requirement had not always been strictly enforced.

Beginning in fall 2012, however, new guidelines from SB 1141 –passed in 2011- are due to take effect in the state of Arizona. Families will be required to provide a proof of residency in the state, such as gas, electric or mortgage bills, or simply a drivers' license with the name and address of the parent or guardian (www.azed.gov). School districts and charter schools will be liable if they do not enforce the law properly and do not keep track of the parents/guardian's residency (SB1141). *Residency* in this context refers to where one actually lives, not to legal immigrant or citizenship status. Schools are not allowed to ask for citizenship, or immigration status of students (oral communication with a school counselor). Interestingly, the Senate Bill which is only two pages long is about who should attend school. The only reference to residency is at the beginning of the bill, in capital letters and is only four lines long in its original text:

In accordance with guidelines adopted by the Department of Education, school districts and charter schools shall require and maintain verifiable documentation of residency in this state for pupils who enroll in the school district or charter school (Amending Section 15-802, Arizona Revised Statutes- SB 1141)

The response from a part of the public is “our concern is that this is only designed to address the issue of undocumented families, and we’re opposed to it. We will comply, but it’s another example of policies and statutes that are unfriendly to Latino-serving districts,” says Manuel L. Isquierdo, Superintendant of the Sunnyside Unified School District in Tucson, Arizona (Arizona Daily Star; March 26, 2012). In Phoenix, the

Arizona Republic political section lists the vetoed and passed bills with a brief summary almost like a title. For SB 1141 it goes as “SB 1141: Requires public schools to get documentation of Arizona Residency for pupils enrolled in their schools” (Arizona Republic online; April 12, 2011). The newspaper refers to the Senate Bill as simply a bill related to residency in general, not residency in relation to undocumented families as Isquierdo mentions.

On the other hand, in their rush to remedy a situation, politicians pay little attention to the actual laws and do not differentiate legal versus illegal immigrants:

Sen. Steve Smith, R.-Maricopa, who sponsored the legislation –SB 1141- said the state Department of Education has “documented examples of people coming over the border, getting on our school buses, going to school and then going back home to Mexico.” “I don’t think we should use our tax dollars to pay for people who are not supposed to be here. I don’t think our tax dollars should be going to educate citizens who are not of this country.” (Arizona Daily Star, March 26, 2012).

The Senator refers to the Ajo school district, which authorized the enrollment as Arizona state residents, students from the Mexican border town of Sonoyta (some 40 miles south of Ajo); however, Senator Smith is confused between residency in the state and citizenship. A student does not have to be a U.S. citizen to attend American schools, but a *resident* not with regard to immigration status, but with regard to living within the state, or the school district boundaries. The legal immigration status of the student within the United States is another matter that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

enforce, not schools. Senator Smith's comment about not educating "citizens who are not of this country" creates a chasm between Americans and "everybody else." Any legal immigrant, i.e. authorized to be in this country by the federal government is ignored as if not part of the U.S. society. Wonders (2006; p. 35) talks about "the construction of cultural and rhetorical borders that separate insiders from outsiders, citizens from non citizens" and she adds that it is "primarily achieved through racialized and classist messages designed to foster public fear and antagonism toward members of a particular group."

The senator's ignorance on this topic of immigration and the border makes him sound resentful toward the border and non-U.S. citizens. This erroneous understanding of who is allowed to attend public schools in this state reinforces the negative perception common folks have about Mexicans and border crossers.

The political and media discourses of documented and undocumented immigration have served a particular agenda within the U.S., a sort of quarantine on culture, and have successfully constructed a categorization of immigrants as a threat, terrorists, drug dealers, lesser, animalistic, and in need of correction and control ... (Miller, 2006; p. 38).

Those views affect the identities of border crossers in multiple ways: how they are regarded by authorities, by their peers, who they associate with, the affinities they create, as well as how they view themselves and this country. The discourse of politicians may make a difference in people's perception of immigrants regardless of where they are

from, however, the border is used as a whipping boy to the state economic difficulties (Miller, 2006).

Life and Identity on the Border

Regardless of where they live, people enact multiple identities, as identities are context-driven. As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) mention individuals change and shift their positions depending on the situations, and identities can only be considered in their varieties.

Martinez (1994; p.61) classifies Mexican borderlanders into nine categories; three of them are of interest for this study (a more complete presentation on Martinez's categories may be found in chapter 2): the commuters who are "people who cross the border on a daily basis to work in the neighboring nation," the biculturalists, or "people whose lifestyles and mind-sets reflect two cultures" and the binationalists who are "biculturalists whose lives are deeply enmeshed in the societies of the two nations and who consequently have a strong international outlook." The identities of the three categories of individuals are necessarily different, as their exposure to the other culture varies greatly for the commuter and to an extent for the biculturalists and the binationalists. Martinez (1994) mentions two other important categories of individuals who populate the border: the uniculturalists or "those people who are monocultural and monolingual," and the nationalists who are uniculturalists who passionately assert the interests of their own nation and are opposed to influences from abroad" (Martinez, 1994;

p. 61). Although the border around Isler and Delicias has plenty of monolinguals, it is difficult to ignore the influence the other nation has on one's own. A simple example is the quantity of Mexican restaurants in Isler, or the Mexican food products widely available in the local supermarkets. Mexican nationals from Delicias frequently shop in Isler and the local Walmart is now offering food items –such as candies- that are found in Mexico. In Delicias, U.S. brands of products are largely available not only on the border but inland as well. The influence each nation has on the other is also partly due to the history, and the fact that the historical roots of Isler are Mexican.

The Study

My interest in this study focuses on Americans and on Mexicans who live in Mexico, but cross daily or weekly to attend school in the United States. The participants of this research are likely to belong to some of Martinez's (1994) categories. The lives and situations of border crossers are different from the ones of students living and studying within this country, Latinos or not. The differences are numerous and of various types. Understanding who the border crossers are is critical if we want to offer them the best possible education and portray them accurately.

To conduct this study, I first identified a group of approximately ten students who I knew to be border crossers from my high school French classes. From this group, I selected three students as the focal students because they were willing to write a journal for a period of a month, and also I felt confident that these students would be comfortable with the research process. After a careful consent process, which ensured that they

understood their rights and the strictly voluntary nature of their participation, I collected the research data over a period of four months, from October 2010 to January 2011. I interviewed the focal students once in person following up often with questions as they arose, asked in person or in writing. I asked the focal students to keep journals about their daily experiences, especially relating to crossing the border. I also interviewed their parents.

In this study I concentrated on those students who live across the international boundary and come to study in the United States. How are student border crossers positioned, viewed or addressed in Mexico and in the United States? How do they negotiate their identities when faced with Americanization on the U.S. side of the border, and Mexicanization on the other side? Their experiences crossing the line and their negotiation of a life between two countries affect their everyday life, and create their identities as students and citizens.

The mere fact of crossing daily or weekly influences the school life of the border crosser whose day starts quite early in order to make it on time to school as the physical border crossing is time consuming, approximately 30-40 minutes. Then, there is the legal aspect of the crossing and the anxiety or frustration associated with it even for U.S. citizens; the questioning may sometimes seem intrusive. The majority of students are U.S. citizens, but their parents are Mexicans and live in Mexico. In a few cases, parents cannot cross the border, either because their permanent residency is pending or because they do not have a permanent job in Mexico and are perceived as a risk by immigration

services. The students recruited in this study are all United States citizens whose parents are allowed to cross the border with a border card.

The place of residence of the border crosser is critical because the child who officially lives on the U.S. side of the border must be living there physically. If he/she goes back home to Mexico every evening he/she may be subject to questioning and suspicion from immigration officers; even though it is not the immigration officers' job to determine whether U.S. school students sleep on the Mexican or the American side of the border. Still, it is a stress that does affect the student negotiation of his identity and how he/she may view him/herself as an individual, and how he/she may be perceived by others. As far as the one who returns to Mexico only on weekends, he/she may miss his/her family, which creates a distraction from learning.

In contrast to the student living and studying in the U.S., the student border crosser is constantly exposed to two cultures each with limitations. The border crosser is involved in family dynamics differently. As an example, a lot of them will miss school on Mother's Day celebrating that holiday with their family. Mexican parents value education (Valencia and Black, 2002), and they also value family. A good education is usually strengthened by a solid family foundation, and that is what Mexican parents create in keeping their children involved in social and cultural events.

Cultural events are closely followed. When Independence Day *el 16 de Septiembre* comes up, most student border crossers faithfully attend the celebrations for one or two days surrounding the festivities. The Latino student living away from the

border does not have that exposure to his/her original culture, just a reproduction of it in Latino neighborhoods while attending to the American ways of life. It is common to see the student border crosser come to school dressed as a *vaquero* with beautiful boots and matching belt, the shirt neatly tucked in his/her jeans. It is not just parading with a Mexican flag celebrating and idealizing Mexico (like lots of immigrants do about their land of origin), it is living an –almost- authentic Mexican life. The student border crosser enacts multiple identities (Pavlenko, 2004) by his/her involvement in both cultures. Mexican-Americans living on the U.S. side of the border do not usually attend the festivities or wear the *vaquero* style clothing.

This is within this very complicated cultural, social, political, and historical context of the border, that I saw the opportunity to deepen my understanding of the context and of certain identities along the U.S.- Mexico border by conducting a case study of several high school students who partake of life on both sides of the border in particular ways. Specifically, they are U.S. citizens who live on the Mexican side, and attend public school on the American side.

Isler has a strong Mexican flair with its culture, food or music. This Mexican flair creates a seemingly identical atmosphere to life in Mexico for the student thus he/she is never fully integrated into the life in the United States. But, he/she is never fully integrated in Mexican life either.

The students physically live in two countries each one with its own rules, lives and cultures, but each one so close to the other that neither is *really* American nor

Mexican, nor are the students. They have a hybrid identity (Nieto, 2002). At least it is the way, I, as a researcher view their identities, but identities are quite complex and require more than a simple determination of who other people are. As an example, here is what happened to me recently in my classroom: as I was explaining the formation of the negative in the French language, I was writing the following sentences in French on the board “Je suis américaine” (I am American) and “Je ne suis pas américaine” (I am not American). As I was reading the first sentence a student laughed, and I understood that in his mind I am not nor could I be an American. So, I told him that we can become American through naturalization, and he replied “Oh yes, legally”. So, I could legally be an American, but that does not mean at heart or in appearances I am an American. Curious, I asked him if he would consider me American if I did not have an obvious French accent. He told me that he would! So, appearances and other peoples’ perceptions are definitely important in our quest for identity, but it does not indicate that individuals’ ascriptions create our identities either. The fact that I could be American legally but not in appearances exemplifies Gee’s theory (as presented next) that an individual may hold a certain institution identity (being American) and a different discursive one (being French) through the discourse of rational individuals.

Theoretical Framework

To study the hybrid trait of border crossers I use Gee’s (2001) concept of multiple identities as a theoretical framework for analyses. Gee (2001) contends that we do not

have a single identity. On the contrary, as normal people we have many of them according to the context in which we are, and how others perceive us. “Being recognized as a certain ”kind of person,” in a given context, is what I mean here by “identity”. In this sense of the term, all people have multiple identities connected not to their “internal states” but to their performances in society” (p. 99). I take the term “performance” as how people perceive us and not as what we are trying to show to an audience.

In his theoretical framework Gee (2001) proposes four ways to understand identity: *Nature*, *Institutional*, *Discursive* and *Affinity*. For the author the *nature* identity of an individual is a state in nature over which one has no control; the *institutional* identity is based on “laws, rules, traditions or principles of various sorts” (Gee, 2001; p. 102) that allow an institution to exercise its power; the *discursive* identity comes from the recognition of “rational individuals” (Gee, 2001; p. 100) through their discourse or dialogue; finally, the *affinity* identity focuses on shared practices among people.

To analyze my data, using Gee’s perspective, I deconstructed the identities of each focus participant to understand every aspect of it and rebuilt it to present who the multiple identities of student border crossers.

Importance of the Study

Much research has been done on immigration and on students who live close to the border and commute between the U.S. and Mexico (Pugach, 1998). In Pugach’s case, the location of research was a half hour away from the international boundary making the

research quite different. My research is on border crossers who live directly on the international line.

This study is important on many levels. First, it provides a counter narrative to the view of the border regions as one in which Mexicans and Mexican immigrants are usually negatively portrayed in the media: they are shown bending through the bushes of the desert to avoid being seen and caught by the Border Patrol, who keep watch by helicopters, cars, or on foot. Or Mexican immigrants are shown jumping the fence (see front cover of W. Cornelius Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective, 1994). The Mexican immigrant is depicted as the illegal worker who ruins the American health care system by using free services meant for Americans. The border crosser is to a certain extent an immigrant, but as American as any other person holding a U.S. passport in this nation where diversity creates such a wonderful kaleidoscope.

Secondly, it is also commonly thought that Hispanics are not proficient in English and therefore are impaired in their education (Capps, 2005). This research provides a better understanding of Latino students for researchers wanting to prepare educators in the southern Border States for a culturally diverse population and learners whose needs are different. These border crossers will likely attend U.S. universities.

Finally, because this study exposes the reality of student border crossers' lives and identities this research will improve our understanding of identity and how experiences and context shape who we are.

Limitations of the Study

A case study is in itself the study of *a case* therefore the sample is very small and is not necessarily representative of all border crossers, and generalization may not be appropriate. Although I have interviewed parents in Delicias, my research did not emphasize life on the Mexican side of the border as much as life in Isler, as I am more familiar with the U.S. side of the border.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Borders

In order to understand the role the border plays in my research it is critical to understand it in a broader context. In the first portion, I review the literature with the purpose of exploring meanings of national borders in general. Then, I characterize types of national borders and their meanings. Next, I focus on issues of the elimination of borders, then I address the issue of the U.S. Mexico border in particular. Finally, I explore borders as a place of repression and enchantment.

“A border is a line that separates one nation from another...the essential functions of a border are to keep people in their space and to prevent, control, or regulate interactions among them” (Martinez, 1994; p. 5). “States establish borders to secure territories which are valuable to them because of their human or natural resources, or because these places have strategic or symbolic importance to the state” (Wilson and Donnan, 1998; p. 9). A national border is also a boundary where cultures, people, trade, and history mingle. “Borders are the political membranes through which people, goods, wealth and information must pass in order to be deemed acceptable or unacceptable by the state. Thus, borders are agents of a state’s security and sovereignty, and a physical record of a state’s past and present relations with its neighbors (Wilson and Donnan, 1998; p. 9). The roles held by borders are multiple. They serve as points of control of people and goods and they are the physical markers separating two states, therefore, two

governments. Finally, borders are also the remnants of history between countries, of events that they shared and that created the present boundary. As an example, it took two wars for France and Germany to settle who would own the border states of Alsace-Lorraine.

Martinez (1994) uses interchangeably the terms 'border' and 'borderlands' when referring to the area and space around the border; Kearny (1998; p. 118), on the contrary differentiates them: he distinguishes 'boundaries' as legal special delimitations of nations as opposed to the 'borders' of nations which are geographic and cultural zones or spaces, i.e. 'border areas' which can vary independently of formal boundaries. Thus, whereas the 'boundary' between the United States and Mexico is an exact geometric line separating the two nation-states, the 'border area' is a broad indistinct and fluctuating zone that overlaps both nation-states." The 'border area' is what is usually called 'the borderlands.' "Borderlands are spaces where the everyday realities of boundaries are played out. They are the proximate spaces of flows across the dividing line. They are spaces where cultural identity, sheltered by the boundary, becomes blurred, mixed, creolized" (Morehouse, 2004).

Overview of Physical Borders

There are two main types of physical borders: the natural one and the manmade one. The natural one is the Pyrénées Mountains between France and Spain, or the Rio

Grande between Texas, United States and Mexico. People used the mountains and the rivers to delimit nations.

Manmade national borders serve a specific purpose and are much more common. The Great Wall of China was built to protect the country from invasion by their Northern neighbors (Ganster, 2005; 2008); the Berlin Wall built after WW2 aimed at separating two political and economic worlds, the East and the West (Dalin, 2005; Ganster, 2005; 2008)). One country, Germany was divided into two. Their fellow countrymen shot to death the Germans living in Eastern Germany if they wanted to escape to the West. The Berlin Wall was used to prevent its citizens from *leaving* the country, as other nations use electrified barbed wire to do just that. Some of the countries that prevent their people from leaving do not mind if others enter as long as they eventually leave and do not ask too many questions. Such is the case of Cuba (Gay, 2000).

Borders may be fenced or not, checkpoints or ports of entry being spread along the line at intervals where cities from both sides of the border meet (personal observation). Most European countries do not have a physical feature indicating each nation's boundaries. The United States-Mexico border is partly fenced with various types of enclosures: a see through wire fence, steel picket fence or a double fence. Ganster and Lorey (2008; p. 7) commenting on the border to the East of the San Ysidro (San Diego) – Tijuana area: “The single fence or steel wall is now being replaced in the San Diego region and other dense urban border areas with multiple fences, several access roads for the Border Patrol, stadium lighting, and video cameras and other technology to detect

illicit crossings.” Other parts of the boundaries between the United States and Mexico remain unfenced at this point.

Movements of People and Goods

If the physical aspects of borders are critical the human aspects are no less important. Studies of the relationship between humans and the proximity to national borders have tended to focus on the conflicts on the border and on the crossing of peoples and goods.

Ganster and Lorey (2008; p. xvi) comment that “borders rarely make clear and simple divisions between or among peoples” and the authors (2005) address the situation of those they call migrants and refugees or split cultural groups; they exemplify it with the Jívaro people who were divided between Peru and Ecuador. Political lines have been traced regardless of these tribes who inhabited the area, and their cultural groups have been split between two countries disrupting the life and culture of the groups. That is also the case of the Tohono O’odham (Annerino, 2008) whose territory became ‘divided’ when the latest U.S.- Mexico border was established. Now, in order for them to gather they have to cross the border with all the formalities it involves. Flynn (1997) contends that the boundaries of most African countries have been created without regards to its ethnic groups and thus it has engendered the political instability that exists nowadays in most African countries: “...colonists paid little attention to indigenous cultural groups

and ethnic boundaries, dividing friends and family into different colonial territories while incorporating ancient enemies into the same colonial territory” (Flynn, 1997; p. 313).

Enemies sharing a border is too often a source of conflict. Friedman (2005) presents the border between Israel and Palestine and the constant religious and cultural battles the Palestinians and Israelis fight, and the clash as the Palestinians do not wish to be “Israelified”. In that respect there was a war between ethnic groups in former Yugoslavia, which was dismantled to create various, hopefully more harmonious, countries. Presently, there is the constant tension between North and South Korea or what Ganster and Lorey (2008; p. xx) call an “enforced version of the quiet borderland.”

Borders are also a place of trade. Goods are transported through borders in trucks (Alvarez, 1994, 2001), or shipped into various major international harbors. The *maquiladoras* or factories along the U.S.-Mexico border that assemble parts sent to them by American companies, send back the finished product to the U.S. to be sold with a higher profit (Weaver, 2001). From that income earned by Mexican workers, part of it is spent on both sides of the boundary. Borders have long been places of trade, and some communities make their living out of the trade along the line and can see their income decline when the transborder trade is reduced (Flynn, 1997). Many U.S. border towns’ economies depend largely on Mexican shoppers. Ganster and Lorey (2008) contend that spending by Mexicans support more than 150,000 U.S. jobs in border communities. The trade goes in both directions: Americans shopping in Mexico or vacationing, even if at this time there may be less crossing in the southern direction due to safety issues. Still,

Americans use health care services in Mexico, be it a dentist, a doctor or to buy medications on the other side of the line. For some medical services, Mexicans do, too (Morehouse and Salido, 2004).

Towards a No Border Zone?

Studies on borders also focus on two important points: the extent to which borders are an integral part of the nation life and on the validity for nations to have borders at all or *How Much do National Borders Matter?* (Helliwell, 1998). Gibbins (2005) contrasts the United States and Canada when it comes to the influence of border in people's lives. The author claims that U.S. "borders are often not only on the geographical margins of national life, but they are on the political and social margins as well" (p. 151). Almost all major U.S. cities are located away from the border with Canada or Mexico. Major U.S. cities are either inland or by the sea. Miami, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco are physically located at the extremities of the country and an ocean or a sea separates them from another nation, that is to say a space with no human life. Canadian cities, politics and life, on the other hand are within a short range of the border with the United States. Therefore, the influence of the latter is felt all across the country: "The influence of the United States is felt not only in communities proximate to the border but throughout Canada. In this sense, the border penetrates the Canadian consciousness, identity, economy, and policy to a degree unknown and unimaginable in the United States" (Gibbins, 2005; 153). In that sense, Canada may be described as a 'borderland

society' (Gibbins, 1989) where populations are never away from the influences of the neighbor. The author also contrasts the Canadian border with the border with Mexico where life on the line has only been part of recent history and in fact, the political life remains in the heartland of the United States far from the border. Sister cities such as El Paso-Ciudad Juarez or San Diego-Tijuana saw a population increase simply due to migration possibilities. However, the cities on the Mexican side are usually larger than their U.S. counterparts. It is necessary to add to Gibbins' perspective that major Mexican cities are also geographically positioned away from the border.

At this point, borders seem to still matter greatly according to Martinez (1986) who notes a critical difference between the two borders and how entering the United States through Canada or through Mexico is a different experience: "Whereas the Canadian-U.S. border is twice as long in miles as the border between Mexico and the United States, along its western expanses, English-Speaking Canadians have much less difficulty passing through the border screen than do darker-skinned Mexican-Americans through our southern border." (p. 59)

Considering, as Martinez (1986) does that it is easier to cross into the United States from Canada than it is from Mexico, even if the same laws apply, it would probably be fair to say that the Canadian border is halfway between the Mexican border and the European ones. Ganster (2005) proposes that borders go through four stages: the first one being the frontier period, the second is when the borderlands area develop with the mixing of people, then the third one when "distinct border region is formed with

clearly demarcated boundaries and definable social and political responses to the boundary” (Ganster, 2005: xv) and finally the fourth one being eventually the dissolution of the border. As Ganster points out the Western European Union is at the fourth stage. Although it could be argued that the European countries still have border checkpoints, they are not used to enforce the traffic of Western European people. Once an individual has entered the European Community he can circulate freely between nations.

In this era of globalization, where NAFTA facilitated the passages of goods between Mexico, the United States and Canada, where one can communicate with someone on the other side of the world through the various social media, it would seem that borders would be eliminated, or at least quite simplified. It is not so. Borders are still part of life and crossing remains a difficult experience for some (Martinez, 1994, 2006).

The Case of the U.S.- Mexico Border

The U.S.-Mexico border and the borderlands are constantly in the news, usually to report human and drug trafficking and, therefore, for the government need to take action.

The US.-Mexico border is tied to people crossing without proper documentation, or so it is commonly perceived. “Often U.S. citizens, even those who live in the border region, perceive the area in terms of undocumented migration, drug trafficking, and decaying cities” (Ganster and Lorey, 2008; p. 6). However, the authors (2008; p. xvii) make the point that only a small percentage of the people who cross the border regularly

do so illegally--“ yet this percentage frequently constitutes the only border story deemed worth reporting in the mass media of both Mexico and the United States.”

For some, crossing the border, legally, is an easy process, when for others it engenders apprehension and difficulty because of the paperwork involved (Martinez, 1986). According to who crosses, the experience is quite different: “...the level of formal resistance varies considerably by language and racial composition” (Martinez, 1986; p. 59).

Lee Morgan II (2006), a former custom agent, depicts the borderlands as corrupted and where law enforcement agents, Anglos or Hispanics, are too often closing their eyes, if not participating, in illegal activities with drug cartels. His depiction of border towns is sometimes quite similar to a Tombstone of the 1800's where gunfights constantly erupted throughout town.

Kearney (1998) takes quite a different approach to the U.S.-Mexico border, contending that it is not the territorial limits that are contested nowadays, but rather the movement of people and their identities: “Foreign labor is desired, but the persons in whom it is embodied are not desired” (125). He goes further by saying that as the southern United States has lost control of the geographic space “invaded” by Latinos, they try to keep some control by reinforcing English as the official language of the state, California in particular. Furthermore, he points out that the border is also associated with “foreign” drugs and “crime” which invade “our nation” (p. 127), implying that people

south of the border are bad and are drug dealers, and those north of the border are the innocent victims of the drug business.

Borders as an Adventure

The border can also be viewed in two contrasting and opposite ways: its repressive and its exciting aspects; two sides that are surprisingly not found in the existing literature, but which deserve a look.

Borders are used as repressive and investigative mediums to watch the every move of people. With the existing technology, it is easy for a government to spy on its citizens in various ways, particularly when they travel from one nation to another. Travelers need to justify why they want to enter a country, if it is for tourism or for business, where they plan on staying (or where they can be found). When coming back they usually need to justify again to their own country of residence why they went away. Actually, if not asked, passports swiped in an electronic system tell where the travelers were even if it does not say why. People, our neighbors who wear a uniform are entitled – in the name of a government- to ask us to unveil our privacy. At the border, travelers might be searched, their luggage searched. Some countries require the passport of citizens and foreigners to be swept as they enter and to *exit* the country.

Borders, however, carry also a sense of adventure and excitement. Although for different reasons, borders are the dream of the immigrant but also of the traveler who wonders how it is on the other side, what is to be discovered. Each traveler is a new discoverer as each person views a new place with a different perspective. Even the intrusive questions mentioned earlier are not important, once the border is crossed, a new world, a new place with its particular noises, smells, people and traffic open to the border crosser. The title of Daisann McLane's article (2008) says it all: "Crossings Borders: This quintessential experience quickens the pulse of even the most seasoned traveler" (p. 58). Her article presents fabulously the border as a positive place (and not one of struggle) where the occasional disorientation leads to wonderful discoveries.

Like unfamiliar foods and customs, each movement across a dividing line was a moment of savor, a delicious complexity of regrets, changes, and, always, tantalizing possibilities. Although I've logged more crossings than I can count, I still delight in the details of transition, the signs and evidences that I am someplace that I wasn't before. Like the way that English dissolves into Spanish as you pass from California into Mexico. How the uniforms and the body language of the immigration inspectors transform from Mediterranean to Eastern Europeans as your train winds from Italian Trieste into the mountains of Slovenia. (p. 55)

Borders can definitely be places of enchantment, of discoveries and not only of the *other* but also of oneself as we try to embrace -at least for a time- a new population and question our own perspective of the *other*.

Studies of Identities

Identity formation...is a process that is fluid and contextually driven. If raised in Beijing and immigrating as an adult, one may “discover” that one is “Asian” for the first time at age thirty. Prior to immigrating, that same individual in Beijing may never have considered her racial or ethnic identity (C. Suarez-Orozco, 2004; p. 277).

As a high school teacher I recently had to fill out a recommendation for scholarship for one of my students. A question was: “Give three words that best describe the applicant”. Although I obviously knew the description was academia related, still was I to say: “Motivated, driven, reliable,” or “Hispanic, border crosser, bilingual”? Because, after all, each set of adjectives describes the student and each provides information about who the applicant is. It is important for the funds provider to know that the student is motivated, even driven and will likely study seriously to achieve an honorable level of scholarship. His reliability is a positive trait of his persona regardless of what he does. The fact the young man is Hispanic, is a border crosser, an individual who goes back and forth between Mexico and the United States and speaks two languages presents a no less

important picture of the student. His history and life experiences are likely to be quite different from the student born and raised in Wisconsin of old immigrants from Germany or Ireland. His bilingualism and border crossing experiences, living on both sides of the international line, show his exposure to multicultural (or at least bicultural) contexts. Both sets of answers to the question are valid, the perspectives are simply different, as identities are often negotiated according to the individual, the institutions and the circumstances; identities are not permanent, they are “not fixed or static entities, but are instead fluid, dynamic, weakly bounded, and subject to negotiation through the practices in which one engages” (DaSilva Iddings and Katz, 2007; p.302).

But identities are also what we want others to see, or probably whom we believe we are or wish we were. “People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are” (Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, Cain, 2001; p.3).

This part of the chapter provides a review of the major theoretical and research approaches in the literature toward an understanding of the concepts and processes of identity negotiation in multilingual contexts. The formation of identities encompasses a variety of aspects such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, citizenship and marital status and that we do not have one identity but various ones. The author however, chooses to concentrate on the research that is most directly linked to this study of teenagers living in Mexico but attending school in the United States. The perception they have of themselves maybe influenced by the identities ascribed to them, including their

linguistic and ethnic identities. Those are critical aspects that shape border crossers' identities and help understand who they are.

I organized the review into the following sections: social identity, language and identity, ethnic/culture and identity, identities as multiple and fluid, and identity on the border.

Social Identities

Hogg, Terry and White (1995) differentiate “identity theory” from “social identity theory” noting that: “Identity theory is principally a microsociological theory that sets out to explain individuals' non-related behaviors, while social identity theory is a social psychological theory that sets out to explain group processes and intergroup relations” (255).

Tajfel (1974; p.69) defined social identity as “that part of an individual self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership.” The author offered a view on social identity based on intergroup behavior. According to Tajfel (1974, 1981) every individual needs to find his place in society by creating a network of memberships; as we live in society it is important that as individuals we find a sense of belonging to groups (of various types) that fulfills us as each individual strives to “achieve a satisfactory concept or image of himself” (Tajfel, 1974; p. 68) which is achieved through a positive membership to the group. If the membership is negative, however, his/her self-definition will not be positive. The fact that the “individual is a member of numerous social groups and that this membership contributes, positively or

negatively, to the image that he has of himself” contributes to the individual self-definition. (Tajfel, 1974; p. 69).

If the individual has a negative image of himself, he will have a choice: either change membership, and adhere to a different group or review his perspective to the group to which he presently belongs. If leaving the group conflicts with some of his “acceptable social identity” (Tajfel, 1974; p. 69), or what is accepted in the society at that point in time, or values that he considers critical for his life, he will have to view his present membership with a different optic. As an example, parting from a Hispanic membership while residing in a predominately White or Black neighborhood may not be acceptable for that individual. He/she is likely to find more common ground with other Hispanics than with Blacks or Whites who might also reject him, like he might reject a Black or a White from his group. Therefore, he will either have to review his own perception of what is inadequate in the group he belongs to, or “accept the situation for what it is and engage in social action which would lead to desirable changes in the situation” (p. 70) in order for him to keep a satisfactory self-definition.

It is only when compared with other groups that membership in one group may appear favorable or detrimental for one’s own image or one’s own identity in society (Tajfel; 1974). “The positive aspects of social identity’ ...only acquire meaning in relation to, or in comparisons with, other groups” (p. 70), and the value of that membership is only valid within a certain cultural space as Berger explains (1966. Cited in Tajfel, 1974; p. 69): “Every society contains a repertoire of identities that is part of the objective knowledge of its members...Society not only defines but creates psychological

reality. The individual *realizes* himself in society –that is, he recognizes his identity in socially defined terms and these definitions become reality as he lives in society.”

Therefore, adhering to one group may appear favorable and be understood in a specific society but have no value in another one.

Tajfel’s social identity theory has been the foundation of much identity research which explores and describes individual group members’ enactments of their identities in the specific intergroup setting in which they find themselves. For example, Hurtado, Rodríguez, Gurin and Beals (1993) surveyed two groups, Chicanos and ‘Mexicanos,’ to find out how the “social identity of adults influences their attitudes about ethnic socialization” (p. 131). Breinlinger and Kelly (1994) explored how subgroups of women were identified using the three strategies of coping expressed in Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory; and more recently Hirose and Taresawa (2005) conducted a study involving close to 500 participants divided into twelve groups who had to choose between upward mobility and group membership based on how they perceived the level of stability between the dominant group and the subordinate one. The intergroup, in some multilingual context were identified and members of one of the groups were interviewed or surveyed about their views of their membership in the group and its social value. Researchers were trying to identify which variables in intergroup context affected group members’ attitudes and intergroup behaviors.

Shinnar (2008) studied a group of 17 Mexican adults legally present in the United States, all employed in the hospitality industry of Las Vegas in low-skilled positions. To collect her data, the author conducted face to face semi-structured interviews, and she used a grounded theory method for data analysis. As a group, the participants considered that they were discriminated against by their co-workers based on the fact they were Mexicans. Their identity as Mexicans was viewed negatively by their co-workers and customers, resulting in various forms of discrimination. “A male food server felt that as a Mexican immigrant he was treated as ‘a second-class citizen,’ and that in order to be considered a ‘good Mexican,’ he was expected to know ‘his place’ and not to aspire to obtain higher status positions at work” (p. 563), and treated poorly by customers who would sometimes treat him as a servant. The participants thought that Mexicans were hired for the jobs nobody else wanted. Although “everything is work there are jobs, physically demanding jobs, that regularly you see Hispanic doing,” a participant is quoted saying (Shinnar, 2008; p. 563). As a group, Mexican immigrants, or Hispanics (the author uses Mexicans, Hispanics, and Latinos interchangeably) are perceived as only able to do the menial and low-skill jobs and are poorly regarded by white folks. As a male food server points out: “We are one of the growing minorities in this country, and here they’re picking up on the negatives. They’re not thinking about the contributions...” (p. 564). Another participant adds that other groups disdain them and only view what some in-group members might be doing wrong such as being illegally in this country or abusing the welfare. Although the participants were not always clear as to which ethnic group

was discriminating against them, they were usually referring to Anglos and African Americans.

Consistent with Tajfel's theory, Shinnar (2008) found that her immigrant participants used three different paths to cope with the negative identity ascribed to them by their group status: individual mobility, social creativity and social competition. Individual mobility involved attempting to dissociate oneself from the group, leaving behind one's membership to the group. Some participants disapproved of those individuals who were satisfied with their small paycheck without trying to move up in the social ladder, even if it was a small move up: "... If I advance even a little....in the position it [would] make me feel good'" (Shinnar, 2008; p. 565) points out a male cook. Other participants were frustrated with Hispanics who do not try to learn English, preventing them from advancing and progressing in the United States labor market. However, individual mobility did not go without repercussions from peer group members who saw the desire to move upward as "sold out for being successful by American standards" (p. 566).

Other individuals used social creativity to cope with negative social identity. They changed their own interpretation of the attributes of the group (Tajfel, 1974; p. 70). They started comparing and emphasizing what they saw as more favorable in their group than in other groups. For example they focused on family values being more prevalent among Hispanics than among Americans. They also modified the way they looked at themselves and accentuated what they did well in their own opinion such as being good and hard workers. Or "others changed the dimension of Mexicans being in low-status positions by

focusing on the characteristics of these jobs, namely identifying them as honest or decent rather than undesirable, menial-labor jobs” (p. 567).

The last mechanism they used to maintain a positive self-concept was social competition; they engaged in social action to show a more favorable group identity. Shinnar (2008; p. 569) points out that although no large scale social action was ever mentioned by the interviewees, “some felt that they should engage in responsible behaviors to contribute to the eradication of the negative stereotypes associated with Mexican immigrants.” Participants mentioned that they should be self-sufficient and not rely on social welfare so that Anglo-Americans would see them in a more favorable way, and that Mexican immigrants should also learn English and pursue career progressions to change the negative perceptions Anglos have of them.

Shinnar (2008) concludes that two of the coping mechanisms – individual mobility and social creativity- were the most used in dealing with negative social identity.

As compared to Tajfel’s (1974) view of social identity theory, Norton Pierce (1995, 1997) places far greater emphasis on the role of power. She studied 5 Canadian immigrant women workers of various national identities (Polish, Czechoslovak, Vietnamese and Peruvian) and found that based on their identities as (powerless) immigrant women, they were consistently denied access to participation in interactions in their second language, English. Their identities were ascribed to them in direct link with their status as immigrants who were not yet proficient in English. The native speaker has a power over the non native as language is not only communication but also reflects

knowledge of a culture and its social traditions: “Thus language is not conceived of as a neutral medium of communication but is understood with reference to its social meaning” (Norton Pierce, 1995; p. 13). The learning process is influenced by the audience, or social sphere around the language learner. The author considers that: “Many have assumed that learners can be defined unproblematically as motivated or unmotivated, introverted or extroverted, inhibited or uninhibited, without considering that such affective factors are frequently socially constructed in inequitable relations of power, changing over time and space, and possibly coexisting in contradictory ways in a single individual” (12). In fact, while she observed and interviewed the 5 women, the author found that all the participants were highly motivated to learn English, but were usually uncomfortable speaking it particularly with people with whom they had an investment, such as a boss, customers at the work place, or individuals who shared the same professional status one participant had in her home country but did not hold anymore. The participants learned English while taking on different identities: one as a caregiver for the family and as a mother to her own children. She also took on that same role as a mother toward teenage co-workers, a situation where she reversed the power role. She became the individual who holds the power instead of the teenage native English speaker. In spite of her uneasiness when speaking English, she refused to be silenced. She created her opportunities to speak the language in a social sphere to stand her ground.

Norton Pierce’s (1995) study of 5 immigrant women in Canada and their struggle to become active participants in interactions in their second language is important for our understanding of identity formation. Contrary to other researcher’s theories which place

language learning entirely on the learner's ability, motivation, and fixed identity, but do not consider the influences of social spheres, Norton Pierce (1995) points out that individuals have multiple and changing identities according to time and space, and relations of power are critical in the development of identities. People's motivation for learning a second language and, therefore, taking power over their own identity, is affected by social relations of power. For the author, language and social identity are intertwined as the language learner does not learn in a bubble but in a social world.

Over time, social identities change, and the individual may go from being the "subject position immigrant" and not feeling like a legitimate speaker of English, to a rebellious actor who takes on the role of a multicultural citizen and develops a right to speak (Norton Pierce, 1995).

Language and Identity Formation

In her study of Puerto Rican children in New York, Zentella (1997; 2002) advocates what she calls "an anthropological linguistics" which "assumes that the way in which Latin@s (as the author writes it) in the United States speak English and Spanish cannot be divorced from socioeconomic and political realities" (Zentella, 1997; p. 322). The author also contends that speaking Spanish is usually associated with working-class and ignorant immigrants who do not value education as well as with academic failure because Spanish speakers are viewed as deficient (2002). Her research approach concentrates on ascribed identities the dominant group (Anglos) gives Hispanics based on

the type of language they use. Whether 'Latin@s' use Spanish or a "Latin@ variety of English" (p. 322) they cannot escape the label of ignorant individuals. Zentella's (1997; 2002) research is different from Norton Pierce's (1995), or Tajfel's (1974) as she does not draw on relations of power, or on group membership to study how language affects identity formation.

Zentella (1997; 2002) contends that the various dialects of Spanish, such as code switching are to be valued as they represent part of the identities of Spanish speaker immigrants. She rejects what she refers to as Hispanophobia from the dominant culture, which dismisses the verbal repertoire of Latinos (p. 323). In bilingual communities, it is common for individuals to switch from Spanish to English and vice versa, using a word here and there or a complete sentence. That way they perform "acts of identity" (Le Page and Tabouret, 1985. Cited in Zentella, 2002; 327) showing that they are part of two cultures, two nations, two languages, that "...they have a foot in more than one world" (Zentella, 2002; 327). The author considers that we hold language rules and purity too tightly, and that there are no pure Spanish or English and even though second generations of Latinos are accused of being incompetent in English and in Spanish, her stand is that languages reflect identities in a multicultural world:

Pejorative references to "Spanglish" (or to "Tex-Mex" in the Southwest) conjure up images of a language mish-mash, a deficient code spoken by deficient speakers and responsible for the academic failure. At the root of the problem is a view of languages merely as separate sets of rules, not as flexible symbolic systems of

communication that are enmeshed with speakers' identities and the communicative context (328)

In that sense, the identities of Latinos are not only created for them but also by them (p. 329). The mix of English and Spanish involves the creation of new words, such as *la troca* (the truck), or *anglicismos* (anglicisms), or *la computadora* (the computer) and that corresponds to the creation of a new identity for immigrants. Zentella (2002) describes it as based on the individual homeland version of Spanish mixed with the language of people (usually Latinos of other nations) they interact with in their new life in the United States.

However, because of intense critique of code-switching and maybe the lack of adequate Spanish of some youngsters some parents turn to English only considering it might make their children more American according to Zentella (2002) who then poses the question: can one still have a Latino identity without speaking Spanish? Zentella (1997; 2002) found that among the participants in her study, Latinos not born in the United States did not think so, whereas U.S. born Latinos did not view Spanish as indispensable part of their Latino identity (p. 332).

It would be interesting to know if the U.S. born individuals in her study were monolingual, and if that aspect did influence their perception of language and identity.

Zentella's (1997; 2002) research shows that in spite of speaking English, Latinos are looked down upon, like Norton Pierce's participants. In the case of Latinos it is not because they are denied the right to speak or have an accent, rather it is the type of

English they use. Zentella's (1997; 2002) research adds to the findings of Norton Pierce (1995) or Tajfel (1974) that the critical aspect of language standards and how the type of discourse an individual uses influences identity formation.

Indeed, language is an important factor of identity construction (Norton, 1997; Nieto, 2008; Goldberg, 2006). According to the language one speaks, or the level of proficiency, an identity will be ascribed by the society in which one lives (Williams, Alvarez, Andrade Hauck, 2004; Torres-Saillant, 2002). Some of Norton Pierce's participants (1995) felt looked down upon because of their accent; the type of language one uses may define that individual as a certain type of person or as belonging to a certain social group, with favorable or negative impact on one's social identity. We live in a society made up of institutions approved by its people by their adherence to them (Bourdieu, 1991). Language is not exempt. On the contrary, we sanction a discourse that is performed by an authorized member under the power of an institution. The same discourse done by someone else would be void of value (Bourdieu, 1991). A person must have an authority recognized by society to have his/her discourse perceived as valid. "The symbolic efficacy of words is exercised only insofar as the person subjected to it recognizes the person who exercises it as authorized to do so, or, what amounts to the same thing, only insofar as he fails to realize that, in submitting to it, he himself has contributed, through his recognition, to its establishment" (Bourdieu, 1991; p.116). The discourse of an immigrant with a heavy accent may not be viewed as legitimate as the one of a native speaker. The code switching used by children of *El Bloque* (Zentella;

1997) is not accepted as “proper” by educators. Language is not only the vehicle for idea transmission and communication it is also a medium to present oneself as a certain type of person, or be ascribed an identity by others. Language is also a means to transmit culture through generations (Zentella, 2002) as well as to unite different cultures who share a common language, such as to form the Hispanic community (Torres-Saillant, 2002) in the United States even if important differences exist within the community.

The work of Zentella (1997; 2002) and Goldberg (2005) demonstrate that in some circumstances ethnic group members may assert or withdraw from their ethnic identity through their use of language. “I ...observed many examples of very light skinned Mexican Americans using Spanish to assert their ethnic identity. In many cases, their language use provided the only clue to this aspect of their identity” (Goldberg, 2005; p. 223). Alternatively, they use the language to separate themselves from it and adopt the dominant culture’s language (Zentella, 2002).

Schechter and Bayley (1997) explore language socialization practices considering the meaning and symbolic importance associated with the use of either Spanish or English in everyday social sphere and in literacy performances.

The authors address the relationship between language and cultural identity concentrating on the methods used by 4 Mexican families (40 families in the original study) to try keeping their young children’s Spanish alive through family and school. In terms of allegiance, the four families (two Mexican born and two U.S. born) described themselves as Mexican or of Mexican-American cultural heritage (p. 513). Not

surprisingly, the Mexican born families viewed the Spanish language as an important tool to keep their ethnic identity and cultural tradition, but enrolled their children in a private English only school for its academic rigor, noting that the level of Spanish in the bilingual school was very poor. It was at home that Spanish was used for interactions between parents and children and to some extent between siblings but with some code switching.

In the second Mexican born family (one of the parents born in the U.S.) of modest background, the children also attended school in English at the request of the parents who insisted their children learn English; however, their children used Spanish at home with their parents, mainly because their parents spoke little English, even the U.S. born father who claimed English as his primary language. Although both parents claimed they wanted their children to maintain their Spanish, the father's view was that he should be the one to teach Spanish to his children and the schools to teach English: "I am the one who teaches them Spanish...I send them to school to learn English, not Spanish, if I wanted them to know Spanish I'd take them to Mexico, right?" (p. 527).

The two U.S. born families spoke mainly English at home, one of them sometimes mixing both languages, but no real effort was made to maintain Spanish within the home. In order to preserve some of their Spanish, the families sent their children to some "enrichment activities... addressing themes related to Mexican culture" (p. 537); however, the activities were held in English. The other family set aside one day each week that was dedicated to speaking Spanish only, and the children had some interaction in Spanish with their grandmother.

In the authors' study all the children were exposed to Spanish in various ways and amounts to keep in touch with their heritage and to form a cultural identity through an exposure to language. Each family felt a sense of "belonging to a larger Mexican or Mexican American culture, and they all were aware that Spanish maintenance is tied to participation in that identity" (p. 538). The participants use language to assert their identity through participation in different social spheres, be it family or social functions.

Ethnicity and Identity

Zentella (1997; 2002) demonstrated that one way to form identities is through the use of language. It does not have to be the standard and academically accepted language, but the one that represents who we are, like Hispanics who use code switching, mixing part of their homeland Spanish, with the local Spanish and with English. The dominant group, however, ascribes various identities to people who use code switching based on the language and ethnicity of the Hispanic people.

Ethnicity is quite an important theme in understanding identity. Ethnicity and race are terms that are often used interchangeably although they are different (Bernal and al. , 1990). "Race is sometimes socially defined on the basis of physical criteria (i.e., skin color, facial features), while an ethnicity is socially defined on the basis of cultural criteria (i.e., customs, shared history, shared language) (Cushner and al. Cited in Choi and Chepyator-Thomson; 2011). "Ethnic identity is the degree to which individuals perceive themselves to be included and aligned with an ethnic group" (Smith and Silva, 2011; p.42). Bernal and al. (1990) claim that maybe because assumptions about a

person's race can be noticed immediately, whereas ethnicity requires a more acute attention to details such as behaviors, beliefs and customs (p. 4), it is recognized later in life by children as it has been differentiated only later in the literature.

Another aspect of ethnicity is that it only applies in nations who have a multicultural diversity. In his epilogue of *Latinos Remaking America* (Suarez-Orozco; 2002) Torres-Saillant states that a person coming from Mexico, the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico is a Latino or a Hispanic only in the United States and not in his/her original country. In the United States, immigrants get "othered" through the assignment of an ethnicity: "Before entering American society from the native land, which for each distinct group corresponded to different socio-historical and geopolitical events, one did not see oneself as Latino or Hispanic but as Puerto Rican, Cuban, Colombian, or Dominican...(...)" (438). While in the United States, politically and ethnically because of their common language they are ascribed, and they take on as well the identity of Hispanics or Latinos. They did not have the ethnic marker in their homeland, and they may not have felt such a connection between nations before coming to the United States. Their new ethnicity was born with their new life in a new land. Still, they all come with their own social and racial bias as Torres-Saillant (2002) exemplifies with Dominicans who are absent from the literature written by Latinos, or by Dominicans who do not like Haitians with whom they share an island, and bring that attitude with them when immigrating to the United States.

In fact, he insists "on the need to separate Latin America from Latino Identity, especially given the legacy of racial inequality in countries south of the Rio Grande" (p. 436).

The next study by Rosalie Rolón-Dow (2004) addresses a different aspect of ethnicity; it demonstrates how some members of an ethnic group with its cultural norms are perceived by the dominant group who uses its own cultural lens to ascribe a negative identity. Using a black, critical feminist framework Rosalie Rolón-Dow (2004) gathered her data in a school site utilizing ethnographic methods. She presents how gender and ethnic components influence the images ascribed by and to Puerto Rican girls in the United States mainland. She considers that there is variability within and between groups, and that educational contexts play a major role in developing identities.

The author contends that American educators and students alike perceive Puerto Rican girls as overly sexual and not interested enough in their academics, their center of interest being more on boys, looks and relationships. “One of the dominant images teachers used to describe Puerto Rican girls was that of hypersexual girls. Both male and female educators characterized Puerto Rican girls because they spent too much time on their hair, make-up and appearance, and described the girls’ way of dressing as “provocative” and “overly sexual”. A teacher emphasized that cultural differences sometimes lead to misinterpretation, and, therefore, she should remain nonjudgmental but the author comments that the teacher still interprets with “the receiver’s cultural lenses” (Rolón-Dow, 2004; 16) and uses her framework of reference to pass a certain judgment on the girls. Another (male) teacher adds that there is indeed a cultural issue, that in Hispanic families girls marry young, and that judgment should not be passed (again), but that an eighth grader should not be forced into the world of an adult. The author remarks again that it is their cultural lenses and gender they use to actually pass judgment on these

Puerto Rican girls, and that is definitely true. This negative judgment of Puerto Rican girls in Rolón Dow's research is but one example of many instances in which Hispanics are ascribed negative cultural characteristics by non-Hispanic members of U.S. society (like Mexican immigrants in Shinnar's study, 2008). Still, Rolón-Dow (2004) presents an interestingly different view of identity, how the way an individual dresses, moves, does her hair or make-up are associated with a specific culture and behavior. The "receiver's cultural lenses" -or cultural background influencing the observer's perception- is also what allows people to become critical when children or women are exploited and abused in lands where beliefs in the role of women are quite different from ours. It is necessary to be accepting of differences but without losing that critical thinking. It is necessary to keep the capacity to make judgments on abuse and not accept it based on the idea that it would be cultural. Still, if we follow the logic of the male educator mentioned above, perhaps from the viewpoint of a Middle Eastern man, American and Western women in general are not behaving and dressing appropriately either. But the most important point could be the cultural lens of Puerto Rico men who quite likely do not perceive Puerto Rican girls and women as loose and hypersexual but "normal" according to their cultural lens. Identity is not only fluid; it is definitely context driven.

According to the author teachers think that: "schooling and sexuality [are] incompatible desires" (17) even if they provide double standards when promoting Cheerleaders who offer suggestive dances during games. Rolón-Dow (2004) suggests that schools and educators work together with students to explore identities and their stereotypes, and that professional development focus on the "contextualized way that

identities are co-constructed over time within webs of relationships” (p. 26). In fact the author suggests that: “attending to these issues would mean exploring how race/ethnicity and social class impact (mis)constructions of who and what is sexual and intellectual, both across content areas (e.g., history, literature) and in the particular lives and circumstances of students” (26). The concept of sexuality is viewed differently by (in this case) Puerto Ricans and by mainland Americans. Taking care of make-up, hair or dressing in a “provocative” way –wearing tight clothing or showing some cleavage are simply presenting oneself in a feminine manner for a Puerto Rican. This represents a perfect example of cultural divide between two ethnic groups who based on their cultural lens ascribe a negative identity to those whose customs are different.

Rolón Dow (2004) has addressed the fact that identities are constructed and that stereotypes must be challenged. The education of Puerto Rican girls should be the focus of schools and not the image the girls give of themselves; their sexuality should not be confused with their intellectual abilities and desire to learn. The weight of school failure should not be born only by the girls, like Norton Pierce’s (1995) participants whose success depended partly on power relations. Schools must do their part and not refute that identities are contextualized and constructed over time.

Rolón-Dow’s study demonstrates with somewhat painful clarity how cultural identities can be ascribed, based on the cultural lens of the other group. Ethnic and cultural identities can also be chosen –to an extent- by those involved as is the case of the participants in Rumbaut’s study (1996). The author concentrates on the influence

immigrant parents' have on their children's self-concept and psychological well-being. As children tend to identify with their parents and the parents' social circles, the family structure and the overall parent-child relationships affect various aspects of the child's life; the one of interest for this review is the ethnic identity the child selected based on the above criteria.

Rumbaut (1996) surveyed over 5000 eighth and ninth graders born outside of the United States or U.S. born with at least one foreign born parent. The sample represented teenagers of various origins, immigrants and refugees from Latin America, the Caribbean to Asia, and was recruited in California and Florida schools. Based on his findings, the author notes that there is no uniform assimilative track toward an ethnic identity formation, and the national origin plays an important role into self-labeling.

Rumbaut (1996) identifies five patterns that shape the ethnic identity of the participants:

- Gender is a determinant into self-identification: girls were more likely to use a hyphenated identity than boys were, except for male participants of Mexican descent who were very likely to identify as Chicanos.
- Acculturation influences how individuals view themselves in term of ethnic labeling: being U.S. born, taking U.S. citizenship or the preference for English over native language make for an assimilative self-definition (p. 167) that is, associating oneself with being an American.

- A feeling of discrimination will lead individuals to reject U.S. culture and take on a national-origin identity.
- The use of pan ethnic self-identities (p. 167) such as Asian, Hispanic, or Chicano follows a different logic. The author concluded that the location and nationality of the individual play a more important role than assimilation. As an example, it is extremely rare that people of Asian origin will use labels such as Asian or Asian American, whereas inner-city youngsters with a wide variety of minorities are much more likely to self-identify as Chicanos. However, the process is reversed for those attending upper-middle class private schools. [Rumbaut points out the surprising fact that the trend is different in California and in Florida. Individuals are more likely to use pan ethnic labels in California than in Florida].
- The relations between parents and children, social status and ethnic socialization also play a critical role in children's choice of ethnic identity.

Both Rolón Dow (2004) and Rumbaut (1996) provide an interesting perspective of ethnic identity formation, but a fundamental difference is that Rumbaut adds the family influence to the development of identities of teenagers as well as the notion that based on that parental influence he/she chooses the ethnic identity he/she is the most comfortable with in his acculturation process. It would be interesting to know how different Rumbaut's findings would be if he had used only children whose both parents were foreign born.

Acculturation means eventually 'becoming American,' which "takes different forms, has different meanings, and is reached by different paths" comments Rumbaut (1996; p. 168). The process may be difficult for teenagers and young adults who need to negotiate identities in different contexts and where their former identity may be negated to embrace a new "made in the U.S. A." label (Rumbaut, 1996; p. 134).

Nieto (2002) asks, "what does it mean to be an American?" While discussing ethnic identity –in the United States- it is critical to be asking that very question, for it is at the center of the complexities of identity formation experienced by immigrants and minorities. Nieto (2002; p. 105) tackles the issue wondering:

Is one an American by the mere fact of being born here? Can one be born elsewhere and still be an American? How many generations does it take? Do we belong here or there, in neither place, or in both? Does being an American have to erase or diminish automatically our accents, our values, our hues and textures? Where does our language, which sometimes is unacceptable both in our communities of origin and in the larger society, fit in? Do we have to "trade-in" our identity, much as we would an old car, to acquire the shiny new image of American? How can we reconcile the sometimes dramatically differing value systems, languages, expectations of appropriate behavior, and the contradictory activities that take place in our everyday lives?

Nieto, a second generation American has struggled all her life with the idea that she could not be American *and* Puerto Rican; she had to choose one or the other, the

“either/ors” as she call it. Although she thought the identity dilemma she had experienced would be solved in today’s generations, she discovered that it is not. Immigrants and minorities are still struggling to define and understand who they are, having to choose between sacrificing their cultural and language background and reaching assimilation. To counter this, the author proposes that every one *becomes American* rather than *be American* (Nieto, 2000; p. 111, her italics). By this she suggests that the term *American* needs to be redefined. It would mean creating another culture using the realities of life in the United States and “...searching into what is already there, recapturing the living and breathing cultures so apparent in our cities and towns, and in our schools and homes” (Nieto, 2000; p. 111). It would not mean taking various aspects of each culture, rather it would involve using in a positive manner what already exists around us, as what being an American really is.

Nieto’s (2002) work is crucial for it presents quite a different perspective on the options available to immigrants and minorities to adjust to life as an American. In her proposal, there would be no rejection of cultural heritage rather the adoption of an American life that already exists in facts and in its reality and not the vision a dominant group has of what America should be.

Identities as Multiple and Fluid

Like some previously mentioned authors, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) propose a construction of identities based on language and power; however, what

differentiates them is their use of a combination of two frameworks to create their own. They combine the negotiation of identities in discourse found among the social constructionists, with the “role of power relations” offered by the poststructuralists. Using this hybrid framework they address the process of language appropriation, and how it is used to construct and negotiate identities. The author’s approach is quite important for it is a sort of recapitulation of the points mentioned previously in other sections, but it also adds to their perspectives. For that purpose they propose five characteristics of identities developed below:

- Identities, discourses, and language ideologies: language and identity complement each other. Language creates an identity but also the ideology that one has about language and its role in our lives, such as the families in Schecter and Bayley (1997) who wanted to maintain Spanish in the family because it was part of their heritage.
- Identities as embedded within power relations: this is based on Bourdieu’s (2001) proposition that there is a standard type of language -accepted by part of society- viewed as the proper language. Thus, those who use it are the ‘good people’ whereas those who do not aren’t, and they usually are the lower social classes and/or immigrants. “A corollary of such linguistic ideology is that speakers of official languages or standard varieties may be regarded as having greater moral and intellectual worth than speakers of unofficial languages or non-standard varieties” (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; p. 15). Speaking proper English is critical for immigrants to “make it” in the United States, even for third graders to

be considered able to perform at grade level in subject topics other than English (DaSilva Iddings, Katz, 2007). In the same vein Zentella (1997) proposes the recognition of code-switching as a language of value even if it is not the language used by the dominant group. Norton Pierce (1995; 1997) demonstrates how power relations affect language learners and identity formation. Furthermore, it also shows the kinds of judgments people make about immigrants, and how one would want to avoid being judged like this.

- Multiplicity, fragmentation, and hybridity: identities are not only a matter of ethnicity or gender; it includes race, age, ethnicity, generation, sexual orientation, geopolitical local, and social status. According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) because individuals change and shift their positions depending on the situation, identities can only be considered in their varieties. Rolón Dow's (2004) students should have been considered in various settings as identities are contextualized.
- Identities and imagination: imagination plays an enormous role in the fabric of identities as it does not often match reality, thus the individual is left usually disappointed and in need of renegotiating his/her place in the situation. Pavlenko (2004) provides the example of Alice, an American student, who spends a year in a France she thought was bucolic yet elegant and sophisticated, but her dreams clashed with the reality of what France is. This new point is quite important as it demonstrates the importance immigrants and minorities may place in their ethnicity. Probably, most immigrants have a preconceived idea of the country they are moving to, ideas brought by television mainly that exposed a chosen version of

the country. They often become disappointed not necessarily because the host country is not good, but mainly because it does not correspond to their expectations, thus the comfort zone of the dream falls apart. It is the same for the children of immigrants who portray their country of origin as wonderful when in fact the parents are likely to have left because it was not. It is also what creates the need for pan ethnic and hyphenised identity; it is a way to be part of the new land while remaining in the comfort zone of the old one.

- Identity narratives: or how individuals create their own identities by offering narratives of their experiences as new immigrants. Pavlenko (2004; p.19) uses the narrative of 12 immigrants from the beginning of the 20th century and “shows that (...), Eastern and Southern European immigrant writers in the U.S. managed to rewrite the ‘national text’ and to present America as a nation of immigrants, rather than of white Anglo Protestants”. In the study she points out that:” for some immigrants then, as for these Jewish women, assimilation also involved secularization. For others, it involved a change of a religious affiliation, often from a marginal religious identity to a more mainstream one” (p. 43). Pavlenko (2004) mentions that the “rags to riches” was born at that time, the possibility for everyone to make it in the United States.

This identity narrative is a little like Nieto (2002) rewriting what it is to be an American, or to become an American.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) offered a perspective that illustrates quite well the various possibilities of identity formation through the use of language, how identities are negotiated through discourse with or in spite of power relations.

Like Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), Iddings and Katz (2007), or Norton Pierce (1995) Gee (2001) considers that we have multiple identities, that as normal people we have many of them according to the context in which we are and how others perceive us. “Being recognized as a certain “kind of person”, in a given context, is what I mean here by “identity” (p. 99). Again, the idea that identity is context-driven is prevalent. However, contrary to previously mentioned researchers Gee (2001) proposes 4 distinct types of identity an individual will adopt in specific circumstances, and in that same circumstance that individual may endorse more than one identity. Although Gee (2001) considers that an identity is negotiated, not all four types are always negotiable. I utilize Gee’s (2001) concept of multiple identities as a theoretical lens for analyses of my data.

Gee (2001) considers that identity can be deconstructed and reconstructed using four elements that may help interpret a person’s identity based on four processes. The author proposes four ways to view identity, or “what it means to be a ‘certain kind of person’” (Gee, 2001). The four perspectives are: *nature*, *institution*, *discourse* and *affinity*. Each identity perspective is built within a certain society and within a context, none of them work alone “Things are not trivial or important all by themselves. We humans make them trivial or important or something in between” (Gee, 2011; p. 92).

One's *nature identity*, according to the author, is a state that is developed through the forces in nature which means that the individual has no control over them. For example, none of us have any say into where we were born, in the United States, Mexico or anywhere else. Usually, nature identity functions only to the extent that it is recognized by either ourselves, others or institutions. It has to be important for someone: being born in the United States is important only because it is recognized by institutions and individuals.

The second perspective is of an *institutional identity*, which is authorized by authorities within institutions (Gee, 2001). The concept of authorization is based on "laws, rules, traditions or principles of various sorts" (Gee, 2001; p.102) that allow an institution to exercise its power. As an example, being born in the United States grants an individual U.S. citizenship because the constitution on which the country is founded states that anybody born on U.S. soil is a citizen of this nation.

The third perspective is of a *discursive identity* which comes from the recognition of "rational individuals" (Gee, 2001; p. 100) through their discourse and dialogue. Basically, it is the perception others have of an individual and the identity they ascribe to that individual. Here, the recognition is made by people who are not professional in assessing who the person is but rather use "everyday theories" (Gee, 2001; p.104) to ascribe an identity. For example, a person who speaks Spanish may be ascribed the identity of a Mexican or of an illegal immigrant by some people. Of course, one needs to take into account that any ascription made is based on the meaning or implications situations have in a specific society. It is a situated meaning as explained by Gee (2001;

p. 63) “meaning is a matter of situated meanings, customized in, to, and for context, used always against a rich store of cultural knowledge (cultural models) that are themselves “activated” in, for, and by contexts.” Although a discursive identity is often an ascription or how people respond or react to an individual; it may also be an achievement by the individual (2001; p. 104) who has been “recruiting” his/her discursive identity by working at presenting a certain identity through the construction of their identity. A person who is bilingual may be recognized as someone who has gone out of his/her way to achieve the status of a bilingual. Therefore, he/she is recognized as such through his/her achievement.

The last perspective is of an *affinity identity* focused on shared practices of people within affinity groups. The people belonging to the groups do not have to reside in the same area or have met one another, they may live on the other side of the world but they share some “distinctive practices” (Gee, 2001; p. 105) that allow them to have that affinity. For example, people who cross the border daily wherever they cross, but let’s say between the United States and Mexico, share some identical struggles regardless of their social status or where they live on the border.

The four identity perspectives proposed by Gee (2001) are tied to one another. Let’s take the example of a student Spanish speaker who has learned the language through his/her parents. That student’s nature identity is that he/she did not have any control over his/her native language. Because he/she speaks Spanish that same student may be ascribed the identity of an undocumented immigrant by some “rational individuals.” The institutions of the United States through their schools may require

him/her to enroll in ESL classes (English as a Second Language) before attending other courses. Finally, it is possible that this student may find some affinities with other Spanish speakers in his area or around the world with whom he/she will share common practices.

Gee's framework offers a similar perspective to Pavlenko in the sense that his framework tends to be oriented toward the individual rather than the group. Gee's last category –affinity- is based on groups, but it is the only one of his perspectives to which the concept of group applies, and yet this type of grouping is quite different from Tajfel's for example, or Rumbaut's. His four ways to view identity are not usually aimed at multilingual settings, minorities or immigrants but at any individual who is recognized *by others* to be a certain type of person.

Border Identities

Various aspects of identity formation that are critical were presented in the previous sections. Martínez (1994) a well-known historian of the Southwest offers another perspective on identity, one that is based on the proximity to the border, in other words an identity influenced by location. He addresses the identity of individuals who live along the Mexican-American border based on their exposure to the other nation. Martínez (1994; p. 61) classifies borderlanders into seven subgroups that involve both residents of the United States and residents of Mexico: *newcomers, uniculturalists,*

nationalists, biculturalists, binationalists, commuters and binational consumers. Then, he adds two categories that involve –at this point in time- only residents of Mexico: *transient migrants* and *settler migrants*. Martinez (1994) classifies the first seven subgroups into two categories: the national borderlanders and the transnational borderlanders. The individuals in these two categories are influenced by an ideological perspective; their “political” view, one could say, is what guides them into being engaged or not in their neighboring country’s society. The binational consumers being those who shop and consume consistently on the other side of the border; therefore, they are in the middle of the two categories:

National borderlanders “are people who, while subject to economic and cultural influences, have minimal or only superficial contacts with the opposite side of the border” (p. 60) and they include:

- Newcomers: people who have lived along the border for less than five years and who tend to follow the mainstream ways of life. With time, newcomers may shift into another category, according to their experience and reaction to borderland life.
- Uniculturalists: mono-cultural and monolingual individuals. For one reason or another, these people do not speak the language of the other nation and are not very interested in their culture either.
- Nationalists: share the same characteristics as the uniculturalists, but also consider the interests of their own country only and reject foreign influence.

Transnational borderlanders “are individuals who maintain significant ties with the neighboring nation...their lifestyle strongly reflects foreign influences” (p. 60) and they include:

- Biculturalists whose life and mindset are influenced by two cultures.
- Binationalists who share the same characteristics as the biculturalist, and their life is fully immersed into two societies, therefore, they are very open to world views
- Commuters “cross the border on a daily basis to work in the neighboring nation” (p. 61). Commuters abound from Mexico to the U.S. but are not as common the other way around, except for educated Mexican Americans. Anglos who commute to Mexico are in managerial positions and they usually are on short-term contract, therefore their exposure to Mexican life is short-lived (Martinez, 1994).

The last two categories – the *transient migrants* and the *settler migrants*- only involve Mexican people from Mexico. Martínez (1994) describes the *transient migrants* as those who just pass through the borderlands and move on towards the interior of the United States, whereas the *settler migrants* come from the Mexican interior but settles in the borderlands –on either side- for a period of time. Again, in these two categories, location is the factor that influences identity formation.

The identities of each of the individuals fitting any of these categories are necessarily different as their exposure to the other culture varies greatly, but they all have in common their proximity to the border, which influences their identities regardless. It

may reinforce the opinion they have of the neighboring country, or it may make them more aware of the world around them. A very critical aspect here is that the identity of the borderlander is not usually an ascribed identity, but one which individuals choose. Their location of residence is to an extent a choice, therefore, borderlanders decide who they are while living on the border. To what extent do they wish to learn about the other culture, are they willing to learn the other nation's language, are they willing (or able if they are unskilled workers living in Mexico, and unable to get a border crosser card) to cross and be more aware about their neighbor's culture and society? It is the individuals' involvement or lack thereof, which makes them who they are and which describes who they are. The subgroup or category they fit in is based not on other people's perspective or lens but on their own choice in their way of life.

Conclusion: The Fluidity of Identities

This part of the chapter provided a review of the major theoretical and research approaches in the literature toward an understanding of the concepts and processes of identity negotiation in multilingual contexts.

Tajfel's (1974) social identity theory that describes individual group members enactments of their identity in specific intergroup settings in which they find themselves was explored. Shinnar (2008) applied social identity theory in a research of immigrant groups in the hospitality industry of Las Vegas. Consistent with Tajfel theory, she found that participants used three different paths to cope with negative identity theory and

maintain a positive self-concept: individual mobility, social creativity and social competition.

Although Norton Pierce (1995; 1997) used aspects of social identity theory in her research of second language learners, she put much more emphasis on the role of power in negotiating identities. Because of their status as immigrants, Norton Pierce's participants were ignored by more socially powerful native English speakers, and treated as unsuitable English conversation partners. However, the participants refused to be silenced and took on different identity roles to create opportunities for them to speak. The role of power in identity formation is also emphasized in the Pavlenko and Blackledge's framework (2004). They link power to language considering that a certain type of language is proper because it is accepted by the dominant group who dictates what is acceptable and what is not, and those who do not speak that language are not the "good" people (Bourdieu, 1991).

The minority groups in Zentella's (1997; 2002) are subject to the same put down as their use of English is influenced by Spanish and vice versa. Their constant code switching is viewed as a flaw or a lack of mastery in either language and also points out to a class issue. To remediate the situation some families make sure their children learn the dominant language at school while maintaining a knowledge of their heritage language at home (Schechter and Bayley; 1997).

Identities are formed in various ways; they are not fixed, rather they are contextual. They maybe constructed around the language one speaks, or the ethnicity to which one belongs. Rolón-Dow (2004) proposed that the dominant group who uses its

own cultural lens to ascribe a negative identity and invariably associates group behavior to school failure negatively perceives members of minority ethnic groups. Rather the problem partly resides with the dominant group who judges others with its own culturally acquired perceptions. In such instances, identities are mainly ascribed to individuals.

People also take on identities when they self-label themselves based on their ethnicity and their level of acculturation (Rumbaut; 1996), but in the quest of an identity for individuals living in the United States, Nieto (2002) proposes that everybody becomes American instead of assigning that role to immigrant and minority groups. Everybody would be on the same pace and would work towards creating an American identity for oneself.

Identities are created, negotiated and ascribed but mainly fluid and contextual. Identities are also space related as demonstrated by Martinez (1994) who categorizes identities based on the proximity and interactions individuals have with the border.

Because individuals change and shift their positions depending on the situation, identities can only be considered in their varieties (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). An individual is not only a female, a Hispanic, a teenager, a well-off kid and a transnational she is each one according to the situation she is in. When she fills out an application or when she crosses the border she is a Hispanic; when she goes out with friends, she is a teenager and a female. It is what Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) call multiplicity, fragmentation and hybridity in identity construction. Identities are not stable in the sense that they shift as mentioned above but also with time, and experience.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

According to Glesne (2005) a qualitative approach is predisposed to assume that “reality is socially constructed” and the variables, complex and “interwoven,” are difficult to measure. The research purpose in this approach is for the personally involved researcher to interpret, contextualize, and understand a situation, an experience that cannot be scientifically measured, but rather that can be interpreted. For Stake (1995): “Standard qualitative designs call for the persons most responsible for interpretations to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgment, analyzing and synthesizing, all the while realizing their own consciousness.”

The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore and explain the negotiation of identities of American-born Mexican descent high school students in a US-Mexico border region. These students reside mostly with their parents and families on the Mexican side and, having legal American status, cross the border daily to attend high school on the U.S. side. This qualitative study is informed by social and historical perspectives and inspired by identities. This research emphasizes the identity of border crossers, and how they position themselves when faced with Americanization on the U.S. side and Mexicanization on the Mexican side. Because its purpose is to understand, interpret, and contextualize their experiences, this is a qualitative study.

Research Questions

How are student border crossers positioned –viewed, treated or addressed- in Mexico and in the United States? How do they negotiate their identities when faced with Americanization on the U.S. side of the border, and Mexicanization on the other side?

Research Context

The research took place in Isler, Arizona at the local high school as well as in Delicias, Mexico. Isler and Delicias are pseudonyms that I use to preserve as much anonymity as possible. The rural town of Isler is located right on the border with Mexico, south of any major city in the state. Isler is a small town of less than 50,000 inhabitants whose population is mostly Hispanics (close to 90%), and of low socio-economics (the median income is less than \$ 30,000, according to the 2010 Census). Delicias, on the Mexican side, is much larger and has a population of at least 4 times that of Isler, its sister city. Isler does not have any major industry leaving the town desperate for employment. Delicias, however, hosts many factories. At the present time, Isler's major employers are the school district, the local chain stores, the Port of Entry and the Border Patrol.

Isler is very remote, and not on the way to any place other than Delicias, so most tourists do not go there. Because of its location on the border with Mexico, Isler like many other border towns holds a negative reputation, making it unattractive to tourists.

As a port of entry with Mexico the town is often in the news for drug, or people smuggling, thus presenting the place as dangerous, and where the good people not interested in that type of business have no reason to visit.

Still, generations of families have lived in Isler as peacefully as in other non-border U.S. communities. Many residents share their lives between the two countries because they live on one side, and have family, or own a business on the other side of the 'line.' My own preliminary research showed that in the year 2008, out of about 1350 students who attended Isler High School, 20% of them shared their time between the United States and Mexico living in both countries, and that border crosser parents were usually middle-class people (personal observation and informal conversation with administrators and students).

Isler High School sits on a closed campus, with grass and rose bushes in the front, and various trees adorn the common areas where students hang around during lunch breaks. The six wing buildings are motel style, each class opening to a breezeway. That means we can all enjoy fresh air, light wind and sun in between classes. During class, it is nice to open the door and look at the outside while teaching and learning.

I chose to conduct my study in Isler for two reasons. First, I work there, and have done so for over ten years. I know the place and have a certain understanding of it and its people, as I will explain later on. Second, it is because I work in Isler high school that I became interested in border crossers' identities. I find it fascinating that people can cross a border between two very different nations everyday, and choose to lead their family life

in one and receive their academic formation in the other. Being a teacher in the research site and being known by most students made it a little easier to recruit, as the students were more likely to trust me to keep their anonymity and were more willing to open up; therefore that also allowed me a better access to candid answers from the participants. By the same token, because I am familiar with how things work around Isler and the border as far as students are concerned, I probably no longer see aspects of life that would be striking to a newcomer.

Border towns are quite different from the rest of the country. Isler is not a 'typical' American rural town any more than Delicias is a 'typical' midsize Mexican city. A lot of houses in Delicias have bars on their windows giving a sense of insecurity; some parts of town seem to have been built hastily, but maybe it is its lack of a downtown, of a *centro* that most Mexican towns have, that is missing. A nice colonial church lay by a plaza, a *zócalo*, but that is about it as far as historical monuments are concerned. However, Delicias has the same lively atmosphere that other Mexican towns have, with Mexican music blasting from the stores or houses, and street vendors selling food from their cart.

Both Isler and Delicias are influenced by their sister city across the border, and what it has to offer. Most of Isler residents have family in Mexico and some conduct their business in the sister city. The business often consists of a little store. Many Mexicans who live in Delicias are not originally from there, but they have moved north into the

area from southern states hoping to immigrate to the United States, or to give better opportunities to their children by offering them the chance to study in the United States.

Methods for Data Collection

Research Approach

This is a qualitative study based on the fact that it presents human behaviors and emotions that numerical data cannot express. Qualitative studies may hold some subjectivity as they involve interpretation of data usually consisting of observations or interviews.

I used a case study design to conduct my research. This approach is appropriate for the type of investigation I was interested in conducting because it provides an in-depth account and understanding of a situation, or a person and how it functions (Stake, 2000). The goal of a case study is not to generalize the findings to other situations, but rather it is to focus on a case, a situation and describe it. Thus, using a case study approach I was able to uncover, understand, and present the minute details of the lives and experiences of border crossers.

Population

I recruited a total of 19 participants. There were 3 focus participants (high school students) and 16 secondary participants that included 6 high school students, 6 educators and 4 parents. It was a sample of convenience as all the participants were recruited at my place of work.

Following the principles of a case study design, I used a small pool of primary participants. I chose to select only three main participants for, it allows for an in-depth account and understanding of their situations and helped me uncover and present minute details of their lives and experiences. By concentrating on a small number of participants, “the researcher is able to capture various nuances, patterns, and more latent elements that research approaches might overlook” (Berg, 2007; p. 285).

Students.

The students had to be border crossers currently attending IHS, between the ages of 15 and 18 years old and be U.S. citizens or Mexican nationals on a visa. No undocumented student (admitting I would have been aware of it) was allowed in the study. I selected three among the pool as potential focus (main) participants. Considering they had to write a diary on a daily basis, I had to select students who regularly did their homework, thus demonstrating dependability. Furthermore, as their parents had to be involved in the research process by participating in an interview, it was a more difficult

task than just having the students answering questions. I asked the 3 students I had selected if they were interested in writing a journal for a period of a month insisting that it may be a time consuming task, and also if they thought their parents might agree into participating as well. Within a few days, I had a positive answer from the 3 of them.

Although I had planned on having a fairly equal number of male and female subjects, I actually had a total of 3 females and 6 males of which one female and two males were main participants.

All the participants were Hispanics as they are border crossers with Mexico. Although I would have liked participants of different socio-economic backgrounds they were all middle-class.

Parents.

They were recruited on the basis that they were the parents of the three focus participants. Therefore, they were Hispanic adults, male and female. In one case, both parents participated in the interview; in the other two, only the mother did.

Educators.

To be included the administrators, teachers and counselors had to have worked for the district for a minimum of 4 years. The subjects included 2 administrators (one White

male and one Hispanic female) and 7 teachers/counselors (3 White females, 1 Hispanic female, 2 Hispanic males and 1 White male).

The study involved a vulnerable population, the teenagers who were my students or former students. To prevent any risks for them of feeling coerced, a school counselor did the recruiting. She emphasized orally that their participation was totally voluntary and that if they felt uncomfortable in any way, they were able to drop out off the project without any repercussions to their grades. I, the researcher also emphasized orally and in writing that their participation was totally voluntary. For additional safeguards, I am the only one who had access to data, and I also used pseudonyms for every participant to protect their privacy.

Recruitment and Consent Procedures

Recruiting students and teachers was more difficult that I had thought. I understood that for the students it might be a challenge as parents might be nervous to officially admit by signing the consent that their child lived in Delicias. The parents sacrifice a lot to make sure their children receive their education in Isler and are able to work in the United States later on. Regardless of the safeguards in place, there is always a risk. For the educators I was quite surprised. I had imagined people would be eager to participate, at least out of curiosity, but that was not the case. I do not think it was necessarily a lack of interest rather they had to make contact with me, and not vice versa;

according to IRB protocol, I could not go talk to them in person and ask if they wanted to be in the research as I had done in a pilot study. I think some teachers would have had very interesting points to make that would have enriched my study, but they did not volunteer.

Students.

The recruitment of students was done by a school counselor, as a safeguard to create a distance between the students and me. This also allowed them to feel like they could refuse to participate without discomfort. Because she had no investment in the study there would be no reason for her to coerce or influence students into participation if they did not wish to be part of the research.

The process for recruiting students was shaped by several realities. Any teacher, counselor or administrator who has enough interaction and discussion with students may become aware of which students may reside primarily in Mexico, and cross the international border every day or week to attend Isler High School. For example, it is common to overhear students talk about their weekend in Mexico, or the textbooks they forgot in Delicias, or they mention the long line at the border to explain why they are late at school. It is based on these assumptions that the school counselor and myself identified the potential participants.

I believe it is because I have the opportunity to teach the same students for multiple years and have been able to know them for a longer period of time that I have learned more about my students. Also, if one has a positive student/teacher relationship, students are more likely to open up. This may be why the participants were all from my classes.

Nevertheless, the first step in recruiting participants for this study was for me to create a list of students whom I assumed lived in Delicias and crossed daily or weekly to attend Isler High School. Once, I had received approval from the school principal to conduct this research, I presented the list to the school counselor asking her to contact the students. I also provided her with a flyer [Appendix G] that explained my study and that she could read and give to the students. The counselor also contacted students not enrolled in my classes, but whom she believed were border crossers, but those individuals never contacted her or me with the desire to participate in the study. The students who had known me for two or three years knew my genuine interest for the border and Mexico; therefore, they were more willing to participate in this research.

In order to recruit the students the counselor explained the main idea of the research, read and handed out the flyer to any student (she assumed to be a border crosser) who came to see her for various reasons, or because she had made contact with that particular individual. The flyer indicated that the French teacher [the investigator is known that way at school] was a doctoral student interested in the identities of student border crossers, and she was looking for volunteers to interview and audiotape. Some of

the participants may have to write a journal for a period of a month. However, the flyer indicated that the students were not obligated to participate in the study, it was their choice and they could even change their mind during the process and drop out. Their name would never be used, so nobody would ever know they participated in the study. The flyer also provided them with the investigator and advisor's contact information.

She, then told them that if they were interested in participating in the research she could add their name and contact information to the list made specifically for the research, or they could simply talk to the investigator, whichever way they preferred.

Because the students are often called to the counselor's office for school business, or visit on their own initiative, and the conversation took place in a one person office with a professional, the privacy of the students was respected and protected.

I handed out the assent form (in English and Spanish) to the students who were willing to take part in the study. The students and their family were given a few days to think over their potential participation.

Parents.

The parents were recruited based on the fact their child was a focus participant. I first asked them verbally through their child, then in writing. The informed consent (in English and in Spanish) was handed out to the student to take home to his/her parents. They had a few days to think it over.

Educators.

I recruited educators by email (Appendix H). I used the high school list serve to email every teacher and administrator. My email was succinct. I explained that I was doing a research for my dissertation. I presented my research questions and asked if they wanted to give up about an hour of their time to be interviewed as long as they had been working in the district for a minimum of 4 years. I did not provide a point of contact other than my work email, as in Isler High School everybody knows each other, so there was no need for further contact information.

The informed consent was handed out the day of the interview. All, except one signed the form the day of the interview. The other educator returned the form signed the next day.

Data Collection Procedures

I used three types of data sources: semi-structured audiotaped interviews, diary (journal), and audiotaped focus group discussion. My rationale for using these means of data collection is that each provides a specific type of information, which in conjunction with each other offers more complete and accurate data. They have a triangulation effect to check the validity of information.

The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues. However,

the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of *converging lines of inquiry*, a process of triangulation (...). Thus, any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode (Yin, 1994; p. 92).

The semi-structured interview is a commonly used and a well adapted source of data in case studies (Berg, 2006), as it involves asking about feelings, impressions or beliefs (Johnson and Christensen, 2004). Because it provides a better understanding of border crossers' identity, the interview is an adequate data collection strategy. Each student interview lasted about 60 minutes.

The focus group met once for about 90 minutes. I introduced some questions to launch the discussion. Then, at a later time I interviewed each focus group participant individually and privately with the same interview questions used for the other student participants.

The 3 focus student participants kept a journal (diary) for a period of a month where they recorded more or less daily the events of their day related to their identities and their lives as border crossers.

Each interview was audiotaped, so that the investigator reports accurate information, as the memory is not always faithful. The focus group meeting was audiotaped as well.

For each participant category, I proceeded as follows:

Main participants. 3 focus students

Data.

- Interview
- Journal/diary
- Interview with their parents

Interviews (Appendix A).

I used a semi-structured interview that I audiotaped. I chose a semi-structured interview format because I wanted the freedom to slightly diverge from the script to gather more in-depth and accurate data. As each participant's experience may be different, the interview must include some flexibility.

The audiotaped in-person interview was conducted in my classroom, at a mutually agreed upon time, after school. The interview lasted about an hour depending on the amount of data provided. I interviewed each participant one time, but I contacted the

subjects many times later on when I felt that some answers needed to be more elaborated. To contact them, I simply asked the participants if they could talk to me some more, at their convenience. I would do that while walking through the classroom to monitor and help students with their work. That way, the focus student's peers would assume I was helping him/her. Often time, the students would either suggest staying after class or come during my planning period or tutorial time, depending on their schedule. I would keep track of our meeting and conversation on their interview's transcript.

The interview was the first data collection I gathered. Then, they proceeded with writing their journal.

Diary.

Each participant was asked to write a journal in a notebook I provided for a period of a month, where they recorded daily (more or less) the events of their day. My guidelines for the participant were that the journal entries should include anything they found relevant to their life as border crossers such as:

- How they felt about lives as border crossers
- The activities they are involved in during or after school that demonstrate who they are
- Description of each border crossing (both toward the U.S. and toward Mexico)

I did not want to be overly specific. If I had guided too much the participants, they might not have given me accurate data, they might have screened out useful elements, or provided me with what they *believed* was important to me, leaving aside critical information. So, by providing a vague guideline, I ensured –I believed- more complete and relevant information. I specified, however, that they were not to use any (real) names to protect everybody's privacy.

I collected the diary at the end of a thirty-day period and contacted the subjects again to ask some follow-up questions aimed at clearing up some elements. Usually, I discretely let them know I had questions and we would meet after school on a day convenient to their schedule as previously explained.

Secondary participants.

- **2 students.**

Data. Interview (Appendix A)

I used the same interview and interview procedure that I applied for the main participants. My rationale was that those students share most of the same characteristics as the main participants; therefore, an identical interview protocol was appropriate. The interviews were audiotaped.

- Parents of the 3 main participants.

Data. Interview (Appendix C)

The parents of the main participants received a different, semi-structured interview that we scheduled together through their child. The audiotaped interview took place in their home.

- 5 other students.

Data. Focus group discussion followed up with an individual interview (Appendix F and A)

Focus group discussion.

The focus group was made up of five secondary participant border crossers. The participants each knew each other. We met for about 90 minutes at a time and date convenient to everyone, but after school for privacy and the sake of time. I audiotaped the discussion. I tried to make sure they would speak one at a time; still sometimes two would speak, and it made it difficult at the time of transcription. Our discussion was held in the office of the counselor who had recruited the students. No counselors were present at that time.

The focus group participants were homogenous, so they could discuss together their respective experiences as student border crossers. They shared the same profile, a family in Mexico and a guardian in the United States. They also shared the same school spirit, attended more or less the same classes, went to the same games and sport activities, but may have held different views on their lives and their future or their experiences and

perceptions; therefore, they complemented each other. The focus group was an important feature of this research because new ideas or different perspectives could have emerged from the discussion. “Using this approach, researchers strive to learn through discussions about conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological and sociocultural characteristics and processes among various groups” (Larson, Grudens-Schuck, & Lundy, 2004; Lengua et al., 1992; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Quoted in Berg, 2007). The focus group also guided the researcher into asking the right questions to the main participants as it provided another insight into the life of border crossers.

I decided for a short set of questions for the group simply to launch the discussion and stimulate reflection on the students about their experiences and point of views. I started with the simple question: “How is it to be a border crosser, to be crossing daily or weekly? Can you describe it to me?”

Within the next two weeks, I conducted one on one interviews with each of the focus group participants. The interviews took place in my classroom, at a mutually agreed upon time after school was over. The participants agreed for our interview to be audiotaped. I used the same set of interview questions as the one for the main border crosser participants. The data collected with the focus group members added to the triangulation aspect of data gathering.

- 7 educators from the high school and an administrator

Data. Interview (Appendix B)

I used a semi-structured interview for the administrators and teachers. I chose to use this interview format in order to allow me the freedom to slightly diverge from the script to obtain the best possible data. The participants received their written consent form at the time of our interview. I also explained the consent form to educators, ensuring that they understood their rights. Each participant signed. I had offered to give them the form when we scheduled our appointment, but everyone wanted it at the time we would meet, probably to save time. One subject returned it the following day after reading it carefully. Our interview meeting was set for after school when students were not likely to come in and see their teachers. One interview took place in my room, the other ones in the subjects' room or office. They all agreed to be audiotaped.

Data Analysis

The audiotapes were transcribed by the researcher in a timely manner, usually the same day or within 2 or 3 days. This process made it easier to recall any tape content that was difficult to understand.

Considering that “qualitative data analysis is conducted concurrently with gathering data, making interpretations, and writing reports” (Creswell, 2009), my analysis remained a work in progress until all data were gathered, so that there was enough information to answer the research questions. Of course, I had to go back to the main participants many times while analyzing the data as I discovered that I needed more input from them.

I analyzed the data using a constructivist worldview (Glesne, 2005; Creswell, 2009). It implies that elements of life are constructed by people conceived of realities. As a society we make a tacit agreement of what is acceptable in a said society and base our existence on it, and we create our own interpretation of reality of what is, and of what is not. “Although the reality we seek is of our own making, it is a collective making” (Stake, 1995; p. 102).

The information gathered –interviews, diary and focus group discussions- was coded according to case study protocol (Stake, 2000; Creswell, 2009). I organized the finding by themes and gave a complete description of the setting and of the individuals involved in the research (Creswell, 2009). To organize the findings by recurring themes, I reread the data transcripts countless times to get a sense of what the information meant, and what it brought to the understanding of my research. I compared the data gathered from each of the main participants, then compared them again with those from the secondary participants in a cross-case analysis. I only used and quoted the main participants and their parents; however, the data gathered from all the secondary participants were critical for triangulation and for understanding a pattern of experiences in student border crossers’ lives. Also, I looked for patterns of data commonly found in the literature, but I also looked for some new ones. (Locke, 2007).

For that, I also relied on “all the relevant evidence” (Yin, 1994; 123) even if some data contradicted rival interpretations, or did not match what I thought I would find.

The Researcher

I am a female immigrant from Europe. I have been working as a language teacher in the school where I investigated for over ten years. I have observed informally life in Isler for awhile giving me a certain idea (or maybe bias) of life on the border. I have gone to Delicias for shopping, to eat, or to visit friends, and the first few times to simply visit Isler's sister city. I speak Spanish, which is important in a border town, but also as a teacher it is necessary to be able to communicate with the numerous parents who do not speak English.

I believe that the fact I have been in the district for many years enhanced my ability to understand and be sensitive to the matters that interested me. I was aware that students attend the district because they are U.S. citizens but do not necessarily live within the district boundaries; it is a sensitive situation that I had to manipulate carefully. But, it was also an advantage to be an immigrant whose native language is not English, among students whose native language is Spanish. I think that in a way, it created a bond, an understanding that we may not be completely from here, them or me.

Ethical Considerations

It was my duty as a researcher to make sure any ethical issues were prevented. I did everything I could for the participants to remain anonymous using pseudonyms for each participant, adult or child. The participants themselves might have volunteered

information to their friends. Although the two male main participants were discreet about it, their friends –border crossers as well- did not appear to know about their participation. I also made sure (I bluntly asked the students) that each participant had a guardian or the parents owned a property in Isler- to avoid that they be in any trouble with the school district, if their identity had to be discovered in some way.

All of the student participants were my students. I strongly emphasized orally and in writing that they did not have any obligation to participate in the research if they did not wish to. My respect for them would remain the same if they did not wish to be part of the research. It was a totally voluntary participation with no compensation for services. And if they chose to participate their grade in my class would not be affected one way or another.

I also instructed the focus group members to keep confidential their participation to the discussion as well as whatever was said during the meeting and not to discuss it among each other after the fact to protect everyone's privacy and well-being.

Trustworthiness

To gather valid and complete information, I needed to choose well the participants. Students who knew me for having been in my class for over a year or two were more likely to open up to me. It is also my impression that because I am not originally from the United States students and parents usually view me differently; I am

not a “gringa.” I am more trusted to understand border issues and the difficulties non-U.S. citizens might encounter, most participants having Mexican parents. They also knew I spoke Spanish, went to Mexico regularly, and was genuinely interested in the Mexican culture and the border. Furthermore, my use of triangulation with various ways of collecting data allowed for reliable information.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This qualitative research aims at understanding the issues and experiences affecting the life, identities and education of U.S. citizens and Mexican nationals who reside in Mexico but cross the border daily or weekly to attend school in the United States. It explores how these border crossers negotiate or position their identity when faced with Americanization and Mexicanization.

This chapter begins with a brief reminder of Gee's (2001) framework of identity that I use to discuss the data. Then, I present the three main participants individually, dividing their presentation into 7 sub-sections to better introduce each individual: *the interviews, the journal, the basics of the participant, the family of the participant, interests and school, residency and border crossing experiences*, and finally *language, cultural identity and citizenship*. Each participant's presentation is followed by a discussion of the data using Gee's (2001) perspectives on identity.

I chose to provide as much information as possible about each participant even if sometimes the same quote appears in the data and the analysis of the data. However, I think that for the reader to have a more accurate picture of the three participants it is necessary to have the raw details first and then have those same details discussed.

Gee's Framework on Identity

The author proposes four ways to view identity that are explained more thoroughly in chapter 2. The four perspectives are: *Nature*, *Institutional*, *Discursive*, and *Affinity*. Each identity perspective is built within a certain society and within a context; none of them work all alone (Gee, 2001).

The *Nature identity* is developed through the forces of nature, therefore, the individual has no control over them. The *Institution identity* is a concept of authorization based on “laws, rules, traditions or principles of various sorts” (Gee, 2001; p. 102) that allow an institution to exercise its power. The *discursive identity* comes from the recognition of “rational individuals” (Gee, 2001; p. 100) through their discourse or dialogue. Finally, the *affinity identity* focuses on shared practices of people within affinity groups.

Because the four perspectives are so tied to each other, for the purpose of clarity, I chose to present the analysis of each of the three participants of this study following almost the same format as the presentation of data. Therefore, the analysis is broken down into the following sub-sections: *Oscar and his family, interests and school, residency and border crossing experiences*, and *language, cultural identity and citizenship*. That way, I use the four perspectives to deconstruct the identities of the participants within a specific topic and reconstruct them linking together the four identities as applicable to present a coherent picture of each individual

Icela Fimbres

An 18 Year-Old Female – U.S. and Mexican Citizen

The Interviews

Icela's interview. The interview took place in my classroom after school was over. We each sat at my desk and after a little bit of chitchat, I began by asking her demographic questions (such as her citizenship, the length of time she has been living in Delicias, or the location of her previous schools) before turning on the tape recorder and proceeding with other questions. We then continued with the interview that lasted for about 45 minutes. Once the interview was over, Icela filled out the descriptive protocol: "I am" and "I am not." In this section, the participant is asked to complete 8 to 10 sentences beginning with "I am" and "I am not." As an example Icela said: "I am speaking Spanish most of the time," and "I am not able to stay in Isler all day."

All along the interview Icela was a little shy. I felt that she was answering the questions truthfully and completely without avoiding any of them but she was talking very softly. It was actually difficult to hear her sometimes, particularly on tape, which made the transcription a challenging task. She acted like she had during some of her oral tests in my class, shy and maybe a little uncomfortable, or afraid to give the wrong answer even though she always gave me the impression that deep down, she knew her answers to be right.

Once we were finished, I told Icela I might have to ask her some follow-up questions to which she responded that there was no problem and to let her know. I thanked her for her time and participation and she left.

Mrs. Fimbres' interview. The interview with Mrs. Fimbres took place at her home in Delicias. After consulting with her mother, Icela suggested we do the interview right after school. She also suggested that she pick me up because in her opinion her house was a little far if I walked, which was what I was going to do. So, Icela and I met on the Mexican side of the border close to the port of entry and Icela drove me to her parents' home. It was a five minute drive. Her mother greeted me, and she led me to the living room where we sat. She offered me a glass of water that I declined, and after I plugged in the tape recorder we started the interview with the demographic questions; she informed me that she is a Mexican national who is authorized to cross to the United States and that she is a homemaker. Then, we proceeded with the interview, which we conducted in Spanish; Mrs. Fimbres does not speak English, her daughter told me, as I was asking Mrs. Fimbres if she wanted the interview to be in English or in Spanish. I had met her before, but I did not remember if she spoke English. I have translated all of Mrs. Fimbres' quotes into English. Icela has made suggestions on some of them, as her bilingual skills are much better than mine.

Mrs. Fimbres was very relaxed and upbeat during the interview, laughing very often, even interrogating herself about her own answers at times. She was always talking very fondly about her daughter. Considering that she told me her daughter had to lie

about her residency when crossing the border (as I explain in Icela's section *Residency and border crossing* experiences), I view Mrs. Fimbres as being truthful in her answers to my questions. Furthermore, most of the questions are more about impressions and opinions than facts per se; thus, any participant who would not answer truthfully would be lying mainly to him/herself.

When we were finished with the interview and I was ready to leave I realized I had forgotten to ask Mrs Fimbres to fill out the descriptive protocol: "My daughter is" and "My daughter is not." I decided to leave the paper with her and have her daughter give it to me at school the next day.

The journal

Icela made 37 entries over a period of a month and a half, writing on 20 different days usually with an entry in the morning and one in the afternoon. Each entry is about a page to a page and a half of a journal size dairy book that I provided. She offers a very detailed picture of her crossing everyday and of her emotions each time she goes through the border. It is a very lively journal to read: "I crossed the border at about 7:05 a.m. Good time," or "I was able to cross at 7:10 am. It was a close one!" She shows with humor how important time is when she crosses the border. "Good time" means she arrived early in Isler. "It was a close one" means she was running late that day but managed to make it on time. On another day, "I had exactly 3 minutes to spare when I arrived at school. Phew..." Sometimes she will also make some heartfelt comments

about border crossing: “To top it off, some jerks were squeezing into the line,” or “... otherwise you will end up stuck in one hell of a line.”

Her journal is written in a natural voice, with a fine range of vocabulary and no spelling or grammar errors that I could see. She does not use any Spanish even to report what Mexican agents tell her, because “Since the interview was done in English, I saw it fit to write in English as well.”

Basics of Icela

Icela is an 18 year old senior who was born in the United States but also holds Mexican citizenship. She has long brown hair, neither straight nor wavy really, or maybe it is but in today’s availability of hair products it is so easy to transform hairstyle that it sometimes becomes difficult to figure out the original hair type and color of a person! Icela is fair skinned and in her opinion she looks Mexican.

Icela indicates that she has lived all her life in Delicias, but has attended school in Isler since elementary. At this point she drives herself to school everyday, and sometimes she gives a ride to border crosser friends who also attend IHS. Icela has her own car, licensed in the United States.

Icela’s Family

Icela is the fourth of five children. She has one older sister who is married and lives south of Delicias in Hermosillo, Mexico, two older brothers and a younger one. Her sister and oldest brother have both attended and graduated from college in Hermosillo.

Only Icela and her younger brother were born in the United States, her other siblings were born in Mexico. Icela's parents chose American citizenship for her, based on economics: there are more opportunities in the United States.

MF: I got three [children] here [Mexico] so I thought the ones that I will have I will have them there [United States]...

SR: Why did you make that decision? It's a very interesting point. You wanted to have her there [United States] to attend school there, for the culture or for the opportunities...?

MF: Opportunities

However, all five children have attended elementary school in Isler. It is very likely that her younger brother will attend IHS.

Mr. Fimbres, Icela's father is from Delicias, whereas his wife was born in a small town further south but moved to Delicias when she was 13 years old. I have not met Mr. Fimbres, that I can remember, but Icela tells me he works in the currency trade business. Mrs. Fimbres is in her mid to late forties, a lively woman who stayed at home to raise her children she told me in her interview.

Icela told me that her parents are financially comfortable, which I can see in their house that in spite of not being pretentious, is nice with an automatic entry gate, which is not that common in Delicias.

Interests and School

As a student, Icela attends challenging classes such as Advance Placement in sciences and languages and maintains a 3.8 Grade Point Average. Advance Placement is college level classes offered to high school students. Her plans were to go to one of Arizona state universities in fall, but because her parents reside in Mexico she must attend the local college for one year to establish residency in order to enroll in a university as a state resident. I explain this aspect further in Icela's section of *Residency and Border Crossing Experiences*.

Icela does not participate in any sport activities according to her interview. Sports often imply going away for games and coming back very late or even sometimes sleeping away from Isler. Not participating in sports is not Icela's choice, but to a certain extent, her mother's. She is worried when her daughter does not get back home right after school as Icela explained:

IF: ... I have limited time to be here at school...I cannot be in sports or I cannot stay late for tutorial because otherwise my family will get worried...

SR: They give you a ride, or how do you get home?

IF: No, I have a car but they get worried.

SR: Ok...even if you tell them, I am going to get home later...they get worried?

IF: Yeah...

SR: And why is that?

IF: [Icela laughs]

SR: Is that linked to the border or they think you might misbehave or...

IF: Yeah, they think I am going to misbehave because...I don't know, I am here in Isler.

SR: Ok, ...oh, oh, they associate misbehavior with Isler?

IF: Oh yeah...[a certain discomfort from Icela, I think]

SR: Oh, but that's interesting.

IF: Yeah...

SR: They think the kids here misbehave?

IF: Yeah [a firm 'yeah']. In high school here.

Her access to extra-curricular activities is quite limited because of her parents' negative perception of Isler High School students as people who misbehave. Her parents are afraid their daughter might do that too. During our interview I asked Mrs. Fimbres to explain what her daughter had mentioned to me. I wanted to have her version of the facts to triangulate the data.

All of them no. Most of them are very wild, they have no boundaries, they drink a lot, they are very...they have bad manners, most of them. I don't like it...These days, women are more...no, women nowadays, no, no, no....it's ugly, ugly, ugly. I can't accept it....yes, and a lot of things, first of all sex. They are dirty minded.

At the same time Mrs. Fimbres considered that:

It depends on oneself, because one as a parent gives them foundations. It is possible that when they leave, they are alone and "ouah", but they return to what they were taught. The others don't. These children who are like that now [as quoted above], they do whatever they want, they get lost.

She believes that if a child has good foundations, he/she might stray a little but will soon be back on the right path, thus she is not worried about her daughter going away to college. A child who did not receive the proper foundation, however, will get lost in the sense that he/she will not find the right path.

Still, Icela is allowed to stay at school for tutorial, at least for some time. She wrote in her journal on November 18th, 2010: “School ended at 12:30 but I needed to go to physics for tutorial. I would’ve stayed longer but since I do not live in Isler, I had to go before my mother got worried.” It seems that as the semester goes by and the finals are approaching Icela stays longer at school. On December, 13th, 2010 she wrote: “Since I stayed for tutorial after school, by the time we headed for Delicias it was already 4:30pm” or sometimes she stays on campus much longer: “I cannot believe I left school at 8:00pm! My mom was freaking out, but after calmly explaining to her that we needed to finish a project, she calmed down and let me stay longer at school.” (December, 9th)

When Icela is not at school, she reads mainly in English, novels and fiction books she tells me in follow-up questions, but she also spends time on the Mexican side with her friend: “When we are bored we usually go to restaurants, bowling, to cafés, to places where they sell ice cream, or simply we get together in someone’s house to watch movies.” Icela spends most of her time in Delicias and Mexico. In general, she preferred it:

I think it's more lively over there, you see more people all of that. I don't like to spend too much time in Isler, Tucson or Phoenix, I like it more over there [Delicias] ... I stay in Delicias for the most part but sometimes I go to Hermosillo for example to visit my sister and all of that...family.

When I asked what made Delicias so much more attractive to her, was it related to the size of the city, she wrote:

Delicias is much more lively for various reasons. Yes, it is a bigger town [than Isler] but it has nothing to do with that. When you roam through the streets of Delicias, you will always see people walking around, children playing in the streets, and people selling things out in the open. I guess what I am trying to say is, people have more interaction between them. In Isler, it is very rare when you see someone walk by, let alone kids playing on the streets. The silence is insufferable.

It has to do a lot with how people behave. As I see it, people in Isler are so worried about sleeping early. It is like they live of the future. Here in Delicias, people love to enjoy the here and now. They know how to have a good time when given the opportunity. I have noticed how the majority of people in Isler are very reserved and introverted, whereas in Delicias people are much more outspoken and sociable. It would not matter if Delicias and Isler were the same size. The results would still be the same for me. At the end of the day, it is not the places, the food, or the entertainment that make Delicias more lively. It is about the people in Delicias.

One may wonder how Icela will address this issue when she is done with college and has a job as it is very likely she will work and live in the United States.

Almost all of her friends live in Delicias:

IF: I don't do anything here [Isler], just when I go visit....my friends are here...

SR: Your friends are here in Isler?

IF: Some...

SR: But you have friends over there [Delicias]?

IF: Yeah, yeah, most...all my friends are over there [Delicias] but some are here [Isler] too. When I come here [Isler] I don't do anything, there's not as many places to go, but over there in Delicias there's a lot to do....so I am over there more.

As Icela spends more time in Delicias, she knows more people over there and a lot of students she meets at the high school are from Delicias also, so her world turns around Delicias. Therefore, it is not surprising that all her friends are Mexican or of Mexican descent: "Isler IS very small, not to mention that it borders up with a Mexican town. I am pretty sure that every friend of mine is of Mexican descent."

Icela plans on working in the United States, which does not surprise her mother.

SR: Where is she going to work in your opinion?

MF : In the United States.

SR : Close or far from the border?

MF : Far, far...

SR : She wants to go away ?

MF : Uh uh...[she agrees]

SR : Only for a while ?

MF : For life I think...

SR : You think...because there are lots of students from Isler or from here who say “Oh Isler is very small, there is nothing”, they leave and they come back...They leave to discover the world if I may say, which is good in my opinion, but they come back.

MF : Yes, they come back.

Time will tell if Icela spends her entire life in the United States, or if she returns to Mexico, or to the border region. She is the 1st one in her family to be born in the United States, so it is difficult to predict what she will actually do.

Residency and Border Crossing Experiences

Icela has spent all her life on the border living in Delicias and attending school in Isler. Although her parents own a house on the U.S. side of the border, to insure residency for their daughter, Icela returns home to Mexico, to her parents every evening. Her parents do not live in that house; they own it simply to provide a legal address and residency for their daughter. She could stay in Isler, but Icela said “It is purely a comfort issue. I feel more comfortable staying at my house in Delicias because my family and all my personal belongings are there. I have no problem staying in Isler overnight, but personally I prefer staying in Delicias. It’s where my home is.”

It is quite possible that Icela's decisions are influenced by her mother's worries. Regardless, her house is right by the border, a mere a 10 minute drive away from school as a crow flies.

In her journal Icela paints a very lively picture of border crossing that matches my observation. One can feel her frustration at the ever-lasting line that can make her late to school if she does not leave home early enough. She must leave at least an hour before school starts, otherwise the line will be so long that she will not make it on time for her first class. It is a continuous source of anxiety for her:

I really have to stop waking up at 6:00 am. It leaves me little time to get ready and by the time I do, it's already 6:45 am. By 6:30 am, generally the line starts to increase, so what happens 15 minutes later? It's almost impossible to get on time to school due to the long line. I really thought I was not going to make it, and I was already planning on what to do in case they've closed the student parking lot. Luckily the line started to move in a rather fast way. When it was my turn to cross, the Border Patrol only asked me if I brought anything from Mexico and then scanned my passport. No "please, open your trunk," or "where do you live?" or anything of that sort. The Border Patrol had such an easy going attitude and dismissed me rather quickly. I like those types of Border Patrols. I had exactly 3 minutes to spare when I arrived at school. Phew...(Journal entry. December 2nd, 2010).

If she had arrived at school after the student parking lot had been closed, she would have had to find a parking space in the street making her even later to class but also potentially

have her receive a detention after school. The detention was put in place to deter students from being tardy, keeping in mind that those students who are tardy usually live close by and do not cross the border!

The problem for Icela is that on her way back home it is the same situation, the line to Mexico is long too, being checked by U.S. Border Patrols first and then once crossed, by Mexican agents. Icela explained the process here:

Before I left for Delicias, I made a stop for Walmart, so by the time I made my way to Delicias it was already 4:51pm. The line of cars that were going to Delicias was again ridiculous. The line ended on Walmart! After waiting for 30 minutes we finally got to the border. Since my friend was already tired from school and the physics tutorial, she was taking a nap. When it was my turn to go the Border Patrol asked me the same questions: “Any drugs or weapons? Do you have more than ten thousand dollars with you right now? Where do you live? Where did you come from?” And I answer the same way I always do: “No, no.” “I wish I had that money but I don’t.” “I live here in Isler.” “I just come from school.” And of course I got stuck on my words a little bit since these guys make me nervous. Since my friend was taking a nap, the Border Patrol on the other side woke her up just to check she wasn’t unconscious or drugged, I guess. After some whining on my friend’s behalf, they let us cross to the Mexican border [side]. Here is the thing with the Mexican border, every time a car crosses a certain section that car either gets a green or red light. If you get green, you get to continue and simply go, but if you get a red light, you need to stop and let the

custom officers inspect you and your car. Since there was a very long line I always deduce that every single car is getting a red light. Which in most cases it's always true. Well, just to help my day, I got a red light again. They asked me if I had something to declare all the while they were inspecting the inside of my car and trunk. After all of this, they politely said: "Have a good afternoon" and they dismissed me. I got home at 6:38pm, and still no matter how tired I was, I needed to start with my homework. (Journal entry, November 18th, 2010)

Adding to her frustration and her anxiety about arriving late at school, she is also quite nervous when dealing with Border Patrols or border agents. Her nervousness is linked to her residency, to the idea that the U.S. agents could "catch her" living in Delicias and not in Isler as border crosser students are supposed to do.

In order for her to attend a U.S. school she has to actually reside in the state. The school district adheres to the state open enrollment: any student from anywhere within the state boundaries may attend our school district. However, a student residing in Mexico does not have that privilege. This residency requirement is enforced by the Arizona Department of Education but not by border agents or even the Border Patrols. The border agents' job is only to make sure a person is allowed to enter the United States and not where they spend the night. However, it has happened [oral communication with a former student border crosser] that some agents have threatened to take the passport away from student border crossers if they kept crossing everyday when they were supposed to live in Isler. Therefore, some border crossers may fear it could happen to them when in all actuality agents do not have that power, and I think most agents probably do not care,

having their own job to do. It is possible however that border agents could report the situation to the Department of Education who could investigate as they have done in Ajo, Arizona (as mentioned in the previous chapter) as that may be a source of anxiety for student border crossers.

The frustration Icela experiences everyday waiting in line often makes her wish she lived in Isler. On November 30th, 2010 she journaled “I woke up at 6:00am. Why? Because I was very cold! I kept thinking this morning that if I lived in Isler I wouldn’t have to wake up so early and I would be able to stay in my warm bed” or on December 8th, 2010 “I wish so hard that I could live in Isler.” If she lived in Isler she would not lose time waiting in line twice a day, and also not have to lie about where she physically lives. This apparent wish to live in Isler is only for practical reasons, because she does prefer living in Delicias as previously presented. In her morning crossing to the United States if she is asked where she is heading Icela answers that she is going to school, and it is fine! It is assumed that she has spent only that specific night in Delicias.

I crossed the border at 7:03 to be exact. As I made my way to the student parking lot my phone rang. It was my friend from physics class asking if I had crossed the border already. When I said yes, she then asked if I could pick her up at the border. Of course, knowing that earlier the line was moving slowly I presumed the line had increased by then. I looked at the clock estimating that I had more than 10 minutes to spare. I went all the way back to give her a ride. Many of my friends who live in Delicias arrived late that day due to the slow

moving line. I keep asking myself that wasn't it obvious that a lot of students from Isler lived in Delicias? And if it was so, why would they delay the line so much? ... (Journal entry, November 22, 2010)

It is incomprehensible to Icela that Immigration agents would purposely delay students on their way to school as the agents are very well aware that a lot of students who attend Isler's schools live in Delicias.

And she had to lie the following day, on November 23rd, 2010 crossing into the U.S.:

... I noticed the border patrol on that particular line was a woman. Of course, not to be sexist or anything but women tend to be more serious and stricter. Needless to say, I am scared of those women. When it was my turn she asked me the same questions they always do, however she did it with no smile and no intent to chitchat. She even asked me what I was doing in Delicias, if I lived in Isler and I said I was visiting my sister and stayed at her place for the night. Of course, that is not true since my sister is married and pregnant and she is living in Hermosillo. The woman just nodded and released me ...

Her mother put it this way:

What I say is that we paid to have her in the United States, so what I am saying is that everything is legal. By, why can't she live here? ... For example, if she tells them "I am going to school", and they ask her, "Where do you live", "In Delicias." Ouah!! They will take her...I don't know ...They will punish

her....”And why are you coming here?” “Oh, I am staying with my ...” She has to lie. I don’t like that.

Those lies are a source of frustration for Mrs Fimbres who does not understand why her daughter cannot attend school in Isler while living in Delicias. They have a residence in Isler and pay property taxes. Those lies are troublesome for her and her daughter. Icela said in her journal entry of November 22, 2010 about her wait crossing the line: “I keep asking myself that wasn’t it obvious that a lot of students from Isler lived in Delicias?” In fact, Immigration Agents or the Border Patrols have to know that countless students live in Delicias; some obvious indications are that the same students cross the border about every day and there are a large number of cars with Mexican license plates pulling over in front of the schools in Isler.

Icela’s nervousness about crossing and being late is exacerbated the last day of the finals right before Christmas break.

Ok, so since I couldn’t afford to be late. I headed early to the border. There was no line but after 15 minutes passed, I concluded I got the slow row. The slow row is a term used to describe when a certain border patrol is in charge of inspecting every car and last at least 3 minutes with each car. “Slow row” is just an improper term, we call it. I do not know the proper term for that. So when it was my turn, expectedly, the Border Patrol in shift took 3 minutes to inspect. Inspect is kind of misused because they make it look like they are inspecting in order to complete the 3 minutes. After this the border patrol closed the line and guided me to customs. I was slightly panicked, not because of what they may suspect but of

being late to school. Since, it was my last day of finals I really didn't want to arrive late. A rather old officer politely asked me to turn off the car, get my purse, and step out of the car. When I did so, the officer started the inspection. He opened all doors, the trunk and the hood. He did this thrice. Yes, he checked the same places three times. I even got scared and started to think that maybe my car had something bad that I did not know of. Of course, that was just me panicking because when the officer was done with the third drill he handed me back my keys. The inspection lasted about 15 minutes. By that time, it was a little before seven so I stepped on the gas and hurried to school. (Journal entry, December 17th, 2010)

Icela's journal entries suggest that this sort of anxious delay in her morning crossing from Mexico to the U.S. is a frequent issue.

Language, Cultural Identity and Citizenship

Spanish is Icela's first language, the one she learned through her parents. It is also the language she uses the most: "I speak Spanish at school, home, Delicias, Isler and whenever I can," and "I speak English with my teachers," but she emphasizes "I speak Spanish most of the time." Icela's parents do not speak English nor do they understand it, so the language of home is pure Spanish even if her siblings do understand English. It is also in Spanish that she will address most people she does not know (in Isler): "I do [address people] in Spanish and if they do not understand I speak in English," however, if the person is a White Anglo individual "I will go with English."

It is at school in Isler that Icela learned English. Based on my observation Icela is definitely bilingual and does very well in her English class. As part of the interview Icela rated her English and Spanish skills. On a scale of ‘excellent,’ ‘very well,’ ‘fair’ and ‘poor,’ she rated her English speaking and writing skills as ‘very well’ and her reading as ‘excellent.’ Although in her interview when filling out the description protocol “I am” and “I am not,” she indicated that she was “often confused with English vocabulary.”

Table 2

Icela: language skills

1. How well do you speak Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
2. How well do you write in Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
3. How well do you read in Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
4. How well do you speak English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
5. How well do you write in English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
6. How well do you read in English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor

(The student’s answers are in bold)

Her Spanish skills on the other hand are excellent for speaking and reading, but she does not feel her writing of Spanish is excellent, saying instead in her interview that she writes Spanish ‘very well.’ Her mother disagreed with that evaluation.

SR: How is your daughter’s level of Spanish? When she speaks?

MF : Fair.

SR : When she writes ?

MF : Very bad, right ?

SR : In your opinion?...[the mother was looking at her daughter, like asking for her opinion]

MF: Fair

SR: And her comprehension when reading?

MF: Bad.

SR: And her oral comprehension?

MF : Fair [she laughs]

Icela's mother views her daughter's skills as low, (Mrs. Fimbres has other children who received their education in Mexico and that is likely her point of reference), and of course, as she pointed out, Icela has learned Spanish through her parents, she has not had any formal education in that language:

SR: How did she learn Spanish?

MF : By hearing us, because she did not attend school.

SR : She did not take Spanish classes ?

MF : Just one year, in 1st grade.

SR : One year here [Delicias] ?

MF : uh, uh. [she agrees]

Yet Icela prefers communicating in Spanish:

I prefer to have a conversation in Spanish because it is the language spoken at home and it's the one I feel most comfortable with. Even though I am able to

...speak in English, I can't help but be aware of the foreign accent I have when I talk in English. That is something that makes me depend more on the Spanish language.

Her preference is not only based on the fact that it is her home language but also on the fact that some people might see her English as deficient. Obviously, having an accent does not mean a person does not master a language; however, it may diminish the confidence the individual has for using the language. Still, as far as writing is concerned, Icela prefers using the English language:

On writing, I depend heavily on English. Since, I have been attending school in the USA since an early age, I was taught to write more efficiently in English than in Spanish. There are many things in Spanish I have no confidence in writing, and thus explain my preference to write in English.

Considering she has received her education in English and not in Spanish, she feels more comfortable expressing herself in her academic language than in her heritage language.

Still, Icela considers that the use of English in her life is limited.

IF: Well, it's [English] important for school, but outside of school I don't use it as much

SR: So, you don't find it important for...

IF: Just for school.

When I asked her how important English was in Isler she replied: "Yeah, it's very rare to see a person that does not understand Spanish as well. Yeah, it [English] is important

because we are in America, but I think Spanish overtakes English.” The importance of the English language for Icela is only related to the fact it is the United States and that she associates English with this country.

Spanish on the other hand is “very important” [for her] because I mostly speak Spanish all the time” Icela tells me, but she also views it as important in Isler: “Oh very important [Spanish] because we live in a border and so lot of people from Mexico come here, so yeah the majority of them are Mexican who speak Spanish, it’s going to be some influence...” Because of our location on the border Spanish is critical, but because we are in the United States English is important; Spanish is the language of everyday business whereas English is the language of education therefore of formal life.

Icela used English exclusively in her journal and in our interview. She did not use any code switching (using two languages in one same conversation), so in follow-up questions I asked her whether she code-switched at other times. She said: “Yes, very much. In fact, when I am with other bilingual friends, we never stick with one language. We alternate between Spanish and English very often,” adding that it is in informal conversations that she uses code switching. I should specify that when I asked her the question I used the term *Spanglish*, knowing the word is widely used around Isler, and not “code switching”. Later on, I decided to have her provide me with a definition of *Spanglish* and I also inquired if she used it for specific topics of discourse:

Spanglish for me means when you unconsciously mix up two words from the Spanish and English dialect, that mean remotely the same thing, and make it into

one word. I do not use *Spanglish* for certain topics, but there are specific words I always say in *Spanglish*. For example, the word ‘parking’: In Spanish ‘parking’ translates to ‘estacionarse,’ however, for some reason probably because of my parents example, I use the word ‘parkear,’ which is not a word in either Spanish or English, but still makes sense to someone that is familiar with both languages. Also, the word ‘car:’ many think that ‘carro’ is a correct translation for ‘car’ but that is not so. The correct translation is ‘auto’ or ‘automovil.’ ‘Carro’ is another word that is frequently used in the language of *Spanglish*.

Icela’s definition and examples do not match what she had implied previously as being *Spanglish*, as “never sticking to one language (and) alternat(ing) between Spanish and English very often.” In practice, Icela uses what some see indeed as *Spanglish* where there may be some code switching and the modification of the lexicon or the words of a language (Ardilla, 2005).

Part of being an American in Icela’s opinion is speaking English, the language of the country: “... if you want to be here in America you should learn the language of America” and “They were born in America, they speak English and they live here, that’s American.”

Being an American requires language, birth within the U.S. and living in the United States. Therefore, according to her own definition, Icela is not currently an American, but when she moves and attends a university or work in the United States, she will become one. She might also lose her Mexican identity.

In that sense the English language is important in Icela's perspective because it is a step towards being American. I suppose then, that a person born and raised in the United States but who would not know English could not be considered American. I also asked her "So somebody who is going to emigrate here as an adult cannot be considered an American, if they get naturalized?" to which Icela answered: "No...no, I don't think so."

Her definition of what an American is, is also part of what triggers her consideration that she is Mexican: "[I view myself] as a Mexican. Even though I was born here I consider myself a Mexican because I've lived all my life in Mexico, I am just crossing the border, I don't consider myself American; I wasn't brought up here." The fact she was not brought up in the U.S. is a major factor in Icela's opinion that she is not an American, that her life is in Mexico and that she crosses the border from one country to another without an emotional attachment to the country where she is going.

I asked her if culture was involved in what it is to be an American or a Mexican whether one can take on the new culture to become American but she thought that "it depends on the person, what they consider themselves, but if they consider themselves Americans if they have that, they were raised here and all that..." So someone raised in the American culture may be an American if they feel they are, but adult immigrants who become U.S. citizens never really become American on the basis they were not raised here in the United States. Being an American legally or on paper is quite different from being an American at heart, and it is also what Icela means. She does apply the same

logic as to when it comes to be a Mexican: “They were raised there as well, they grew up in Mexico, all that.” Therefore, to be a Mexican one has to have been raised in Mexico, and speak Spanish. And that is the case of Icela.

I asked Icela if we should choose whether we are American or Mexican or can we be both? Again, Icela mentioned that self-identity is what matters: “I think you can be both and that depends on the person-- what they consider themselves, and what they actually are, so we can be both”. For Icela, again being an American or a Mexican is based on who we feel we are rather than on citizenship. .

I found interesting that during her interview, Icela told me she was not a dual citizen with Mexico and was not planning on becoming one. Being a U.S. citizen was sufficient for her. Considering that she claims identity as a Mexican, it was surprising. So, in a follow up question I asked her about it and she replied:”I apologize if I said such a thing. My mother assured me that I do have dual citizenship since I was born.” Surprisingly she was not aware of her dual-citizenship! It may simply be because she did not need it at this point in her life, so identifying herself as a Mexican was enough for her. Her lack of interest in her Mexican citizenship is actually a perspective in the same direction as to her view that claimed identity is more important than the citizenship itself, so in that sense she did not need to be a Mexican citizen to feel she was one. It is also worth noting though, that after I asked Icela if she was a dual-citizen, she thought about it enough to check with her mother.

When I asked if she saw herself more as a Mexican, American, Mexican-American, Chicana, Latina, Hispanic or ...other, she answered:

IF: Hispanic....[she seems to question it]

SR: I mean, I don't know maybe you don't see yourself as any of those...

IF: I think Hispanic because I was raised in Mexico but I study in the United States, so I kind of know the culture and all that, the language also...

SR: So, because of that you consider yourself a Hispanic, because of the culture here...

IF: Yes, I am involved in both cultures but mostly... my education and all that I have it here in the United States...

SR: So, when you are in Mexico, you don't consider yourself a Hispanic?

IF: Yes, I do. Yeah, yeah, sure.

SR: Ok. If you had to fill out on a form between Latina, Hispanic, Chicana...what would you choose?

IF: Hispanic.

SR: Hispanic?

IF: Yeah.

SR: So, how do you define Hispanic?

IF: If you were born in the United States but you are from Mexican or another Latin American Heritage. That's what I consider Hispanic.

SR: And what do you consider a Latino/a ?

IF: Oh, that's a hard one. I only know Hispanic.

SR: No, but that's fine, that's fine. If you don't know, you don't know. And how would you consider Chicano/a? What is it in your point of view?

IF: Oh, I don't know.

SR: That's ok.

Now, Icela switches perspective and sees herself as an American, but who is also a Hispanic. She does not mention being American in the above quote but she implies it when she takes on an American perspective where everyone has a recognized ethnicity, be it Hispanic, Black, Asian, Caucasian...The ethnicity Icela chooses for herself is also based on the fact that it is the only one she knows within the categories which might apply to her: Hispanic, Latina, Chicana or Mexican-American.

Her mother, however, does not see her daughter as a Mexican but rather as an American. She compares her daughter to her other children who were born in Mexico and attended school in Delicias; she views Icela more independent, therefore, more as an American than as a Mexican: "Her culture is American. As a Mexican, no, that's the way she is. She is very liberal...like she is very independent, and they are not, they depend a lot on me. It's very different." Contrary to her other children, Icela does not rely on her mother as much, making her seem more of an American individual than a Mexican one. Now, Mrs. Fimbres puts herself into the American perspective of hyphenated identity and she gives her daughter her own version of it:

MF: ...because she is more from over there, her culture is more from over there than from here...American-Mexican [she laughs]

SR : Mexican-Amer...

MF : American-Mexican... The other way around, because she is more from over there than over here...because she has the culture from over there and not from here.

For Icela's mother the fact that her daughter is more American than Mexican makes her an American-Mexican rather than a Mexican-American, the version used in the United States.

As it is tempting to wonder if someone who lives in one country and crosses to another is an immigrant or not, I had to ask Icela if she considered herself to be one. I think she was surprised by the question: ".....N....no.....why, I don't understand....," then she told me: "I don't consider myself an immigrant". Her definition of an immigrant goes as: "When you are Mexican and become American through naturalization." Of course that does not apply to her as she was born in the United States. However, Icela points out that some people might see her as an immigrant based on her looks.

SR: When you go to places (in the U.S.) other than Isler, how do you think people see you?

IF: As an immigrant [she laughs]

SR: As an immigrant?

IF: Yes, they think I am Mexican because I look like one.

Interestingly, Icela associates Mexican to immigrant, as if anybody who looked Mexican was an immigrant, as if a non-White whose family has been here for generations would

be an immigrant because they have the features of their ethnic heritage. Another reason why people could see her as an immigrant is her accent. One of the reasons she prefers to speak in Spanish rather than in English is also due to the idea she has that people could see her as a foreigner: “Even though I am able to speak in English, I can’t help but be aware of the foreign accent I have when I talk in English.” Her accent, very light in my opinion, is a source of self consciousness, an awareness that people may not see her as an American, therefore, she switches to Spanish the language that brings her confidence.

Her self-consciousness might be related to experiences her mother has had with retailers in one of the major cities in the state where employees had treated her badly and disrespectfully because she is Mexican and does not speak English:

IF: Some people at the mall and all that, they treat you differently because you look Mexican, kind of racist ..., they are not as polite as they are with another, a White person ... they don’t treat you politely or they get mad at you sometime. They start arguing with you, or even shouting at you because you are Mexican...

SR: You have encountered those situations?

IF: Yes, when they start arguing with you. When, my mom has experienced it when someone started shouting at her in English because they knew she would not understand it, so...

This is the only occasion that Icela mentions when her or her family was treated differently based on their ethnicity or language. In that particular occasion, her mother was treated as a foreigner, specifically from Mexico. In fact, Icela never makes any

reference to any racist or preferential treatment on the part of the agents while crossing into the U.S. In the same manner she does not make any preference for immigration or custom agents from Mexico or the United States. Interestingly enough Icela mentions Mexico and the United States in the same impartial manner in her journal writings:

... some cheerful Border Patrol asked me if I had anything from the U.S. and after telling him no and that I just came from school he asked me if I was passing my classes."Of course!" I said but he just smiled and let us pass. On the Mexican border it was the first time that I've gotten a green light in a long time. (Journal entry, November 6th, 2010)

Icela mentions that the U.S. Border Patrol is nice and when she reaches the border of her homeland she simply calls it the Mexican border. All along her journal she presents facts but she does not include herself in either country. She detaches herself from both. In her diary and her interview she does make a definite separation between both Mexico and the United States, but mainly she does not make particularly positive or negative comments about either one. She presents the situation, the facts of a student border crosser life. She does not usually refer to Mexico as home. She crosses the border to go to her home but not to go to her home country. In her journal, the only time she shows a certain emotion is when she said on November 6th, 2010: "The nice Border Patrol greeted me with a "good morning!" Border Patrols who do that are always the most appreciated when we cross to America. I was in the United States by 7:05am. Very good!". Here 'America' and 'the United States' are almost like the promised land!

The separation Icela makes between both countries is recurrent when I ask her if Mexican history should be taught in U.S. border town schools: “Not really because it’s an American school so, why make it different from other American schools in the country” and about being off on September 16th the Mexican Independence day (because of a large rate of absenteeism the school district loses a lot of money) “No, because that’s an American school.” Icela does not see Isler and Delicias as a single entity separated by a border but two towns separated by different customs, cultures, and people.

Discussion

Icela and her Family

Icela’s parents chose to have their daughter born in the United States. Icela did not have any control about her birthplace. That she is a U.S. citizen is not something she chose. Therefore, according to Gee’s (2001) framework, Icela’s nature identity is as a woman, as an American and as a daughter.

The nature perspective on her identity is that her citizenship was outside of her control. We can say, however, that Mr. and Mrs. Fimbres constructed a discursive and institutional identity for their daughter by “assisting” or “helping” nature in choosing her place of birth. From Mr. and Mrs. Fimbres’ perspective it was their choice to have their daughter in the United States, to provide Icela with opportunities. Gee insists that the four perspectives are tied to one another: “It is crucial to realize that these four perspectives

are *not* separate from each other. Both in theory and in practice, they interrelate in complex and important ways” (Gee, 2001; p. 101). By giving birth in the United States, they insured Icela the institutional identity of an American citizen with its rights and obligations. Her citizenship was granted by a set of authorities, an institution that is the government applying the constitution that has authorized her to be a U.S. citizen based on her place of birth. Her position as a U.S. citizen is officially endorsed by all agencies of the country. And that is exactly what her parents wanted: the recognition of her U.S. citizenship each time she crosses the line to enter the United States.

The fact she is a female was a ‘decision’ from nature and not hers or anyone. However, her gender as a female will have consequences on her discursive identity because of the expectations “regular folks” (such as her mother, as will be presented later on) in Mexican society might have of her as a woman. Her female nature identity will turn into a discursive one where she is ascribed a discursive identity based on the discourse of others regarding her role as a female.

In regard to her family, Icela confirmed what I could see, that her parents are financially comfortable. This discursive perspective on the family’s identity is recognized by people, me among others, because of what we see: an automatic entry gate- not that common in Delicias- a comfortable and apparently fairly large home, and the facts that Icela has already gone to Europe, and she has a lot of electronic gadgets. Her parents have worked to gain that financial ease; it is their achievement, which also affects the recognition of the daughter by other youngsters, as a well-off individual.

Interests and School

As most students who take Advanced Placement classes in high school and maintains good GPAs', Icela planned on going on in one of the state universities; however, because her parents reside in Mexico and pay their income taxes there, Icela would be considered an out of state student with the high tuition rate it implies. The institution that recognized her as a U.S. citizen by birth, is the same one that denies her, the same access to higher education as other citizens of this country. She is given the status of an outsider by that same institution. However, she is allowed to enroll as an in-state student at the local community college and after one year of attending she can claim state residency and go to a state university [in an oral communication with a counselor, I was told that some local community colleges do not look as closely to residency status of U.S. citizens as the state universities do, making it easier for U.S. students whose parents live abroad to be considered state residents]. She could attend a Mexican university because she is also a citizen of Mexico, but it is very difficult to enter a public university in Mexico, due to the high competitiveness among the best students. As far as the private universities are concerned they are expensive, and the Mexican education system does not offer extensive scholarships like the United States does. Therefore, it seems practically impossible for Icela to attend a Mexican university, the institutions of each country affecting, one way or another, the possibilities individuals have. However, Icela's true reason for not attending a Mexican university is that she wants to continue her education in the United States:

The reason why I decided to attend higher education in the U.S. is because, that's one of the main reasons why I was born in the U.S.: opportunity and education. It was my mother's decision certainly however, I always knew I was going to study in the United States. Mexico was never an option because I never imagined it as one. My mother was a heavy influence in that decision but, even now, I prefer going to the United States for a higher education.

It is her education, received in the U.S. that will give her opportunities to have a good job as her parents wanted when they decided to have her in the United States.

Icela is involved in Mexican and American cultures, usually following Mexican traditions for family and home, and American traditions for education and work, negotiating an identity that fits into both cultures. The Mexican institutions that are created based on "laws, rules, traditions or principles" (Gee, 2001; 102) guide how Icela leads her life: Icela cannot participate in sports or stay late after school because her parents are worried she might behave badly as Isler High School students do, girls in particular, according to Icela's mother who stated: "These days, women are more...no, women nowadays, no, no, no.....it's ugly, ugly, ugly. I can't accept it ..., yes, and a lot of things, first of all sex. They are dirty minded..."

Therefore, Icela will be ascribed the identity of a "bad girl" that is, a girl who drinks and has sex, according to Mrs. Fimbres' perspective, and not following the rules of the Mexican institution where women have a more traditional role. This role is authorized by its unwritten rules and laws that people follow as part of the tradition.

Mrs. Fimbres, a woman, wants her daughter to behave as a respectful woman, as viewed by the Mexican establishment. At the same time, though Icela's identity as a young woman is also discursive in the sense that it is other people such as her mother, her peers, her neighbors, individuals who are familiar with her, who might recognize her as "bad girl," or at least that is what Mrs. Fimbres fears. If Icela spends too much time in Isler she could take on the discursive identity of a girl who drinks and sleeps around and be recognized as such. So, to avoid running the risk that her daughter might take on this identity, Mrs. Fimbres encourages her daughter not to participate in extra-curricular activities. By obeying her parents Icela satisfies their desire that she achieves and be ascribed the identity of a respected Mexican woman, even though her mother says her daughter is more American than Mexican. Of course, Icela is still a teen, and as such may at time slip, but as her mother mentions a child who has received a good foundation, will get back in the right path.

Not participating in extra-curricular activities reduces an affinity identity opportunity for Icela who cannot interact with other students who do share some common interests in sports or even school sponsored clubs. It is only during school time that she is able to create affinities with others on the United States' side and she does. Like most at the top of their class students, Icela chose to attend classes that are known to be the most difficult, and she also chose to study French for her four years of high school although she had no obligation to do so. Icela and her peers share common 'practices', such as working very hard to complete demanding assignments, to keep up with high grades, they also share the stress associated with it as they worry about how much scholarship money

they can receive to attend college. These students are very motivated about their education. Icela and her peers' affinity is concentrated in their will to excel.

According to Gee's analytic lens (2001), the affinity perspective most often applies to people who do not know each other, usually live in different parts of the country or the world but share one common interest and participate in specific practices: "What people in that group share, and must share to constitute an affinity group, is *allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices* that provide each of the group's members the requisite experiences" (Gee, 2001; 105. Italics from Gee). But the author (2001; p. 109) also mentions that sometimes people "see their participation in certain practices as what gives them an identity as a particular" member of a certain ethnic group; being of a certain ethnic group "in this sense becomes a sort of "lifestyle" that creates affinities with those who share the lifestyle." Icela prefers spending her time in Delicias rather than in Isler not because people in Delicias are Mexican, but rather because of how they live their life. Her preference is based on people's behavior and what they choose to participate in: "Delicias is much more lively for various reasons ... When you roam the streets of Delicias, you will always see people walking around, children playing in the streets, and people selling things in the open. ... It has to do a lot with how people behave ... it is about the people in Delicias." Icela shares the same interests as other individuals in Delicias, she may not know the people she sees in the streets but like them she enjoys the social gathering aspect. She shares a certain lifestyle with them that creates an affinity. She identifies with them creating for herself an affinity identity.

“Isler IS [Icela’s emphasis] very small, not to mention that it borders up with a Mexican town. I am pretty sure that every friend of mine is of Mexican descent.” If Icela’s friends are Mexican or of Mexican heritage it is not because she does not want to associate with people of other ethnic groups, but rather because not only does she have an affinity of lifestyle with Mexicans, also it is about the only ethnic group she is able to meet in the Isler/Delicias area. Isler being a small town away from any major city immigrants other than Mexicans, have never come there, so the population is mainly Hispanic with some Whites and very few Blacks or Asians. The friendships Icela has made are based on whom she is able to meet at school or through friends and neighbors in Delicias. In a way, her affinity of lifestyle is also an affinity of proximity, in the sense that Delicias is her only option outside of Isler. If Icela was exposed to a larger city with more opportunities to go out, like when she goes to the university, she might find affinities with people who are not Mexican but whose lifestyle she enjoys because she is surrounded with opportunities to “do things” and see people and life all around her.

Residency and Border Crossing Experiences

Icela’s residency requirement is within an institutional perspective as an institution authorizes it. In order for her to attend an Isler public school, she must reside in this country and not in Mexico regardless of citizenship; however, that requirement is also part of a discursive perspective. Icela must show that she lives in Isler, therefore, be recognized as a U.S. resident not only by immigration officials who represent an institution, but also by ‘regular folks’ (Gee, 2001) in Isler. That is an important point

because some Isler residents do not realize that numerous students who attend the Isler School District reside in Mexico. Of course, for anyone who drives past the schools at the beginning and end of day one will see many cars with Mexican license plates, but for those who do not, it would be a shock, and that may create an uproar in town, as Isler people might think Mexican people use the school district services for free. Isler residents would ascribe the institutional identity of Mexican citizens to student border crossers like Icela. In informal settings, I have heard some teachers at the high school commenting that students coming from Delicias should not attend IHS. I have no doubt that in these teachers' mind, the students are Mexican citizens. I have also read a blog on the local newspaper's website where an Isler resident was commenting on the money spent by the school district, on students who come from across the line.

Still, there is not much school officials can do beyond what they are already doing that is asking for *three* proofs of residency from the student's parents or legal guardian. To prevent a chaotic situation, mainly for themselves of course, student border crossers are discreet about their status as border crossers. Icela's own identity is affected by the discourse of other people the "regular folks", the border crosser such as Icela must, therefore, negotiate a discursive identity of an Isler resident. In fact, in recent years, there have been occurrences when for a matter of a few weeks, parents would drop off their child one or two streets away from the school apparently because there had been complains by some local residents that students from Delicias were being dropped off at school. Families showed a low profile to avoid being detected as border crossers. Icela's car is licensed in the United States; therefore, that specific situation did not affect her.

When crossing the international line Icela's negotiation of her identity appears even more clearly. She told an immigration agent that she spent the night at her sister in Delicias when that was not true: "... she [immigration agent] even asked me what I was doing in Delicias, if I lived in Isler and I said I was visiting my sister and stayed at her place for the night. Of course, that is not true since ... she is living in Hermosillo". Here, Icela has to negotiate an institutional identity by making sure the agent believes her identity as an Isler resident as required by law, but she must negotiate a discursive identity as well, as the agent is using her job training to figure out if a crosser is being truthful, as well as her knowledge –or lack of- as a private citizen of Isler who might know how things work. As a border agent, she is aware that each day children and teenagers cross into the United States to go to school. Even if the child or teen does not mention his/her actual destination, it is obvious considering the time of day and the regularity of the crossing. In the afternoon, many of the same people cross back into Mexico. As a private citizen of Isler the agent interacts with people and has to be aware of life in a border town.

In my opinion, in the example mentioned above the agent is becoming a private citizen when asking Icela why she spent the night in Delicias when living in Isler. As an individual with her personal opinions who is aware of life in a border town, the agent questions Icela's institutional identity as an Isler resident, although she recognizes her as a U.S. citizen. She is not able to enforce residency, but doubts Icela's identity.

Icela wonders why crossing the border is made to be so slow and complicated when officials are aware of the situation: "... I keep asking myself that wasn't it obvious

that a lot of students from Isler lived in Delicias? And if it was so, why would they delay the line so much?” Icela is frustrated that not only she has to lie but also she may be delayed to school because of the line when everybody knows what is going on. Like her mother who does not like the fact her daughter has to lie when she crosses the line, Icela does not like taking the identity of an individual who must lie, particularly that every agent working at the border is aware of the situation.

Everyday, Icela, like other student border crossers, is ascribed the identity of a potential smuggler when she enters Mexico and is asked if she brings over \$10,000 or guns and ammunitions. Everyday when she comes into the United States she is also perceived as a potential criminal. Of course, any one who crosses to either country goes through the same process; however, this is an everyday occurrence for Icela and other student border crossers. She is ascribed the discursive identity of a potential smuggler by agents who based on their training and common sense, know that anyone may be a criminal.

What stands out in Icela’s experiences of the border is her constant frustration and worry about being late at school. She could stay in Isler overnight that would simplify her life “... I prefer staying in Delicias. It’s where my home is.” But her home is in Delicias, therefore, she must go daily through the hassle of border crossing to attend school and run the risk of being late to school. Here, Icela has no choice but to negotiate an identity that is based on others, that is an institution that decides where one should live to attend a

school and the regular ‘folks’ who have a take on who may attend the local schools through elections.

Language, Cultural Identity and Citizenship

Icela was raised in a Spanish speaking family, and it is how she has learned the Spanish language. She acquired English through her education on the U.S. side of the border. The fact that her family is from Mexico, and she was raised there was not her choice, rather it was “a state developed by the forces in nature” (Gee, 2001). She had no control, obviously, over her family background. Her identity is negotiated through the choices of nature in the same way that she has to position herself according to her parents’ decision to send her study in Isler, United States, rather than Delicias, Mexico. In that sense, all these decisions have been made for her by others: either nature or her parents, but none by Icela herself.

In fact, Icela’s parents, her mother in particular had a strong influence over who Icela is now. ”It was my mother’s decision [to have her in the U.S.]...my mother was a heavy influence in that decision [attending university in the U.S.]” At this point, the direction Icela’s life is taking has been decided by others; therefore, she negotiates an identity based on other people’s choices and what they want for her. It is not to say, that Icela disapproves of those choices: “My mother was a heavy influence in that decision, but even now, I prefer going to the United States for a higher education.”

It is thanks to her education in the U.S. that Icela was able to reach a bilingual status. She has achieved learning both languages, and she may be recognized by most

'rational individuals' as a bilingual person through her discourse. Because all her education was done in the United States she is more proficient in English when it comes to writing: "Since I have been attending school in the USA since an early age, I was taught to write more efficiently in English than in Spanish." Although she is recognized as an American citizen by the institutions of the United States, she may also be recognized as such by others thanks to her oral and writing skills.

It also appears that Icela wants to negotiate a discursive and an affinity identity through her learning of English. Icela's view is that as a person who lives, to an extent, in the United States she should learn English: "...If you want to be in America you should learn the language of America." Here, Icela wants to be recognized by others as an American, or at least as someone who respects the expectations of others, that as a resident of the United States, she learns the language most people speak. She also negotiates an affinity identity when she speaks English, "the language of America" as she endorses "a set of distinctive practices" (Gee, 2001; p. 105) that speaking a language involves.

Whenever she has the chance, it is in Spanish Icela speaks: "I speak Spanish at home, at school, in Delicias, in Isler and whenever I can." And it is the language she is the most comfortable using. "I prefer to have a conversation in Spanish because it is the language spoken at home and it's the one I feel most comfortable with." Because she speaks Spanish often and in her opinion has an accent: "I can't help but be aware of the foreign accent I have when I talk in English," she may also be ascribed the identity of a non-native of English, of a foreigner, of a Mexican. "Rational individuals" away from

Isler may ascribe her, the identity of a Mexican based on her language but also on her appearance. “They think I am Mexican because I look like one.” The fact that Icela looks Mexican leads her to being ascribed the identity of a Mexican by people who associate Mexican looking to being a Mexican which may actually be what Icela wants in most situations.

Regardless of what “rational individuals” may ascribe her, Icela self-identifies as a Mexican “[I view myself] as a Mexican. Even though I was born here, I consider myself a Mexican because I’ve lived all my life in Mexico.” Icela probably considers that she has affinities with other Mexicans with whom she shares experiences and participates in specific practices (Gee, 2001) even though she crosses the border everyday to the United States. As I mentioned earlier I view her affinities more with a way of life that a certain type of people have rather than Mexicans.

Regarding the United States, Icela’s position is simply that, because she was not raised there, and does not share a set of distinctive practices with its people, she is not an American. At most, she is a Hispanic because “[You are a Hispanic] if you were born in the United States but you are from Mexico or from another Latin American Heritage. That’s what I consider Hispanic.”

On the other hand, her Mexican raised mother, and a “rational individual” ascribes her daughter the identity of an American. “Her culture is American. As a Mexican, no ... that’s the way she is. She is very liberal... like she is very independent.” Mrs. Fimbres uses a Mexican or Mexican border town perspective to ascribe an identity to her daughter, whereas “regular folks” in the United States use an American perspective to

ascribe an identity to Icela. It is important to differentiate Isler from the United States and Delicias from Mexico. Isler and Delicias being border towns, the perspectives on being a Mexican or an American are more vague and flexible. Mrs. Fimbres uses language and behavior to ascribe her daughter an identity. In her opinion Icela's skills in Spanish are quite low and her behavior is to an extent that of an American. She is not badly behaved like some Isler girls, viewed by Mrs. Fimbres, but she is independent like American women usually are. Maybe, it is the identity that Mrs. Fimbres wanted for her daughter, an independent young woman with a solid Mexican upbringing.

Icela is a dual citizen of Mexico and the United States, which she was not aware of until she participated in my research. She originally believed she only was a U.S. citizen; that was not an issue for her. She was fine with the idea of being legally American because she does not seem to have any desire of having a dual identity or a dual citizenship either. Icela is Mexican at heart, and for her that is what matters. Of course, holding a U.S. citizenship is a position that was authorized by institutions through their laws, being born in the United States gives automatic citizenship, and the fact that it is officially sanctioned provides Icela with the opportunities she has to study and later on work in the United States. And, that is why her parents decided to have her in the United States. It does not seem to be a point that Icela realizes, even though her identities are centered on the choices her parents made for her 18 years ago.

Rogelio Nuñez

A 15 Year Old male - US citizen- Not a Citizen of Mexico

The interviews

Rogelio's interview. The interview with Rogelio took place in my classroom after school. Rogelio came to the appointment we had set with, if not enthusiasm, at least a real desire to be participating in my study. I sat at my desk, and Rogelio sat on a chair right by the tape recorder that was on the desk. He was comfortable and cheerful. I asked him how he was doing, and we moved on right away to have him answer in writing the questions: "I am" and "I am not." There were eight to ten lines for each that he could fill out with a word or two each, or a sentence and he did not have to fill out all of the lines. For example, on the first line he said: "I am bilingual," and "I am not a Mexican citizen." Then, we proceeded with the interview.

During the entire interview, Rogelio remained relaxed and would quite often laugh. He generally understood well my questions and did not ask for clarifications, but I sometimes did when I wanted him to provide a more complete response. Later on, when I was analyzing the data, and discovered that I needed more information, I asked Rogelio follow up questions. All along, Rogelio sounded very truthful; I did have the feeling he was trying to answer the best he could.

When we were finished I thanked him and, Rogelio told me to let him know if I had more questions for him later on.

Mr. and Mrs. Nuñez's interview. The interview with Rogelio's parents was scheduled to take place at 6:00 pm in Delicias. I set up the appointment through Rogelio, who consulted with his parents. He had given me his parents' address but they thought it was more practical for me if they picked me up, so Rogelio crossed the border by foot and met me right there on the U.S. side. He then crossed back with me into Mexico. We were not stopped by the Border Patrols who stand right before the Mexican border, neither were we halted by the Mexican officials. We then met his father, who was waiting for us. It took about 5 minutes to drive to their house, where Mrs. Nuñez greeted me. They had me take a seat at the dining room table, where I put the tape recorder. Mr. Nuñez found an extension cord as the table was a little far from the outlet, he then went on to prepare coffee while I was chatting with his wife. Rogelio went in another room to watch TV, but as the house has an open floor plan, he could hear us talk. When coffee was served, we started with the description of their child "my son is..." and "my son is not." They decided she would write but, at his wife's request Mr. Nuñez would tell her what to write. Eventually they both responded to the questions, and she did write the answers.

Once they were finished, I asked them the demographic questions. They told me they were both Mexican citizens, both allowed to enter the United States. He is an engineer in Delicias and she has a clothing business. Mr. Nuñez does not speak nor understand English much, and if his wife speaks very little English, she does understand it. So, our interview was conducted in Spanish.

During the interview, two family members (Mrs. Nuñez's brother and his wife) came to their house, so I stopped the recorder as they were introduced to me. We then proceeded again with the interview.

Mr. and Mrs. Nuñez were both very involved in the conversation, giving me the impression of answering honestly. They were friendly, making the interview go smoothly. Mrs. Nuñez talks fast, and a lot, and quite often the couple would talk at the same time, making it difficult for me at the time of transcription. Later on, their son, Rogelio did help me when I was not sure what was said, as he is accustomed to hearing his parents' speech patterns. The interview lasted about one hour to one hour and a half and once it was over, Mr. Nuñez and Rogelio drove me back to the border. I crossed by foot, reached my car and left.

The Journal

Rogelio made 29 entries over a period of a month and a half. Each entry is on average a page long of a typical diary type of notebook that I had provided for each participant. His journal is written in the English of a regular sophomore level student, but he tends to make a few spelling mistakes particularly with single or double consonants 'stoped' instead of 'stopped' or 'latter' instead of 'later;' however, the same word can be spelled right one time and not another time. He also has some difficulties with the homophone 'their' and 'there.' The two times he meant to use the adverb 'there' he misspelled it and wrote instead the possessive 'their.' Seven times out of about 15,

Rogelio wrote 'their was' instead of 'there was' and except one time, this latter mistake is within the last five pages of his journal. I do not have the impression that Rogelio was proofreading or taking care to edit his thoughts. The journal was written in a natural voice. The structure of his sentences is good with an appropriate range of vocabulary for a sophomore.

His journal entries are not usually very detailed, he does not present in depth the events or situations he reports. There are two reasons for that I believe: I might not have been explicit enough when providing instructions on the data I wanted to gather, and he is only a 15 year old young man; thus, this lack of analytical presentation is quite normal.

Basics of Rogelio

Rogelio is a tall and lean 15 year old with thin and short dark hair who was born in the United States. Most of my students are quite talkative and Rogelio is no exception. He can be really quiet for a while and suddenly he starts and he simply does not stop! And he laughs, he laughs a lot too. He is a lively young man. I have noticed that during his sophomore year he has started taking great care of how he dresses, wearing a scarf matching the rest of his attire.

Even before he was part of my study we had a good rapport, but now that I have interviewed him, visited his family for our interview, and he has come on some of my field trips, it is even more obvious; while he waits for his cousin after school he often stops to say hello and chat a little. He is a friendly and smart kid who is not afraid of

having his own opinion even if he respectfully disagrees with a teacher. I remember one time I was reprimanding a student in tutorial, and Rogelio was there. After the student was gone Rogelio told me that I had been mean with that student! He did not say it in an offensive way, but as somebody who feels the need to comment when in his/her opinion someone does something wrong.

In the demographics section of his interview Rogelio indicated that he was born in the United States, but has spent the first 13 years of his life in Delicias, Mexico, but attended Santa Rosa, a religious private school in Isler. In fact, he has never attended school in Mexico.

Rogelio does not have any siblings, he told me in his interview. While I was at his parents', interviewing them, I met his cousin, whom he sees everyday at school and at home. They seem to be a little like brother and sister. He has other cousins, but they live away from the border.

Rogelio does not drive yet, but plans on learning soon and obtaining a driving license on both sides of the line (oral communication). Although it is common for kids from Delicias and Mexico in general to drive much before the legal age according to Mexican laws, Rogelio does not do that.

Rogelio's Family

Rogelio's parents are in their mid forties. They look young like people who have had a good life in spite of being hard working. From their interview I learned that they are both Mexican citizens, and that Mrs. Nuñez is from Delicias, now living two streets away from her parents' former house. "I lived here [in Delicias]. My parents' house was at the corner of Benito Juarez and Los Niños Heroes, only two streets away from here;" whereas, her husband is from a small town not far from the border: "I [am] from a very small town, an hour and a half away."

As I previously mentioned, Mr. Nuñez is an engineer and his wife has a clothing store. However, in an oral communication with their son, I learned that Mrs. Nuñez also does decorating at parties such as *quinceañeras* or weddings, and she also sews clothing for those celebrations.

Based on my observations and on Rogelio's opinion (oral communication) his parents are financially comfortable. I base my opinion on their house, the numbers of international field trips the parents are able to offer their child as well as how Rogelio dresses. He does not dress in a Walmart style, rather in more expensive name brands.

The aunt and uncle I met at his parents' live in Delicias and have a daughter who also attends IHS. He also has aunts and uncles living in major cities in Arizona. His grandparents live in the United States. His maternal grandparents live in Isler as permanent residents (green card holders), and his grandparents on his father's side are naturalized U.S. citizens living further north in the state (oral communication).

Interests and School

Rogelio is a 4.0 Grade Point Average student. For next school year he is registered in Pre-Advance Placement (college level classes offered to high school students) and Honors classes (oral communication). In his interview I learned that he belongs to various school clubs but he is particularly involved in student council, a club based on government organizations and is also enrolled in a leadership class that sponsors various events in the community.

Even before Rogelio was part of my study I knew from discussing with him that he was very interested in Mexican and American governments and politics. In fact, outside of school he is nicknamed 'El Jefe,' which "comes from all my political campaigns since I was little" and "because they consider me as somewhat of a leader," Rogelio explained to me in an oral communication. From what he told me, most of his immediate family is interested or involved in local Mexican politics. It is then, not surprising that, according to his father (interview), Rogelio would like a political career:

SR: And where do you think he will work?

MN : In the United States.

FN : I think so too.

SR : Far away from the border or close by?

FN : Far...he is thinking about other countries as well...

SR : Really ?

FN : In diplomacy...

When Rogelio is not busy with clubs or classes, he practices tennis or he reads. In his follow-up interview questions, he described his readings: “I read newspapers, traditional literature and historical/political books...[and] social and philosophical books.” But of course, Rogelio is a teenager so he likes to be with his friends: “I like to hang around with my friends in Delicias, and usually do, depending on how much money I have to spare.” In an oral communication he added that he also enjoys *cruising* the streets of Delicias with his friends.

Based on my observations, Rogelio has friends on both sides of the border. I was wondering if he had friends who were not Hispanic even though the non-Hispanic population is a very small minority in Isler and at IHS (95 % are Hispanic). He said: “All of my local friends are of Mexican descent, although I have friends in Tucson and Phoenix who are Anglo and Black, and I have a group of friends from North Carolina who are Black and Anglo. I have met them throughout conventions and in a trip to Europe.”

All in all Rogelio probably spends more time in Delicias than in Isler and does enjoy the lively atmosphere, although he associates his liking of Delicias to its size and the availability of activities: “I enjoy spending time in Delicias because there are more things to do, even though in Isler it’s safer and more calm...” Rogelio did not mention any specific aspects that make Delicias more attractive to him. Apparently, it is the

positive and happy aspects of Mexico that make it enjoyable for him and others. In fact, a teacher whom I interviewed talking about another student border crosser [not involved in this study] as an example, described very well what he and other border crossers seem to enjoy about Mexico:

...I can't really tell who is a Mexican citizen and who is a Mexican-American some days, you know like Luis, and you probably have to edit that, but Luis I know comes across the line every day. I am sure he is over here [Isler] for an education, but he is over there [Delicias] for the culture and the things that are...happy. When I say "happy," I mean enjoyable, and his family is there. It's hard sometimes to recognize just exactly what would that [to be a Mexican] mean for me, but if I listen to kids it seems more that they enjoy the culture and the traditions not so much the economy over there.

In that teacher's view, the students enjoy spending time in Mexico for the positive aspects that Mexican life offers, like culture, family values and traditions-- but it is not to spend their life and have a career. Besides, as Rogelio's father mentioned, his son is likely to work in the United States and not in Mexico.

Residency and Border Crossing Experiences

Rogelio has lived in the border region all his life either in Delicias or in Isler. In his interview, Rogelio indicated that for the past two years he has been living in Isler

during the week and returning home to Delicias on weekends, and that is to comply with the residency requirement held by public school districts. When in Isler he stays at his maternal grandmother's, who is also his legal guardian. However, sometimes, if the traffic at the border is not too heavy, he will go home to his parents.

In his journal Rogelio presents the border crossing process where waiting is always part of the experience. On December 3rd, 2010: "Today as my mother and I headed to school we waited fourteen minutes" or on November 26, 2010: "The line to enter Mexico was really long, finally we entered back to Mexico thirty minutes later." As well as being asked questions or sometimes being searched as on November 22, 2010:

Today as my father and I headed to school at about 6:00am, we had to wait in line for about twenty minutes. Their [there] are about eight lanes in which cars can be inspected only one was open. When we got to the checking point they asked us where we were going, and we answered that we were going to school then he asked for my passport and I.D., then he checked my book bag and let us go for waiting almost half an hour.

Sometimes, in spite of the wait, crossing seems easier "there, we were asked many of the common questions" or another time "when we got to the American border the custom asked for my passport and asked the usual questions." Based on my observations and on Rogelio in an oral communication, the usual questions pertain to where one is coming from, where one is going and the presentation of the passport. However, if the person has a nice car, Rogelio told me the officer is likely to ask: "Who does the car belong to?"

Where do you work? What do you do?” If the person crossing is not a Hispanic it is very likely he/she will be asked what he/she is bringing back from Mexico.

On the way back to Mexico, the crossing process is a little bit different. There is a Border Patrol/Custom checkpoint a few feet before the entrance to Mexico, where U.S. officials look for large amounts of cash and for weapons that feed the power of the drug dealers. Anyone entering or leaving the United States must declare any amount over \$10,000 to customs. It is also illegal to bring firearms to Mexico; at most ports of entry, there is a sign indicating that weapons and ammunitions are prohibited. Nowadays, considering the drug cartel situation in Mexico, the violence that it engenders, and the large amounts of drugs that go through the U.S. -Mexico border, U.S. officials are definitely looking for any suspicious activity. Then, there is the Mexican border with immigration and customs.

Rogelio made notes in his journal entry of November 17, 2010 about what he saw while waiting to cross the line:

Today on my way back to Delicias from Isler, I encountered something really interesting, my mother and I were waiting in line to cross the American checkpoint before entering Mexico, the line was slow because there were many cargo trucks heading to Delicias. We were sitting in the car when we watched a boy about my age cross the border walking, he was stopped by a custom and was apparently asked for his passport or ID, he then took out his ID and was asked to move aside to a metallic table where he was *interrogated* by a custom and two

Border Patrols. The boy was asked to open his jacket and turn while they inspected him, he was then asked to pull out everything out of his pockets while other two officers asked questions. After about two minutes of *interrogation* the boy was released.

It is interesting that Rogelio uses the words –that I italicized- “interrogate” and “interrogation” as one would do to a criminal, to refer to the questions asked by Custom officers and Border Patrols. He uses those same words twice again, in his next journal entry when an old lady is searched:

Today on my way to Delicias from Isler, once again my mother and I were waiting in line to cross the American checkpoint to enter Mexico. We were sitting in the car when we saw an old lady walk through the checkpoint she was then stopped and told to move aside. The lady moved aside and put her groceries on the floor then the custom officials *interrogated* her, the lady had to open her purse and had to show her passport. After being searched and *interrogated* by he officials the old lady picked up all her groceries and walked through the checkpoint and entered Mexico, then the old lady vanished from our sight.
(Journal entry. November 18, 2010)

Rogelio’s portrayal of U.S. officials as individuals who interrogate and search anyone even an old lady, appear to be fueled by the same frustration he expresses at the questioning and the amount of time he spends every day waiting in line.

Today I was coming back from Isler, it was about 11:00pm. My uncle and I were going back to Mexico. We had waited a long time in line. My uncle was *frustrated* because he had an appointment the next day. I was also *frustrated* because we had waited for a long time. When we got to the American checking point they asked us if we had any weapons or more than ten thousand dollars. My uncle didn't answer right away, even though we had neither of them. The custom told us to move aside, and get out of the car. My uncle got *frustrated* so then the custom told him to put the keys on the roof of the car, he threw the keys on top of the roof. While they inspected the car they got the car speakers and threw them to the car. (Journal entry. November 20, 2010)

In this short paragraph, Rogelio uses the word “frustrated” three times –as I have indicated in italics- showing how tired and exasperated he and his family are by the wait they have to endure at least a few times a week, twice a day. A few days later, on December 11, 2010 Rogelio and his family feel as frustrated: “Today as my family and I came back from Isler we were *frustrated* because we had to stop before we entered the American checkpoint, and many people were getting in front without waiting. Our normal time was 10 to 15 minutes but now we had to wait longer,” and also on December 4, 2010: “Today as my family and I headed to Phoenix, we had to wait thirty minutes to cross the border, once again as it always happens we ended up *frustrated* for the waste of time that they caused us.” In my opinion, Rogelio’s frustration leads him to think that the security measures at the border are a waste of time because they generate lines of people waiting, people who cross every day and who are asked the same questions each time.

In his interview Rogelio explained that once he has gone through the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol check point, he crosses the border and enters Mexico where he goes through immigration and customs. He told me that the crossing to Mexico is more difficult than it used to be but the people are friendly: “Nowadays, it’s harder because of the new laws. Mexico had to change their system of border and now they have people who are trained like Border Patrols and they do the same thing but more *friendly*. *Not so interrogative, it’s like a greeting not so much, not that much questions*, but it’s easy” or “the Mexican official asked us what we had and my mother answered we had gone for groceries, the man just smiled and said “have a good day”.” (Journal entry. November 17, 2010)

His experiences on the Mexican side seem much easier, smoother than on the U.S. side as Rogelio expresses above --as I indicated in italics. However, in some cases U.S. officials happen to be friendly, too, as on December 6, 2010: “The line was unusually short when we got to the American border, the custom was really kind, on our way back the situation was similar”

Border crossing may be difficult one day and easy and smooth another day, but the wait is still there and it remains a time consuming experience. However, crossing the border has not always been such a hassle. Mrs. Nuñez, Rogelio’s mother is from Delicias, and she remembers when as a child she could cross the line just to pick up the ball she was playing with, that had gone too far away. At the time it was only simple barbed wires that separated the two countries. She also mentioned that at the time Delicias was safe,

and she could walk back home after going out dancing. It is not considered safe to do so, now:

MN : Yes, we would cross, and me I was living here [in Delicias]. My parents' house was at the corner of Benito Juarez and Los Niños Heroes, only two streets away from my house. We would go swim or play at the park...there were not so many problems with drugs or nothing like that. We would walk to go dancing, at night without any problems.

FN : Without insecurity

SR : So, living on the border nowadays is quite different from thirty years ago ?

MN : It's very different, totally different.

In that passage Mrs. Nuñez mentions two types of changes occurring in Mexico that have affected border crossing: drugs and the border itself. Drug cartels were not as prevalent in Mexico or at least they were ignored or left alone so there were no real fights with authorities, and the fights over territories among cartels were more subdued. The border fence itself has changed too; it has gone from being a barbed wire fence to being a strong metal double fence in some places, creating a visual and physical separation between the United States and Mexico as I present further in a different chapter.

Of course, other changes have occurred, too. Although illegal immigration from Mexico to its northern neighbor has decreased by 60% along the Southwest border (Department of Homeland Security) in the last seven years, the U.S. economy has

weakened in the last few years. The weakening in the economy has created an emphasis in the United States on illegal immigration, and a need to stop it by building a fence that could deter people from crossing. A major change is the quantity of drugs, cash and weapons that have been seized. “From 2006 to mid-2011, DHS seized 75% more currency, 31% more drugs, and 64% more weapons along the Southwest border, as compared to previous last two and a half years” (www.dhs.gov; retrieved November 12, 2011). Because these aspects have changed the atmosphere of border towns and border crossing, Rogelio’s experiences of Delicas and border crossing differ from his mother’s at the same ages.

Language, Cultural Identity and Citizenship

Rogelio’s first language is Spanish. Rogelio’s parents reported that they do not speak English and that they use “puro español” [only Spanish] at home. Rogelio also reported that he uses Spanish with his friends and family at home and at school “in some classes.” Based on my observation, one hears more Spanish than English on campus among the student population, so it is very likely that Rogelio speaks Spanish at lot more than English. Besides, Rogelio considers that Spanish is the language he uses the most. By his own assessment, supported by his parents, Rogelio speaks and reads Spanish at an “excellent” level, but lacks knowledge in his writing skills. He does not know accents: “I don’t use that. In no language. I don’t like accents.” And he laughs!

His parents consider that he lacks proper spelling mainly because he has not studied Spanish formally. His mother said: “At least he *speaks* well, but he needs more. But we correct him when he speaks, and he reads a lot to improve his Spanish.” His father added: “He lacks in spelling. He does not master it well because he did not study Spanish.” While he attended Santa Rosa, a religious middle school in Isler, Rogelio was taught Spanish, but as a foreign language by a non-native speaker, thus it is fair to consider that he never really studied the language. Rogelio added that his parents never “taught” him Spanish, they would simply correct him when he made a mistake. The few times I saw some extract of Rogelio’s written Spanish there were a lot of misspelled words, which he is aware of; when he helped me transcribe his parent’s interview he knew what the words were, and what they meant, but he did not know how to spell them. He told me that I would have to check the spelling.

English on the other hand is a language that Rogelio has learned formally through his education in Isler. As part of his interview with me, I asked Rogelio to make a self-evaluation of his speaking, writing and reading skills in the Spanish and English languages. The 4-point scale ranged from “excellent” to “poor” with “very well” and “fair” in between. In English, Rogelio rated himself as speaking and reading very well, but his skills in writing were only fair. In my opinion, it is probably an accurate evaluation, which matches my own assessment of his English. As I mentioned previously (in the journal section) his journal was written in a natural voice with some spelling

mistakes, such as doubling a consonant when it should not or vice versa, or confusing “their” and “there”. His grammar structure was as good as any other student’s.

Table 3

Rogelio: language skills

1. How well do you speak Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
2. How well do you write in Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
3. How well do you read in Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
4. How well do you speak English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
5. How well do you write in English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
6. How well do you read in English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor

(The student’s answers are in bold)

Rogelio expresses himself well orally in English; he has a slight accent which is probably why his assessment is that he speaks English “very well” instead of “excellent”. Besides, in his interview and in informal conversations that I have had with him on various topics, not necessarily related to my study, he explains his ideas well and in detail.

Interestingly, Rogelio did not use any Spanish in either his journal or his interview. I was surprised that in his journal Rogelio reported the questions from the American and Mexican officials in indirect discourse, never quoting them. Because they were not quoted, Mexican officials' questions were reported in the indirect discourse in English and not in Spanish. In a follow-up question I asked Rogelio if I was correct to assume that Mexican officials talked to him in Spanish. He indicated that they always use Spanish with Mexicans, "but, they use English with Anglos. I have seen some Canadians crossing and they spoke to them in English." When I asked Rogelio the reason why they were not quoted in Spanish he mentioned that he thought it would be better for me.

All throughout his journal or his interview I noticed that although Spanish is Rogelio's first language, the one transmitted to him by his family –thus is part of Rogelio's heritage-- and the one he uses the most with friends, and quite possibly at school he did not mention it as such. He never mentions the fact that Spanish is part of who he is, that it is part of his cultural background, of his identity. Maybe, it is so obvious to him that he does not specify it, but it is not because he would be ashamed of his native language and cultural heritage. It is only later on in a follow-up question that Rogelio made a link between himself as a Hispanic and Spanish as his heritage: "Spanish is important, it's my heritage. And for example, when I grow up even if I don't plan on living near a border town, I want my children to learn how to speak Spanish fluently." Still, Rogelio mainly views Spanish as an important element of Isler because it is a border town rather than a personal trait of who he is:

I think it's [Spanish] something really important, because it's a border town and Delicias is way bigger than Isler, and the majority of people here are Hispanic, so I think even if you are a White person you should know a little bit of Spanish to know about the culture of the place you live in.

Rogelio does not seem to consider the Spanish language important on the personal level, even if he prefers to speak in Spanish rather than in English he told me in follow up questions: "I prefer to speak in Spanish because it is my first language, and I speak it more fluently." He prefers to speak in Spanish, simply because it is easier for him to express himself. Still, he does not include himself in the group of Hispanics, rather he includes anyone else connected one way or another to Mexico and the border. He associates Spanish with a physical location, the border; however, he excludes himself as a person of Hispanic heritage and even as a border crosser.

In Isler, it is in English, however, that he will first address people he does not know --but "if they look Hispanic I speak in Spanish." In Delicias he addresses people in Spanish "all the time."

It is in English that Rogelio prefers to write: "I prefer to write in English because it is my academic language." English is the language in which he has received his education.

For most bilingual people regularly exposed to two idioms, code switching -or mixing two languages- is a common occurrence; in Isler where the majority of people are bilingual, it happens everyday. However, Rogelio reported not using code switching or *Spanglish* as it is commonly called around Isler, very much. Rogelio defines *Spanglish* as

“just a combination of Spanish and English”. When he does, it is because: “some words are better expressed in English or in Spanish” he reported. So, he adapts his use of language to the conversation he is having, in order to be the most accurate in what he wishes to express. For instance (examples provided by Rogelio), he will say:

1. “Mi *goal* de este año es tener una A en *Math*”
2. “Ya fuiste por tu *blue slip* para *soccer*”
3. “Tienes que tener la *recommendation* de la *miss* para ir al viaje”
4. « Vamos a ir a la *party*? »

In each sentence in Spanish, Rogelio uses English words (that I emphasized with italic) about a situation that is more likely to be related to his life in Isler:

1. He mentions his goals for academics. He is a student in the United States.
2. The authorization paper (blue slip) is to play soccer with the school team. In the U.S. *fútbol* is called soccer.
3. He mentions a trip that will take place with other students from the school. “La Miss” is the teacher who recommends that student he is talking to. The students talk about the trip in Delicias, I am sure but the trip participants talk about it in English with the teacher at school.
4. Although the party is more likely to be taking place in Delicias than in Isler (the best ones being in Delicias by students’ accounts), the students talk about it at

school and parties wherever they take place, are a “hot” topic of conversation among teenagers who attend IHS.

Rogelio claims to avoid code switching as much as he can --or realizes-- because he understands that words not only have a meaning found in a dictionary, but they also have a cultural meaning or a use particular to a language with its nuances.

As Mexicans we are a really expressive culture and sometimes we like to remind each other that we are happy to be friends. For example I tell my friends (girls) really often “Love you, Pretty, my princess” [to English speakers] or “Babosa, Mensa” [to Spanish speakers]. But if you translate those statements they would be really inappropriate or have a different meaning. Like the “I love you” in Spanish is “te quiero” or “te amo” and that’s only used for your girlfriend. And if you call a girl “dumb” [babosa] or reckless [mensa] you will get slapped. That’s why each word has a certain meaning in English or Spanish.

Some words have a specific meaning in a particular culture and not in another and that is why Rogelio adapts his language to be appropriate and convey the message he wants to pass on. For example, I have heard people calling affectionately a man or young man “gordo” (big, fat) and the individual would not take offense. However, in the American culture it would be totally inappropriate and insensitive to call someone “fat,” or even “big,” and definitely derogatory to call someone “dumb” and “reckless.” So, Rogelio uses the Spanish word that makes sense in the target culture.

Rogelio's reported use of code switching is only with English words in a Spanish language conversation not the other way around he said.

SR: The times when you use code-switching, you use English words in a Spanish sentence. Now, do you sometimes do the opposite, speak in English and use a word or two in Spanish?

RN: Not really. The only way I would use that is if I were talking about 'guacamole.' I would say it with a Spanish accent.

However, the previous example of his code-switching use may be viewed as English with some Spanish words. It is important to take into account that we are not always aware of what we say particularly with code-switching, so it is possible that Rogelio uses English with some Spanish words more often than he thinks.

Still, when he speaks English with someone, it is usually because he assumes that the person does not speak Spanish or is not a native Spanish speaker. For example, two or three Anglo teachers and many U.S. born Hispanics know Spanish well, but most do not mix it in an English language conversation; therefore, the first language the students associate with those teachers is English. So, they speak English with these educators without the use of Spanish words: "I don't speak Spanish with my teachers, except sometimes with Ms Morales [an Anglo teacher], she knows some Spanish, or with you, otherwise I speak English with teachers."

Rogelio, however, is not really fond of the idea of mixing codes: “I don’t actually use *Spanglish* [code switching] when talking, but I sometimes do write it when I am texting” or “I rarely use *Spanglish* but when I use it, it is mainly to talk to Chicanos” because “they don’t learn how to speak right in English or in Spanish.” It is only with these Mexican-Americans that he uses code-switching as they do not master either language well, according to Rogelio. Code-switching allows a communication without the risks of misunderstanding, as Rogelio explained in an oral communication: “When I use *Spanglish*, I just talk about whatever the conversation is about because they [Chicanos] are really used to the language and it is funny because most of them don’t know fluent English or Spanish. So, if you speak in one language only they will misinterpret you.” Their lack of knowledge in either languages, leads to misunderstandings as Chicanos, according to Rogelio, do not master the subtleties of the English or Spanish languages. Therefore, Rogelio’s use of code-switching is according to his report, just to accommodate others rather than for a personal need, and it is only with Chicanos.

It is worth noting that in our interview Rogelio did not use the term “*Spanglish*.” It is only in our informal conversations that he did.

English and Spanish are both part of Rogelio’s life on the border, and each language is associated to a culture. About being a Mexican:

Mainly, to call yourself a Mexican, people over here [Isler] call themselves sometimes, a Mexican but they don’t respect the culture as much. The first thing

is many of them don't even speak Spanish, or they don't know how to express themselves in Spanish. And I think it's one of the main points of being called a Mexican, to know the language and the culture and knowing when are important dates of the Mexican culture.

Being a Mexican requires speaking Spanish well, and having a good hold on the culture such as knowing important events and what they mean for the Mexican people. Rogelio also expressed the view that U.S. border town schools should offer Mexican history classes to its students: "I think in border towns it's [Mexican history] something really important to teach students because you feel bad when somebody confuses a date with an American festivity, like Thanksgiving day. It really does not mean anything to the Mexican culture." Rogelio's perspective that some people call themselves Mexicans but "don't respect the culture as much" is because:

Some people consider themselves Mexicans but they don't adopt their heritage in full; they don't know our true traditions and/or our language. They don't respect Mexican priorities and misinterpret what we as Mexican people truly are.

In a follow up question I asked Rogelio to explain what he meant when he talked about "Mexican priorities:" "Somehow family, work and education. When I say education I mean academically and tradition wise. If you go deeper in Mexico, in small towns you notice a balance between family, work and education, not like in border towns, which are more busy." Whereas, those he considers "not so Mexicans" will not follow traditions in the same manner:

A real good example of what a real and a non real Mexican family does is the Day of the Dead, in November. We call it 'El Dia de los Muertos' [the Day of the Dead]. A real Mexican family is not going to work that day. My parents are not going to work. The people spend the day with the family, eating together in the cemetery or at home and bringing crowns of flowers [to the cemetery] that they make themselves. A non real Mexican is going to work, and is not celebrating the day. He might not see the value of such a tradition and would not appreciate the cultural and family aspects.

Here, Rogelio points out the emphasis on family as one of the priorities in Mexican life, as he does again: "(...) in America they don't take that much importance on things that should be more important...like family, in the U.S. work is very important."

In Rogelio's perspective English is valuable because it is the language of the United States, and he considers that being a U.S. citizen, he should speak the language: "I think it's really important. First, it's the country's main language and second of all it's the way the schools are managed and the works and everything" or "I think it's very important because many people speak English and it's a, well I am a U.S. citizen so it's something I should know." English and Spanish are a means to an end: to understand and be part of a culture even if English is mainly used as a practicality as the country's main language and the one needed to advance culturally and economically.

Rogelio's perspective is shared by his parents who consider that he should know both Spanish and English. When I asked them if they thought English was important or necessary for their child they both considered English to be as important as Spanish. And his mother said:

If he lives here [Delicias] and he has decided to study in the United States, he must learn English. As we said before, how does he want to be considered a Mexican if he was born over there [United States]? If he studies over there he must also know things about over there. We don't want him to be a Chicano... (laughs).

His mother does not want this identity for her son; she wants him to be an individual who belongs to both cultures. If he speaks English he is likely to be a full participant in the American society but will not be estranged from his cultural and linguistic heritage.

Cultural aspects of Mexico or the United States are prevalent in every aspect of Rogelio's journal and his interview. Usually, Rogelio detaches himself from both nations, as someone who does not belong to either country he is talking about, maybe to show some objectivity but here --as I emphasize with italics-- he did include himself totally as a Mexican. He self-identified as being one of them:

SR: How do you view yourself? As an American or as a Mexican?

RN: I view myself more as a Mexican because I have grown into both cultures but I am more connected to the other culture.

SR: To the Mexican culture?

RN: Yes...because I know more about the dates and the significances of some things and the way of acting, the way of responding to things, it's more different. Like Americans tend to react, as an example, cancer is pretty bad but *they* tend to overreact and in Mexico it is something more like you tend to accept it, and even though the person is cured *we* don't lament it so much as here, and other things *we* take more importance in some things and here in America *they* don't take that much importance on things that should be more important...

SR: So, you see yourself more as a Mexican because you are more exposed...?

RN: My way of thinking is of a Mexican.

Rogelio's statement that he considers himself "more as a Mexican" is reinforced by the way he explains the differences he sees between Mexicans and Americans. He refers to Americans as *they*, as a group he does not belong to and to Mexicans as *we*, including himself as a Mexican. Rogelio is quite insightful in his analysis of both countries, and he shows in the quote that he understands that a culture is deeper than simply knowing dates, it is about beliefs and how one responds to its traditions.

I also asked Rogelio how he thinks people see him when he goes away from Isler, within the United States he explained: “I think they see me as a Hispanic because I speak fluently [English and Spanish] and I act like an American and at the same time I am a Mexican.” Again, he views himself as a Mexican with a strong influence from the United States by his behavior, so he could be perceived as a Hispanic but not as a Chicano “I am more connected to the way of living of a Hispanic, not so much of a Latino or a Chicano.” Not everybody gives the same definition to the words *Hispanic* and *Chicano*, particularly the latter. For Rogelio a Hispanic is “all of those people (...) that are more connected to Spain and the Spanish culture”, whereas a Chicano:

As Mexicans we tend to look at it in a bad way because a Chicano is in the middle of an American and a Mexican because, they don't learn neither culture. They don't learn how to speak right in English or in Spanish and their way of thinking has been culturally diffused and they don't develop a straight way of thinking either American or Mexican and sometimes their traditions are lost.

Being a Hispanic is based on a cultural and ethnic heritage, whereas being a Chicano is based on behavior; Chicanos do not learn about their Mexican heritage, the language or culture of Mexico and they are lacking knowledge about the family's country of adoption, the United States, according to Rogelio. He also added that “Chicanos resent both cultures.”

Rogelio mentioned that Chicanos have a different way of speaking; he explained that it is mainly related to accent, but he did not mention any word that would make a person “sound” Chicano:

Their accent, first of all, they have a different way of pronouncing. [When speaking Spanish] Their “a” are more with an English accent, their “r”, they sound more English too. When they speak in English, they speak directly like an Anglo, but like some syllables sound like a Spanish speaker [speaks].

In his description of Chicanos, Rogelio creates a barrier or a border between those who are ‘real’ Mexicans or ‘real’ Americans and those who are not, like the Chicanos. In his perspective individuals must be able to perfectly blend into both cultures. It is quite possible that a person born of non-Hispanic U.S. parents may see Rogelio as a Chicano – provided they know the term- because for them he will not *really* be an American. In that sense, being a Chicano is all relative.

Rogelio does not label himself as a Mexican-American, neither do his parents who said “he is not Mexican, but he is not American.” So, at first glance he could be viewed as being a Chicano by Rogelio’s definition. A Chicano, however, is neither an American nor a Mexican *because* he is unknowledgeable about neither one in Rogelio’s opinion. Still, his mother acknowledged that Rogelio could be “mexico-americano” but she laughed when she said that, as it represents more a translation of the American hyphenated term, rather than a conviction that her son would be a Mexican-American. Accepting to call her child “Mexican-American” means giving him a stronger American

identity: an hyphenated identity is a label used in the United States not abroad, even as close as Mexican border towns. In Mexico one is Mexican or one is American but not both, the concept of labeling a hybrid citizenship is an American phenomenon (Torres-Saillant, 2002). Mr. and Mrs. Nuñez do not see their child as entirely Mexican as they are, nor as totally American as they see when they cross into the United States. However, there is an ambivalence, as to how they view their son. To the question: “Does your child acts or thinks more as an American or as a Mexican?” Mr. Nuñez : “As a Mexican... when it comes to culture and family, he is more dependent about the family,” but when I asked if they would prefer for their son to be more American or more Mexican:

FN: ... one should see the good, the good of both countries. Mexican, from Mexico the culture and the family, and from the United States work and opportunities...

MN : The opportunities of work, because I think for example, from being an American, I like the discipline that they bring in their job and the sense of responsibility at work, I like that. And him [Rogelio] as ...I want to respect what he chooses, what he decides for his life, how to lead it. I want to respect it, because he is very mature, and I want to respect what he thinks. But, I think he is Mexican because he is of Mexican parents but regardless [I want to respect] what is most convenient for him.

Both parents want what is good for their son, even if it mean becoming more American. However, it is more a desire to respect their son’s decision rather than what they really

wish. But that remain a better option for them that seeing their son like their nieces and nephews who live in the U.S. and who are losing their Mexican heritage:

MN: ... the way we view it, is as you want to be Mexican, but you were born over there and you are going to study over there, you also need to know from over there. We don't want him to become a Chicano (She laughs)

SR: So, you don't want him to become a Chicano?

MN: No.

FN: No.

MN: I have a sister whose husband is American and she is Mexican. And her children, the oldest daughter does not want to speak Spanish, she has never wanted to. And my sister speaks to her only in Spanish, and she told her "you need to speak Spanish" because she is Mexican. "I am not Mexican, my daddy is American and I was born here." "No, your mommy is Mexican." Now, my sister is fighting with the boy [her son] who does not want to speak Spanish, he only wants to speak in English and he always understands it but he does not want to speak it.

Viewed by Rogelio and his parents, those children are Chicanos --that is, by Rogelio's definition, people who are "in the middle of an American and a Mexican because they don't learn neither culture. They don't learn how to speak right in English or in Spanish." Rogelio's mother defined a Chicano as "I have cousins who are Chicanos because they

are neither Americans nor Mexicans, it's really ugly." And that is the identity she would not choose for her son to have: "So, I don't want that for Rogelio."

For Rogelio, living in two countries and two cultures involves an understanding and respect of each one mixed with the ability to adapt. His mother said:

Yes, what happens is that he can adapt, he adapts to the situation. What I noticed when we go anywhere; for example when we are waiting in line and someone is trying to cut into the line, he gets angry and says 'why do they do that, it's not right.' So, like an American?

Mrs. Nuñez provided the interesting example of her son reacting as an American when somebody tried to cut in line, still it is often difficult to pinpoint the cultural differences of two countries, and mainly how people react to them, how they modify their behaviors to fit in. Individuals usually behave differently in one place or in another, as one behaves differently when talking to a friend or to a supervisor, and Rogelio understands that quite well. He sees himself acting, behaving or handling himself differently when in the United States or when in Mexico.

RN: Because in the U.S. it's a different way of thinking, in actions and in ways of speaking, and when you are in Mexico it's another...you behave in a different way when you address people, when you are in a store. It's not as common to

greet someone, here in the store than it's over there... because sometimes people tend to look at you, like...people are more reserved here

SR: And what else do you do differently in each country?

RN: Well, ...the way....let's say if you are walking down the street, over here you do cross the right way and over there it's all jaywalking [laugh]. It's common. And people don't get angry and over here it's something bad.

Rogelio is able to see and understand the different patterns of behavior of each country and to adapt his life to it in a comfortable manner. He also noted a difference in his own behavior in each country:

When I am in Isler I tend to be calmer and less alert because the situations are not like over there [Delicias], where if you are on your bike you won't get hit by a car. Here [Isler], and over there you need to be alert somehow...even though the American way of living is faster, over there [Delicias] it's really faster than here. And over there at 12 (midnight) everybody is awake and over here at 8 everybody is asleep and nobody gets out of their house..."

And he laughed as he said that. Here again, he adapts by changing his behavior, he is more careful when riding his bicycle in Delicias than he is in Isler because he is aware of the potential dangers, thus his alertness. The fact that he laughed when talking about jaywalking, about people going to bed at 8:00 o'clock or even the dangers of riding his bike in Delicias shows his good sense of humor about the differences of both cultures.

His apparent ability to adapt to each country and adopt some of its values allows him to belong to both cultures and societies. He is able to position himself as an American or as a Mexican according to the culture he is in. Rogelio does not feel pressured to be more American or more Mexican: “Some situations tend to make you think like that [to be more like an Anglo-American] but the way of thinking I have created in myself makes me go back to my own way. I don’t think that much, I don’t go to that side.” Later on, Rogelio clarified in writing what he meant by “my own way”:

I have a Mexican Border mentality, which is working hard and enjoying my rewards. My fundamental mentality in decision-making comes from my Mexican traditions and culture, but when it comes from improvising I use a more global mentality in which I look for the best opportunity or the best results and that mentality isn’t very Mexican. For example, sometimes I prefer to work than be with my family and friends because that work will give me a better future. That situation explains my wide mentality in which I prefer job than family. If I would be more “Mexican” I would rather be with my family in that situation but at the end I get the best of both worlds but at the same time keeping my Mexican root alive.

As he explained his “own way” Rogelio exposed how he enacts two of his multiple identities. He chooses to take on some of the American ways when it comes to work, but at the same time he wants to keep his Mexican heritage through traditions. He is a

borderland citizen; he has the option to adopt American or Mexican ways to the extent that one can choose.

With some contradictions with his previous statements Rogelio also said:

I never feel more pressured to be a Mexican because I have chosen to be one. Even though most of my academic life has been in the U.S., my cultural life and social life has developed in Mexico. That is why I feel more Mexican than American. Although, sometimes I can be considered more Mexican than other people who live and study in Mexico because my family is very traditional and we have always incorporated Mexican culture to our life.

Here, Rogelio returned to his original perception of himself that he is a more Mexican, because of his upbringing that had been made up of Mexican values and culture.

The answer Rogelio, and all the participants, main or secondary, gave when asked if they saw themselves as immigrants was quite interesting to me. My question was basic: "Do you consider yourself an immigrant?" I had not defined the term 'immigrant' in any way, considering that there is very likely a discrepancy between its meaning and the way it is commonly used in today's political discourse. Interestingly, I could feel some defensiveness in their answers, insisting on the fact they were not immigrants because they were born in the United States, implying they had the same rights (and obligations) as any other American regardless of where they lived. Here is what Rogelio said:

RN: [I don't consider myself an immigrant] first because I was born here, second of all because I have been in the American culture all my life and all my life in the Mexican culture, so I have learned to balance both things. And an immigrant has to change their way of thinking to a new culture and to me it has always been normal, both cultures.

SR: Both cultures normal, yeah...that's why, that's why it's fascinating. Do you think other people see you as an immigrant?

RN:.....

SR: Not necessarily in Isler.

RN: Well, they may because sometimes I tend to have an accent in my way of speaking in English, but that is because I speak too much Spanish on vacations or my free time and that can make me look like an immigrant, but as the way of thinking I am to both cultures.

Here, Rogelio did not portray himself solely as a Mexican but also as an American, which emphasizes some of that defensiveness. However, it is also quite logical. It is difficult to imagine an individual who has had constant interactions in two countries who would not have been impacted by one of them. Rogelio offered an interesting definition of an immigrant: as someone who "has to change their [his/her] way of thinking to a new culture," meaning that to an extent that person must replace his/her native culture with the new one. That does not apply to Rogelio as he had been raised in

both the United States and Mexico and their respective cultures, either at home or at school. He had been immersed in both cultures and languages all his life. Indeed, he did not have to “change [his] way of thinking” as he was already influenced by both countries, Mexico and the United States. Still, he is aware that he might be viewed as an immigrant when he is away from Isler, but he self-identifies as being part of both countries.

At times Rogelio views himself as a Mexican but at other times, as an American. Legally, he is an American (he was not a dual citizen), but at heart he is a blend of Mexico and the United States. Rogelio has not decided if in the future, he might apply to be a Mexican national as well, becoming a dual citizen.

Discussion

Rogelio and his Family

As one of the Amendments of the U.S. constitution states anyone born on its soil is a citizen of the United States. As Rogelio was born in the United States, the institutions of this country recognize him as an American. He is not a Mexican citizen though, so while he spends a lot of time in Mexico he is not recognized there institutionally as a

Mexican, but he may be ascribed the identity of a Mexican by “rational Mexican individuals” (Gee 2001), who base their discursive perspective on Rogelio’s language and looks (he did not look like an Anglo, but quite likely as a Mexican or Latin American). Therefore, Rogelio negotiates the institutional identity of a U.S. citizen while in the United State and the discursive identity of a Mexican as viewed by the dialogue of others while in Mexico.

Part of Rogelio’s nature identity is being a single child who was born in the United States, of Mexican heritage. Rogelio had no control whatsoever on his cultural heritage, place of birth or ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Having only one child may or may not have been his parents’ choice but regardless, it is part of what constitutes the kind of person Rogelio is. Rogelio’s entire life will be affected by the fact he does not have siblings.

Rogelio dresses well, part of it is that he knows how to take care of himself. But it is also because his parents are able to finance an extensive and rather expensive wardrobe. I do not doubt that Rogelio is recognized as a well-dressed and fashionable well-off person by his friends and teachers. To a certain extent, Rogelio has achieved that discursive identity –he is the one who decides what to wear- but it is also thanks to his parents’ financial means that he is able to dress as he does.

The same goes with the international trips Rogelio was able to take. The experiences Rogelio was exposed to during his trips were partly generated by his parents’ financial means and hard work. However, the fact that Rogelio chose to makes these

experiences worthwhile is his own achievement. He has negotiated the discursive identity of a teenager who has already acquired a certain experience of the world around him.

Regarding his family, it is quite interesting that Rogelio's grandparents on both sides of his family live mostly in the United States –as permanent residents or as naturalized U.S. citizens, contrary to most immigrant families who have their grandparents in Mexico while their parents and themselves, live in the United States. Therefore, for all his young life Rogelio's identity has been influenced by the ideas and perceptions his family had about the United States.

Rogelio was always quite impatient and frustrated when he had to wait to cross the border; the same way his uncle was that evening when he did not immediately answer a border agent who was asking him if he had over \$10,000 and firearms. Also, Rogelio considers that "...in America they don't take that much importance on things that should be more important...like family, in the U.S. work is very important." It is also what his parents think. His father pointed out that the good of Mexico was "the culture and the family," and the good of the United States was "work and opportunities."

Mr. and Mrs. Nuñez also have a strong opinion about Mexicans in the United States, those they call Chicanos, as Mrs. Nuñez exemplified with her sister's children (as is presented later on). Mr. and Mrs. Nuñez do not want their son to be one, and Rogelio concurs with his parents. He does not want to self-identify as a Chicano neither does he want to be ascribed that identity; because a Chicano is someone who knows nothing about the United States or Mexico, by Rogelio and his family's definition.

It is common occurrence for Rogelio's parents and his uncle to be frustrated with the border crossing process, and with the time they "wasted" at the border (Journal entry. December 4th, 2010). In his journal entries, Rogelio, himself often expresses frustration at the border crossing process. He has grown up in Mexico, crossing the border regularly and probably heard stories about life in the United States. Therefore, his entire identity as a U.S. citizen is in part negotiated through the perception and experiences of his family.

In fact, Rogelio considers that "parents choose how they offer the culture to their children, how they present both countries" (oral communication). Thus, Rogelio is aware that his identity is influenced by his family's presentation of both countries. His discursive identity is then the reflection of his parents' experiences through their dialogue on the United States and Mexico.

Interests and School

Rogelio is very involved in after school activities, particularly activities related to government. In Delicias, his parents and he are involved in government and politics. As a young child, Rogelio was nicknamed "El Jefe," "which comes from all my political campaigns since I was little" and "because they consider me as somewhat of a leader" (oral communication); all these experiences must have reinforced his confidence and he must keep negotiating the discursive identity of a leader that "rational individuals" have ascribed to him earlier on. Gee (2001; p. 106) states that individuals may "recruit" their identities or "attempt to get recognized" as a certain individual. Rogelio enjoys being a leader in various school activities and he also wants to be perceived as such by "rational

individuals,” very likely his peers and teachers. To achieve that status he needs to talk and handle himself in a manner that shows confidence and definite leadership to be ascribed and recognized as a leader through the discourse of others.

Institutions of any level create rules for the government and vice versa. By his involvement in governmental activities and clubs at school, Rogelio forges for himself the identity of an individual who wants to work with institutions and be able to influence the positions that are sanctioned by authorities when it comes to laws or rules.

During his free time, Rogelio spends time with his friends locally, but he is also in contact with people his age who live away from Isler, in Tucson and Phoenix as well as out of state. He met them in conventions and on trips to Europe; the students who attended these conventions are part of Student Council, a club based on government organization. These young people share a common interest: politics, government and leadership. They have a strong interest in their community and they want to learn how to get actively involved in it. These students may have nothing else in common, but when it comes to government they share common endeavors or practices (Gee, 2001). It is because his out of town friends and he care about the same things and have the same interests that Rogelio may position himself within an affinity identity.

Residency and Border Crossing Experiences

Like most student border crossers whose parents lived in Mexico, Rogelio has a legal guardian in Isler for him to establish residency in the state and be able to attend public schools. In doing that, Rogelio follows the requirements set by the government that grants the right to attend public k-12 schools to any child who resides in the state regardless of citizenship. Rogelio received U.S. citizenship by birth, but that does not grant him the privilege of attending the local schools, only his residence does. Often, the residence is not a home but an apartment or a house simply used to meet the institutional requirements. A set of authorities, the government in this case has ruled that residency was the deciding factor in who may attend public schools. Therefore, Rogelio has to negotiate the institutional identity of an Isler resident around the laws and regulations of the institution.

His home is in Delicias, so Rogelio crosses the border about every day, and each time he is asked the same questions by border agents, sometimes the same agent two or three days in a row. And of course, he is required to show his passport, having to prove every single time that he is allowed to enter the United States. So, about 5 times a week (just to attend school) Rogelio has to justify to agents his institutional identity and his destination; that, plus waiting in line each time he crosses. Therefore, at each crossing Rogelio has to position himself within the rules of an institutional identity as it is part of Rogelio's identity that he is a border crosser. It is not something that he has accomplished on his own, it is a set of authorities, the international community, who have decided that each time an individual crosses a border he/she must justify his/her identity. This

continuous justification of institutional identity, search and wait are a source of frustration for Rogelio.

While Rogelio (and his fellow student border crossers) wait in line, and he is physically positioned two or three cars away from the Port of Entry itself, he almost loses his institutional identity: being so close to the checkpoint, but with a line of cars behind him, he can not leave; therefore, he has no place to go but wait, so his institutional identity is placed on hold. At that point, it is as if he has lost his institutional identity. He is between the institutional identity of an American --who must prove he is one-- and the discursive identity of a Mexican through the dialogue of the Mexican people he is leaving. He is not a Mexican citizen, so his institutional identity in Mexico is of a U.S. citizen.

When crossing back to Mexico, border agents or Border Patrols, right before the entrance to Mexico, question him; for Rogelio it is as if he is perceived as a criminal every time he crosses and is questioned and/or searched. Teenagers are often used by dealers to transport their merchandise (going into Mexico it is cash and firearms that agents might suspect). This perception is not only created by an institution but mainly by practice and facts. It is not uncommon to hear on the news, to read in the local paper, or hear through the grape vine about teenagers caught trying to pass drugs into the United States. "Rational individuals" who live along the border are aware of the fact; so it is their discourse or how their talk about the border and the young people who pass drugs that made Rogelio, the teenager a potential criminal. The "rational individuals" might be

border agents as private citizens or local residents. It is a discursive perspective about his identity that Rogelio resents. He resents the recognition and is offended by the constant questioning and interrogating of people.

Rogelio was annoyed when he saw the boy crossing the border toward Mexico be “interrogated” by Border Patrols. He was also frustrated when his uncle’s vehicle was searched by border agents. He considers that these inspections are wasting his time. His resentment for the border process on the U.S. side is why he finds Mexican officials to be more agreeable. They do not ascribe him the individual trait of a criminal. Although the Mexican border agents are trained as U.S. Border Patrols “they do the same thing but *more friendly. Not so interrogative, it’s like a greeting not so much, not that much questions.*” Of course, it could be argued that on one side of the border agents might be more efficient in discovering prohibited merchandises, but it is not a point that was of interest for Rogelio. He wants his identity as a border crosser to be recognized but in a positive manner, as an individual who carries business on either side of the border without criminal intent.

It is important to keep in mind, that border crossing has not always been the way it is now. Things were different when his parents were his age, but a drastic change in border crossing happened first right after 9/11, and then again a few years later when the Mexican drug cartel started acting violently. Therefore, for most of his life Rogelio has known border crossing only as a hassle and he has probably heard his parents more often that not, commenting on how easy crossing the line used to be. These aspects have influenced Rogelio’s perspective on border crossing. In fact, when Rogelio compares

Mexican and American agents and views the Mexican ones as “more friendly” and not “so interrogative;” it is through that discourse that he does ascribe the discursive perspective of a rude and abusive behavior on border agents and the United States as a country.

Language, Cultural Identity and Citizenship

Rogelio’s first language is Spanish, transmitted to him by his parents as he grew up. His native language was developed by forces in nature, forces beyond Rogelio’s control. His abilities in Spanish and English however, are Rogelio’s achievement; Rogelio reads in Spanish on a regular basis and speaks the language everyday. He works assiduously in his English class not only to make sure he passes the state test (AIMS), but also to master the language the same way any other American does. His work and achievement in the English and Spanish languages are part of what makes Rogelio who he is, but it is recognized through the discourse of others and the identity they ascribe to him -based on his language skills.

Rogelio strives to use languages well to recruit a discursive cultural identity. He considers that in order to be recognized a Mexican, an individual has to master the Spanish language: “I think it’s one of the main points of being called a Mexican, to know the language and another is the culture.” Through one’s discourse, the individual is recognized by others as Mexican because he not only speaks the language but

understands its subtleties –using “gordo” in Spanish as a term of endearment but not using it English as it would be offensive. Rogelio embraces this Mexican discursive identity because he wants to be perceived as a Mexican, within the Mexican community. He works at making himself a Mexican by being proficient in Spanish and by making sure he knows enough about Mexican culture –or at least border town Mexican culture- to be ascribed the discursive identity of a Mexican again within the Mexican community. And there is no doubt that he is ascribed the identity of a Mexican through the discourse of others.

To know English is equally as important: “because many people speak English and it’s a, well I am a U.S. citizen so it’s something I should know.” Although Rogelio has the institutional identity of a U.S. born citizen, he feels that he needs to associate with others and find the common practices that make them Americans. His institutional identity as an American is not sufficient, he has to be aware of what it is to be one, and one aspect is language. In a way, Rogelio creates an affinity with other Americans born of foreign parents, for whom learning English and the culture is important to be part of this nation, and eventually, he shares an affinity perspective with all Americans. Indeed, like any person born in the United States of foreign parents, Rogelio has to negotiate an identity made up of at least two cultures (the parents’ culture and the U.S. culture) and two languages (home language and English). In that sense, Rogelio shares a bond, a “set of distinctive practices” with other U.S. citizens born of foreign parents who have the difficult task of finding their own identity between their cultural heritage and home language, and the culture and language of their country of birth and residence. It is also

with Americans that Rogelio shares an affinity identity by his desire to learn about its culture and language and by his actual involvement in school clubs that involved politics; the foundations of how a country is organized.

However, Rogelio rejects an identity as a Chicano – and so do his parents about their son. Rogelio and his parents reject the idea that Rogelio could be ascribed the discursive identity of a Chicano by “regular folks.” They refuse to accept the “discourse or dialogue” of other people that could engender the recognition of Rogelio as a Chicano. The “discourse or dialogue” would be based on Rogelio’s linguistic and cultural knowledge of both English and Spanish. As a Chicano he would be an individual without a real and clear identity because in Rogelio’s opinion, which is shared by his parents, a Chicano “is in the middle of an American and a Mexican, because they don’t learn neither culture. They don’t learn how to speak right in English or in Spanish.”

Rogelio refuses this identity for himself, he does not want to be ascribed this identity, and that is why learning proper English and Spanish and their respective cultural aspects are important to him.

Rogelio takes pride in avoiding code-switching, which he thinks is caused by knowing neither language well; however, in his opinion, he is also able to use code-switching to communicate accurately with Chicanos: “When I use *Spanglish*, I just talk about whatever the conversation is about, because they [Chicanos] are really used to the language and it is funny because most of them don’t know fluent English or Spanish. So, if you speak in one language only they will misinterpret you.” Here, Rogelio is presenting

himself as someone who wants to be aware and in control in any language situation. He is recruiting the discursive identity of a fluent speaker of English and Spanish who also rejects code-switching. That way, he demonstrates his acculturation to both countries, therefore rejecting the identity of a Chicano. But, he also is trying to self-identify as an acculturated individual who is still able to use code-switching to be understood, when necessary. Therefore, he uses a “social language” distinctive of the group that allows him to be included if necessary: “Social languages are distinctive in that they are used to enact, recognize, and negotiate different socially situated identities and to carry out different socially situated activities” (Gee, 2000; p. 413).

Rogelio considers that to be fully understood by a Chicano, he has to code-switch. If one goes back to Rogelio’s example ‘babosa’ and “mensa,” Rogelio’s assumption is that a Chicano would not understand the expression and would take it differently as the words have connotations that could offend some people. It is what Gee (2011) calls “situated meanings” where a word or an expression has a specific meaning in a given situation. Although Rogelio rejects the identity of a Chicano for himself, with Chicanos he finds some common grounds, associating with them in language, sharing language patterns he would not otherwise use (according to him), but does because it is necessary to communicate; therefore, he shares an affinity identity with them. Gee (oral communication) considers that in an affinity perspective there must be a common interest, it is about what one cares about. For Rogelio, this affinity is with Spanish

speakers Chicanos or not, people he can share the language with and show his acculturation to Mexico and the United States.

Interestingly, two points stand out in Rogelio's identity in regards to Chicanos. First, Rogelio takes pride in his fluency in the English and Spanish languages, contrary to Chicanos, who know neither language well, in his opinion; however, he makes numerous spelling mistakes in English, and even more in the Spanish language. Of course, countless people regardless of their ethnic and language heritage do. Still, it could be tempting to ask oneself if Rogelio, by his own definition of a Chicano, could be ascribed by "regular folks" the discursive identity of a Chicano in some aspects? Besides, he thinks that "Chicanos resent both cultures." Rogelio does not resent Mexican or American cultures; however, he is usually more willing to criticize the United States rather than Mexico in cases such as border crossing. Second, Rogelio's dialogue on Chicanos is the same as his parents. They seem to really fear that their son might become what they would consider an uncultivated Hispanic. Therefore, Rogelio creates for himself the discursive identity of a Mexican-American who is knowledgeable about both cultures and languages to fulfill his parents' wish, so that probably also becomes his own choice of identity. Although Mexican-American may not be the label Rogelio wants, still it may be the closest to who he actually is.

Rogelio accepts the recognition of a Hispanic: "I think they [Anglo] see me as a Hispanic because I speak fluently [English and Spanish] and I act like an American." If

he is perceived as a Hispanic he is also recognized as an American of Mexican heritage by people who ascribe him that identity. Rogelio negotiates that identity everyday when he crosses the border into the United States. He is also a Hispanic within an institutional perspective as his both parents are Mexican; therefore, the tradition sanctions his categorization of a Hispanic.

Eventually, Rogelio views himself as a Mexican (“my way of thinking is of a Mexican”) because “even though most of my academic life has been in the U.S., my cultural life and social life have developed in Mexico ... I know more about the dates and the significance of things and the way of acting, the way of responding to things.” His upbringing and his understanding of Mexican culture have led him to feel like he is more Mexican. The fact that he ascribes himself the identity of a Mexican becomes an individual trait but only because others recognize him as such through his achievement. He worked to achieve that identity of a Mexican to make sure he was viewed as such by others, the “regular folks” in the Mexican community.

At the same time, Rogelio does not deny his American identity, quite the contrary. He has learned English not only as a school requirement but to be part of the American culture. He has the institutional identity of an American and also wants to take on the discursive identity of an American as ascribed by regular Anglo folks in the United States. I doubt Rogelio wants to be ascribed the discursive identity of an American by Mexican individuals in the United States. However, in order to have the valid identity of an American as recognized by “regular folks,” the recognition has to come from the dominant group, the Anglos not the Hispanics. In the interest of establishing a clear

American identity, he also actively works to distinguish himself from the Chicanos with whom he might be confused.

Rogelio has constructed his discursive identity around two countries; he has worked to receive that recognition through “the dialogue of others.” He views himself as a person who is able to adapt to both countries. “Because in the U.S. it’s a different way of thinking, in actions and in ways of speaking, and when you are in Mexico it’s another (...).” And he provides the example of how American and Mexican people react to cancer, or how traffic rules are usually enforced in the U.S. (when crossing the street for instance) but ignored in Mexico. He has that awareness that he reacts and behaves according to the rules of each place. He has achieved the ability to be comfortable in each country, and it is how he is recognized by others.

Oscar Torres

A 16 Year Old Male - US and Mexican Citizen

The Interviews

Oscar's interview. The interview took place in my classroom after school. Oscar was relaxed and ready to participate in the study. He sat near the desk, and after a few words of chitchat we started with the demographic questions, and then I asked him to complete eight to ten sentences beginning with "I am" and "I am not." Finally, I checked the tape player and we started the interview that lasted for about forty minutes during which Oscar remained comfortable and sometimes laughed. I felt that he answered my questions truthfully, trying his best to express his thoughts clearly as he sometimes felt it was difficult to pin point the matter of his ideas: "How can I put it" he said a few times.

Once we were done, I told Oscar that I might have some follow-up questions later on, to which he responded that it was fine. I thanked him for his time and participation and he left.

Mrs. Torres' interview. The interview with Mrs. Torres was held at her home in Delicias. Oscar gave me his mother's phone number, and after he consulted with her, she suggested that I call her that Saturday to see if she could meet me that very day. I called Mrs. Torres, I initiated the conversation in Spanish, and we agreed that I would meet her *a la garita* on the Mexican side of the border. I crossed the line into Mexico where I was not asked to present identification by immigration or custom officials. Based on my

observation crossing that port of entry in the past, I have noticed that cars may be stopped but rarely pedestrians. On one occasion, on my first crossing to Delicias, I believe, I was asked in English if I had a weapon or over \$10,000. At the time I was a little surprised by the questions, but I replied in Spanish making a face that I did not have either. The officer looked surprised by the fact I answered in Spanish and smiled. That is the only encounter I had with a Mexican official when crossing as a pedestrian.

A few feet after the Mexican Customs, I stopped and waited for Mrs. Torres to come and pick me up. That place is the meeting point for border crossers, students or not. For anyone who crosses the border to go anywhere in Delicias, it is the spot where people wait for their ride to come and pick them up. Taxis and local buses wait there and cars are crammed in the few spaces, their drivers expecting some family member or friend to come from Isler. So, like everybody else I waited for my ride, while some people looked at me, maybe some students from the high school who recognized me as an IHS teacher or simply because I am White and my appearance is not of a Mexican. Finally, Oscar, not his mother, came and drove me to his parents' residence. Their home is a charming sturdy white house that used to belong to Mr. Torres's parents as his wife indicated me. Mrs. Torres greeted me, and Oscar left to meet his older brother, a former student of mine.

We sat in an elegant living room, and with a glass of water in hand we started the interview, in English. At the time, I did not remember that Mrs. Torres spoke perfect English with a light trace of an accent. I think I was surprised by the quality of her English as most border crosser parents that I met usually do not speak English regardless

of their level of education. She explained that she had attended the local Isler Catholic School that her sons also attended later on. She used to be a student border crosser herself like her sons had been.

In the demographic section of the interview, Mrs. Torres indicated that she was a Mexican citizen who was allowed to enter the United States. She was an accountant and her husband was an architect.

Mrs. Torres was in her mid to late forties; she was a soft spoken and friendly woman who laughed easily. She appeared as a woman who was raised well and for whom good manners were de rigueur in dealing with other people. She seemed like a woman who always knew how to follow the proper etiquette. Our interview lasted about forty minutes; then, I asked her to fill out the standardized protocol form about her son.

When we were done she offered that her sons drive me back to the border, but I politely declined as I felt like walking, the border being so close; a short 10 minute walk.

The Journal

Oscar made 19 journal entries over a period of almost a month. Each entry was very short and did not provide much detail. It seemed that writing in the journal was an afterthought for Oscar. Some entries were as long as a half page of a regular diary style page or as short as three lines. Every entry was written in English in a natural voice. His English was proper, the only time Oscar used a very relaxed language is when he said: "Today was back to school. It sucks". That was the extent of his liberties with English.

The sentence structure was always good with a fine range of vocabulary considering that there were not many entries and each one was usually short.

Basics of Oscar

Oscar is a sixteen-year-old U.S. and Mexican citizen, brown-haired with a fair complexion, not an exception in border towns. Due to Mexican history there are a good number of people who are not the 'traditional' dark hair and dark skin type. In spite of his appearance Oscar blends well in Delicias as people like him are not uncommon.

Oscar is the last of three children, all of them boys. I had one of his brothers as my student a few years back. They resemble each other physically, although Oscar is of smaller frame. However, Oscar is quite different from his middle brother in one major aspect: Oscar is not a quiet person like his brother is. Oscar is very talkative particularly when he and his friends attend the same class. Although he talks and laughs a lot, he is an agreeable and excellent student.

Oscar is well-mannered, polite and respectful, and maybe a little shy and reserved when he does not know someone, but lively and friendly once he is comfortable. When Oscar has a belief he does not back off to please others. In my class, we have had debates on controversial topics (that way there should be disagreements, therefore, more speaking in the target language); Oscar usually shares his opinion with classmates even though it may not always be popular (as an example, a discussion on global warming). Usually, Oscar and I get along very well, but occasionally because of his excessive talking disturbing the class, I have had to take action and keep him after the bell. In those cases,

he was a little frustrated and annoyed and so he expressed it to me: I was unfair, other people were talking...It was one more situation that demonstrated to me that Oscar could fend for himself comfortably.

Oscar was born in the United States but holds both U.S. and Mexican citizenships. In the demographic section of his interview he indicated that he has lived fourteen years in Delicias while attending school in Isler and now lives in Isler as he attends IHS.

Oscar spends some nights in Isler and some in Delicias depending mainly on soccer practice and games. His legal guardian in Delicias is a family member, some cousin Oscar believes. He is not very sure how family related they are. When Oscar crosses back to Mexico he usually carools with other student border crossers. Oscar holds a driver's license in the United States, but just a permit in Mexico where one needs to be 18 to have a license. He is only 16. It took Oscar two traffic tickets (oral communication) to finally get his driver's license in Isler, where he has been driving for a few months with only his permit. He is still driving in Delicias without his driver's license.

Oscar's Family

Oscar is the last of three children. Both his brothers attends one of the state universities where Oscar plans to go as well (oral communication). The three children were born in the United Sates and have attended local schools in Isler.

Mr. and Mrs. Torres are both from Delicias. They have family on both sides of the border and it is a family member who was Oscar's legal guardian. The Torres family

travels on both sides of the line; in Mexico they often go to the family ranch that used to belong to Mrs. Torres father, five hours south of Delicias. In the United States, Mrs. Torres as well as her children do most of their shopping in Isler, or the main cities in the state. It is common for Delicias residents who are allowed to enter the United States to buy their groceries at the local Walmart or to shop in the discounted outlets (Ross, Marshall, T.J. Max). Food is often cheaper in the U.S. than it is in Mexico, and some clothing at the local outlets may be more affordable than in Delicias; the selection is also wider. Still, not every Delicias family can afford shopping in the U.S., but by Oscar's account his parents are financially comfortable.

As previously mentioned Mrs. Torres is fluent in English, whereas her husband understands it but does not speak it too well; he forgot English according to Oscar. Mrs. Torres's heritage is Mexican and French on her father's side and Mexican and Spanish on her mothers' she mentioned during our interview.

Interests and School

Oscar is a 4.0 Grade Point Average who enrolled in Advanced Placement classes for the next fall. Oscar exceeded in Math and Reading on the state test, a test required by the State Department of Education for students to graduate from high school. Oscar mentioned: "I only passed writing; I was about 8 points away from exceeding."

Before IHS, Oscar attended Santa Rosa, the local Catholic school in Isler, where students are required to speak English and where, in my opinion, they receive an

excellent education. All the students I have who have attended Santa Rosa have very good foundations and are proficient in English.

Soccer is of major interest for Oscar. He belongs to the school team and during the off-season he plays with his friends in Isler. He does not play soccer in Delicias because “they don’t have good grass over there” commented Oscar who laughed as he said that! “I would play [in Delicias] if the team did not stay here [Isler]” he added. Sport is what defines Oscar’s identity in his opinion: “I see myself as a Mexican because it’s a matter like, the World Cup. I didn’t like the U.S. team. It’s like my nature is Mexican, I go for the Mexican team; a lot has to do with sports (...).” I have regularly heard Oscar and his friends comment on soccer games they had watched, the teams being Mexican and International ones. It was a major affair for my students when Mexico beat France on the 2010 World Cup. Before we had left school in May, I had made an ‘informal bet’ with some of my students -Oscar was one of them-- that France would easily beat Mexico. I personally did not really care about who would win, rather it was more a source of fun discussion with the students. Oscar and his friends were serious about Mexico being *the* team who was going to win. I was the source of friendly mockery when we came back to school after summer and Mexico had beaten France. The U.S. team, however, had never been mentioned.

When Oscar is not at school, he spends time with friends on both sides of the border as he indicated in his journal entry of December 29, 2010: “Today, I crossed to soccer practice and came back [to Delicias]. My brothers invited some friends to the house and had a little party.” Or, he revealed during his interview:

I enjoy spending time in Delicias, hanging out with friends, and also in Isler playing soccer. I enjoy it [playing soccer in Isler], and all summer long. Like when the season ends, we start playing with friends and everything, and I play here. And sometimes I go to friends' house here [Isler] also, I go to Jose's house, we play video games.

He also spends time with family in Delicias, or in Isler:

Yesterday, I went to a Cardinals' game in Phoenix with all my cousins. We had a great time. Before the game we ate at Johnny Rockets and a girl who spoke Spanish attended [waited on] us. My cousins from Guadalajara and Hermosillo are big fans of the NFL. Today, we just played Nintendo all day and went to church. [Journal entry. December 26, 2010]

Oscar enjoys watching football games, so if sports defines Oscar's identity (as he mentioned it), Oscar has a dual identity as a Mexican who loves soccer, and as an American who enjoys football. His identities are also revealed in places where he enjoys spending time: "Delicias is for nighttime, to go out, there are no curfews, no cop trouble, because of alcohol, not that I really drink. It's kind of like, there are no parties here; parties are over there [Delicias]. During daytime, I do errands for my parents or I stay home." Oscar associates his life with Delicias when it is a matter of having fun, and no strict rules to abide to.

As Oscar mentioned he spends time with friends who live on both sides of the border, but his friends are mainly Mexican friends: "I have mostly Mexican friends, but I have relationships with Anglo and Asian friends. There are some Anglos in Isler, but I

mainly met them [Anglos or Asians] in Tucson.” Realistically, in Isler or Delicias it is difficult to meet people who are not of Mexican descent. According to colleagues [oral communication], when a major company in Isler, was doing business the population was about 30% White the rest was Hispanic. Then, when the company left most of the White people, mostly executives moved away to find better work opportunities. Therefore, now Isler is mostly Hispanic.

When it is time to go to college, Oscar plans on attending one of the state universities like his two brothers. Then, he intends on working in the United States:

SR: You want to live here [the United States] when you work, when you are older? You want to live by the border or away from the border?

OT: It does not really matter. It’s a matter of where my job takes me and making a living. I want to be here [U.S.] because of opportunities.

Oscar wants to work and live in the United States because of the opportunities available here. He later added on [oral communication] that he hoped to live close to the border to pass on his Mexican heritage to his children.

Residency and Border Crossing Experiences

Oscar has lived his entire life in the border area of Delicias/Isler. It is only since starting high school that he has been living in Isler during the week and in Delicias on weekends. As Oscar explained in his journal, he sometimes returns home to Delicias to

visit his family before crossing again the same day, to Isler and spend the night at his guardian's:

Today was back to school. It sucks. While crossing back [to Delicias] from school, the immigrants [Border Patrols right before crossing into Mexico] asked me for an ID. I showed it but the person next to me, did not have one. He got arrested. I went back at night [to Isler] to sleep at my aunt's. [Journal entry. January 3rd. 2011]

On other days he does not cross the border at all as he presented on his journal entry of January 4, 2011: "Today I had a soccer game, I did not cross." As the team was with the school, when he had a game, in town or an away game, Oscar spent the night in Isler, it was easier for him.

Being a border crosser is for Oscar a normal part of life. He explained that because it is a common phenomenon in Isler he does not feel different from the rest of the population: "I think it's normal [being a border crosser], because I live in a place where it's like, not only me. I think if it was only me, I would feel weird, but it's like every one around me. Even if they are not border crossers they are still like me. There's nothing special about me." The fact that a large number of students commutes between the two countries, makes Oscar sense that he blends well in the community of border crossers. Asked if he thinks his life is different because he does not live fully in Isler he commented:

Not really. Well, there are people who don't cross at all and it's very different. I feel fortunate because I get to get both experiences, and I mean it's cool. People who don't cross to Mexico, I feel they don't have a life. Well, I mean, they are not...it's boring here. Isler is boring, but if you combine Isler and Delicias together, it's fun, it's not dull. It's cool.

Oscar distinguishes between those who cross the border daily or weekly from those who never go to Delicias. Among the students who live with their parents in Isler, many of them have relatives in Mexico; therefore, they cross regularly to visit family and friends. These students usually go out on weekends in Delicias, rather than in Isler where the parties are not as numerous. And then, there are those students that Oscar mentioned that never cross the border to Mexico. Usually, their parents and often themselves, have a negative perception of Delicias and Mexico, viewing it as a drug infested and dangerous place. Based on my observation these students are Anglos and Hispanics. The Hispanics are usually of U.S. born parents of Mexican heritage. In Oscar's opinion, being a border crosser is rewarding because it creates a more exciting life. His perception, on the opportunities crossing back and forth provided, is shared by his mother who also enjoys living on the border:

Here in Delicias, it's very tranquil, it's very nice. I think living here is very nice. I like it because we can go and shop over there [Isler].... And I have a lot of friends who live on the other side [Isler], I have family that lives on the other side. ..Isler is a very calm town so that's nice. It's nice living here.

In spite of the idea young people may have of Delicias as a potential party town, Mrs. Torres does not see it that way. Her perception is of an adult who views the everyday life of the place and not the *fiestas* happening here and there, where there might be some excessive drinking. However, the excessive drinking is more often the action of teenagers who live in the United States, rather than of Mexican kids' who do not view drinking as a novelty as alcohol consumption is not as restricted in Mexico as it is in the United States.

Oscar did not present his border crossing experiences much in his journal, except when he sometimes mentioned "long lines both ways" (Journal entry. December 20, 2010). An interesting point was recurrent in his journal: he was searched on a regular basis while crossing the border. On December 20, 2010 he mentioned: "I was stopped by the immigrants [immigration officers] going to Isler and on my way back. When I am by myself they like to check me." And then, he said on December 22, 2010: "Today I packed the car and drove off to Tucson with my mother and my grand-mother. The car was full and they did not search us. I think they don't search women's cars." Two weeks later on January 7, 2011 he was searched again: "Today [a Friday] I went back to Delicias. I will spend the weekend here. It is more relaxing here at home. I got searched crossing back again." When he is by himself Oscar is often searched because, he told me later in a follow up conversation: "when they see young people, they have a tendency to check you because they look at people who are more prone to do bad or illegal things." It is not a rare occurrence to have a teenager caught passing drugs at the border. It makes the front page of the local paper as well as the news on TV. Oscar is not offended or impatient about being searched, he takes it with a degree of philosophy: "I can't do

anything, it's not like I am going to say anything. You go with the flow! I got mad only once, they searched my car for an hour. That's the only time I got mad."

As is the case with Mrs. Nuñez [Rogelio's mother], Mrs. Torres remembers well the border and the crossing process of her youth. It was quite different:

MT: Visually, I don't like it. Seeing the fence, I don't like it, because it's like the Berlin Wall. It's not nice. And everybody had a passport to cross....When I was a child if I forgot my border crosser card they would simply say "you are fine, you can cross." Everybody knew everybody. I knew every single custom agent and everybody knew us, because we used to cross everyday to go to school. So, we were used to that, and the agents were so nice, very nice and they treated us like family. And now, you barely know the agents even though you cross every day and everything. I am not saying they are not nice or they are rude.....

SR: You never had any bad experience?

MT: No, no. No never. But I do see a difference growing up and now what my children are seeing and everything. It's different and I don't like that, the fence. It was so easy, it was a wire fence, you could even cross [the fence] and you would come back. There was nothing wrong or any problem.

Now, Mrs. Torres views the fence as an ugly separation between two people who should have the opportunity to go back and forth between two cities without having to get checked like potential criminals. What distresses her the most is that her children see a fence that indicates that they may not be welcome into the United States. At the time of

her childhood entering the U.S. outside a port of entry may have been an offense but it was not enforced because “there was nothing wrong or any problem;” it was not assumed that people had bad intentions. Nowadays, it is quite different, and her sons’ identities may be stained by how they are regarded while entering the United States. Although not mentioned by Mrs. Torres, illegal immigration and drugs being smuggled into the U.S. have definitely play a major role in the transformation of the border, but also as she pointed out Delicias has grown a lot: “A lot of outsiders came and it did hurt. It did hurt, it did hurt. And it came from being a very quiet small town to a bigger town with a lot of problems that come with the growth.” The expansion of Delicias has forced U.S. officials to stop the “I know you, you are fine, you can cross” and instead consider everybody a potential criminal.

Language, Cultural Identity and Citizenship

Oscar is bilingual. He has received all of his education in English while attending the Isler schools. As previously mentioned, he has exceeded ‘reading’ on the AIMS, making him part of the 7% who did in his class cohort for IHS. He has acquired Spanish “through his parents” his mother told me; Oscar has never been a student in a Mexican school.

Table 4

Oscar: language skills

1. How well do you speak in Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
2. How well do you write in Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
3. How well do you read in Spanish?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
4. How well do you speak in English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
5. How well do you write in English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor
6. How well do you read in English?	Excellent	Very well	Fair	Poor

(Student's answers are in bold)

Upon my request, Oscar evaluated his skills in both Spanish and English. Not surprisingly, he is more competent in English than in Spanish. His reading and writing abilities are at a higher level in English, which is logical as he received his education in English; whereas, he considered that he speaks better in Spanish than in English and: “I prefer to talk in Spanish because it is easier to express myself. I also have Spanish vernacular way more mastered.” In my opinion, it is quite possible that he expresses himself as well in English as he does in Spanish, but the level of language and the type of conversation may be different. He is likely to be more proficient in English when it is a matter of school or work related conversation, whereas for everyday exchange he may communicate better in Spanish.

Not surprisingly again, it is in English that Oscar prefers to write: “I prefer to write in English. I have never actually written much in Spanish, so it is easier for me to express myself writing in English.” It is also in English that he reads the most:

I do not read a lot in Spanish, but I like more the topics in Spanish than in English. Even though I read more in English, I enjoy more reading books from Spanish writers. But, if it is an English novel originally, I do not like to read it translated to Spanish.

When Oscar goes over the news on the Internet, he usually prefers to read them in Spanish, not for a matter of language he told me but rather for its content: “There are more interesting things” and he laughed and specified that it was more graphic!

Mrs. Torres, Oscar’s mother evaluated her son’s skills in Spanish the same he did. She considered that his writing and reading competence are good, whereas his speaking and oral comprehension abilities are excellent.

Oscar speaks Spanish much more than he speaks English he claimed: “I use it [Spanish] with practically everyone, except teachers who do not know Spanish at school and maybe some coaches in soccer, and when I am on vacation or something like in Tucson, people I encounter with, not normal life.” Normal life for Oscar is life in the Isler/Delicias area, or when he goes with family and friends, and that is when he speaks Spanish. He uses English to address people when he is away from his regular life, but around Isler he chooses the language to use based on the ethnicity of the individuals:

SR: In Isler, do you address people you do not know in English or in Spanish?

OT: Usually, if I don't know them, I would...like, depending on how they look, like their aspect.

SR: So, if they look Hispanic, you are going to go with...

OT: Spanish.

SR: If they look Anglo...

OT: English.

His choice of language use is based on the likeliness the person speaks Spanish and most people do speak the language in Isler, as Oscar mentioned:

I know there are people that don't speak Spanish [in Isler], but like, it's impressive to see how many people actually do speak Spanish, even if they live in Isler, they still speak it. Even if they have lived all their life in Isler and never cross to Delicias, they still know Spanish, and they even speak Spanish with their friends; they don't use English as much. There are groups that do, but it's more the Spanish language.

Based on my observation, Oscar speaks a lot more Spanish than English at least with his friends; however, he addresses me in English. In a follow-up question he concurred that at school he speaks English with any adult who does not address him first in Spanish, regardless of ethnicity. English is the language of school, the language of his education.

His constant use of Spanish does not mean he neglects English or finds it unimportant. He uses the language that the other will understand, but he does not feel obligated to speak one language over the other: "If they [people] address me in English I

“speak English, if they address me in Spanish, I will speak Spanish. It’s just...it’s their decision” and he laughed while making the comment. If Spanish is widely used in Isler, English remains an important language too:

It’s important for school, and there are people that don’t know Spanish, and you do need to speak English to them, teachers for example. There are some that don’t speak Spanish, and you need to speak English in your English class. And if you speak Spanish and the rest of the class does not understand...

Oscar is respectful of those who do not speak Spanish and he is pragmatic; he considers that one needs to use the language that everyone understands in order to communicate.

And that is why Oscar thinks that Americans should learn other languages:

It’s very important because it’s a country of immigrants, like everyone comes from everywhere, so it’s very important. You need to know English well, some people don’t, like Mexicans [undocumented people] they cross over and you still need to associate with them, be able to communicate with them to get something done, otherwise it’s going to be like....you are not going to get anything done [he laughs]....and you are going to encounter people that you are going to need to know Spanish, French, whatever, German....

Language is a communicating tool to live in society and get it moving. Language is also a representation of the United States and the fact that this country was built by immigrants of various backgrounds and languages. Therefore, both Spanish and English are important and necessary to Oscar: “I have lived most of my life in Mexico, like where I travel where I visit, they are all Mexicans, so I speak Spanish more, so I think it’s more

important...” and Spanish is his native language, the one he has learned from his parents and that represents his roots as his mother mentioned: “I really would be sad if he didn’t know Spanish because those are our roots.” Oscar plans on keeping his roots alive through his future children: “I would like my kids to be raised either in Mexico or in a border town. I want them to learn Spanish.” And he added [oral communication] that it was: “To fit with the family. It would be weird if they did not speak Spanish.” The language is a communicative tool for the family to keep united and aware of its heritage. English remains fundamental in Oscar’s life: “It’s [English] almost as important [as Spanish] because I want to pursue studies in the United States, but I know Spanish, but I need to know English very well, that’s why.” English is a practical tool to communicate, and therefore, to succeed in this country. English is a necessity, a *need*.

Mrs. Torres viewed knowing English as essential:

MT: I would be very sad also if he could not speak English because he was born in the US and I live in here in the border, in a border town. My parents, one of their key things, they wanted us to learn English. They understood English but they did not speak English, but they thought it was very important for us to learn English, and that’s the same for us. It was a very important language to learn.

SR: Is that because we are on the border or is that because you think English is important?

MT: Both. Both, yes it’s very important because we are living in a border town and even though everybody speaks Spanish [we both laugh]....But, I think it’s important for them to learn English...

Speaking English is critical as the Torres family lives on the border and English is also an important language, but Oscar was born in the United States; therefore, he should speak English his mother believed. Oscar shared the same perspective:

SR: Do you think it is necessary to speak English to be an American?

OT: Yes. Yes I do. Because if you want....you need to interact with Americans. I think it's very important to be taught English, so you can be like Americans.

Because if not, you can't, you are not American culture wise. You are only like, the paper says you are American. But, I think it's more important who you are.

SR: So, to be an American you have to speak English? Is that what you mean?

OT: Yes.

Although Oscar's quote is a little confusing, and I could not have it cleared up, Oscar mentioned some interesting points. To be an American, one should speak English, at least to interact and have dealings with people, as he mentioned previously. Speaking English is also a medium to be part of the country, to fit in, to be *like Americans*, to be the same, to avoid being different, at least on the surface. On paper (the birth certificate and the passport he uses to cross the border) he is American, he holds the same passport as any other U.S. citizen, but at heart he is a Mexican: "I view myself as a Mexican. I was raised in a Mexican culture." Therefore, for Oscar, the culture one is raised in, determines who we are. To the question about what it means for someone to call himself or herself American he said:

To be born and raised with cultures that are American, like really American.

Cultures, not influenced by, like in Isler, there's influence by a lot of Mexican

culture. But, if you went deep in the middle of the country, because there's also Canada, and if you went like deep... I don't know how to put it, it's not being influenced by other cultures, because here everyone is influenced by Mexico. Everyone, there's not a single person that is not influenced by it. And [to be an American is] to really keep like those fundamentals of a culture.

Although he was born in the United States, Oscar was raised mainly in Mexico in a Mexican culture and that what makes him a Mexican in his opinion. To be an American, one has to be away from both the Mexican and Canadian borders and have a culture that has been sheltered from any external influence. Had he been raised in Isler, Oscar would still not be American at heart because of the Mexican influence. The three major components that make someone an American Oscar summarized to me are: language, and where someone was born and raised. He applied the same logic to being a Mexican:

Same thing, to be raised with a culture, like what you eat for example, has a lot to do, and what they talk, how they speak Spanish, what they do what they like.

Like, people in the United States like football, like the oval, Mexicans like soccer, that's how you are raised and different other things.

Values, habits and ways of life are different for each culture and that is what makes an individual part of a specific culture. Of course, there is a conflict in Oscar's identity: he wants to be like an American by adopting the language, but he also wants to remain a Mexican. He claims both identities.

I mean it's at heart. I know I am a Mexican, the paper says I am an American and that's good because I would like to be like an American for, I want to study in

America, I want to live in the United States. I want to live here [U.S.]. But, it's like, I am part of a Mexican [he stumbles in this sentence], I was raised in my culture.

Being an American on paper is an advantage as it will allow Oscar to live and work in the United States, but his heritage is Mexican. Oscar seems to struggle with how to define himself as an individual holding dual cultures.

His mother, however, perceived her son as simply being a Mexican. In her opinion he behaves more like a Mexican:

MT: He is not outspoken, I think he is more educated that way.

SR: And more reserved?

MT: And more reserved definitely.

SR: But do you think it's more a Mexican trait or do you think it's just his personality?

MT: No, I think it's Mexican. Because our culture is more reserved, you don't speak your mind... You are more disciplined that way. There is that barrier that you can't cross because of your education; that you must behave yourself and not say what you think...

SR: Is that only with family, at work, school or is that only in specific situations?

MT: I think in family....They have to respect more.

SR: There's a strong respect..so in that sense he behaves more as a Mexican?

MT: Yes, as a Mexican....

Mrs. Torres mentioned to me that she was concentrating on his upbringing, and in that sense he is a Mexican, he does not express his opinion within the family as is expected of him. However, she noticed a difference in her son's behavior and ways of handling himself when in Mexico or when in the United States:

MT: He is more outspoken over there than here, I think. For example, here in Mexico you don't respect much, uh....for example, the signs, the traffic signs and everything and as soon as he crosses over he respects everything, traffic signs and he behaves more...differently I think. In that sense, that's where I see he's crossing the line [we both laugh], American and Mexican....Or when he is in a store [in the U.S.] for example, let's say electronics and he goes and asks questions, and he is very fluent asking questions and everything and here [Mexico] there's not many salespersons and everything so you just, you know, go around...

SR: So, he is Mexican here and he is American over there to a certain extent?

MT: Yes.

By her son's ability to handle different situations specific to each country's ways of life, she views him as being comfortable and blending in both cultures making him a Mexican and an American. Mrs. Torres definition of an American is quite different from her son's:" In my point of view...oh my God, it's a hard question. For me being an American is a lot of opportunities, a lot of opportunities for example for my children, have a better education. That I think is part of being an American. Having more...more opportunities." She bases her definition on what the United States can offer her children to be

economically successful in life; whereas, her son views it on the cultural and legal aspects, the same as he understands what it is to be a Mexican. His mother, on the other hands described being a Mexican as: “Well, I guess...about being a Mexican...there is social life. There is social life, you meet people, you interact with people.” Mrs. Torres’s presents the social perspective of what it is to be a Mexican.

Oscar does not usually consider himself a Mexican-American in spite of being an American –on paper- and a Mexican at heart. He does not claim his heritage in a hyphenated form. Nor does he claim to be a Chicano, a Latino. Just a Mexican:

I see myself as a Mexican because it’s a matter like the World Cup. I didn’t like the US team, it’s like my nature is Mexican. I go for the Mexican team, a lot has to do with sports, soccer, and like my brothers like they were always Mexican, we were raised in a way that we view ourselves as Mexican. Well, if you ask me I would say I am a Mexican, I think other people if they analyze me, not because of what I think, they would say I am a Mexican-American.

Oscar is aware that in spite of viewing himself as a Mexican, others might see him as a Mexican-American. In a follow-up conversation he explained to me why he could be perceived as a Mexican-American: “It’s a lack of knowing me. But if they know the facts, I live in Isler, I am taught in English, and also if you say ‘soccer’, they know you are from the U.S.; whereas, in Guadalajara they don’t know what ‘soccer’ is, they call it ‘fútbol’.” Oscar raised an interesting point, how language divulges who one is.

Regardless of knowing the facts or not, people will quickly figure out that Oscar lives (to

some extent) in the United States because of the words he uses. In fact, Oscar reported using code switching a lot or *Spanglish* as he calls it, with friends and people who live on both sides of the border. However, he only uses English words in a Spanish sentence and not vice versa he explained:

Spanglish is a mix between Spanish and English. It only works when talking Spanish though, because there are little or no mixed words in English. In Spanish you have 'soda', 'soccer', 'sandwich' and many other words. They are totally English and are used only in Northern Mexico and by Mexicans in the United States. You don't even realize they are not correct, until you go to Southern Mexico and people have a blank stare when you tell them 'soda' or 'sandwich'.

Oscar is well-aware of his use of code-switching, how it divulges his background, but also that the code-switching words may not be understood in regions away from the borderlands. Still, "using *Spanglish* has become very normal for me. Anywhere close to Delicias or Isler, I usually use *Spanglish*. However, when I go to Southern Mexico, I try my best to get rid of those words when talking."

Therefore, in his language use, Oscar mixes two identities, Mexican and American to create a new one that of a Mexican-American maybe, even if it is not the way Oscar views himself.

As Oscar was raised in Mexico, in a Mexican culture, it is worthwhile asking ourselves if he is an immigrant to the United States. Oscar did not think so. In his opinion: "I am not. I mean the paper says I actually live here, because I live with my aunt

and I study here. So, I don't see...I have my life here, I want to pursue it so I don't see myself as an immigrant." And asked if others might view him as an immigrant: "I don't feel judged at all, I don't feel like they see me and ask 'Is he an immigrant?' or 'Where does he come from?' I feel like I fit perfectly with everyone else."

People who interact with him probably do not view Oscar as an immigrant either, not only because he has U.S. citizenship but also because he is the same as everyone else, he blends in the American culture. Interestingly though, Oscar wants to convince himself that he does belong to the U.S. culture as much as he belongs to the Mexican one. For his mother he is not an immigrant solely on one fact that he was born in the United States: "No [he cannot be considered an immigrant], mainly because he was born there and....mainly because he was born there." She associates citizenship to immigration, she associates *immigrant* with its legal aspect, not the cultural one.

Discussion

Oscar and his family

To some extent we all make choices in our lives that affect who we are. At times, however, others make those decisions such as parents. It was Mr. and Mrs. Torres's decision and not Oscar's to have him born in the United States. His parents who opted to give birth to Oscar in this country, making him a U.S. citizen with all the rights and

obligations involved, developed this nature part of his identity. Gee (2001) points out that the forces of nature are important only to the extent that they are recognized as such by either ourselves, others or institutions. Therefore, Oscar's birth in the United States is only important in so far that it is recognized by the U.S. institutions; be it the immigration services, Social Security, or the legislative branch that allows a citizen to vote and be an integral part of this country. However, because it is the institution who grants people citizenship and which may decide to repeal it, Oscar's place of birth may not be totally part of his nature identity: "It can be viewed as a type of nature identity ...but it is secured by law and thus it can be taken away and is contestable at that level...Right wingers in several states have wanted to repeal the 14th Amendment or at least not count immigrant children born in the US as state citizens" (Gee, 2012; email communication). In that sense, society, in the form of an administration, has control over Oscar's institutional identity in Gee's perspective.

Oscar is also a Mexican citizen, and that aspect of his identity was purely a negotiation with the institution. "A set of authorities" (Gee, 2001; p. 102) "laws" and "rules" and their powers authorized Oscar to be a citizen of Mexico in spite of being born abroad; based on his parents citizenship as Mexicans. As is presented later, identity through the emotional association to a nation may sometimes be much more than its official aspect. Still, this dual citizenship may have an impact on how Oscar positions his identities, as citizenship is the ultimate recognition of one's belonging to a nation.

The forces of nature are what determined the way Oscar looks. One way of looking at Oscar's identity, at who he is, is that he is fair skinned, but it is a state for

which he had absolutely no control, and it is not something he has accomplished. That one looks fair or dark skinned is not in itself important. However, because we live in society and prejudice does exist, looks based on ones' race or color among other aspects may become critical. Oscar may be ascribed the identity of a Caucasian and not of a Hispanic by some "rational individuals" in the United States or may have be perceived more positively because of a lighter skin, by the same "rational individuals" in Mexico.

Like most border crossers' parents the Torres are financially comfortable according to Oscar. This discursive perspective on the family's identity is locally recognized by people in their surroundings, by store owners on both sides of the border. Most of the family's shopping is done in Isler (as is the case of many border crosser families) or in the surrounding towns; therefore, the family may be perceived as either "rich Mexicans" or as "dirty Mexicans" according to who ascribes the identity. There is a lot of poverty in Delicias, but Isler merchants are also aware that some old Mexican families have been well off for generations; and that there are also many professionals (doctors in particular) in Delicias as well as some large ranches in the Northern part of the state. However, law enforcement agencies such as the Border Patrols, based on their field of work may assume the family's money was illegally obtained. The family's identity is negotiated through other people's ascription, the "regular folks" or the law enforcement officials; the latter ascribes an identity to the families based on laws within the institutions, as well as on their own ascription, based on their experience.

Interests and School

Although an excellent student, I viewed Oscar as a very talkative student who sometimes disturbed the class. This discursive identity that I, a “rational individual,” recognized in him is an individual trait of his personality ascribed by others, at least me his teacher. Here, Oscar achieved the identity of a talkative person who also knows when it is time to work. However, this discursive identity that I ascribed to him may not be applicable in other classes or contexts. Maybe, some other teachers view Oscar as simply a regular student who, like his classmates, enjoys chatting given the opportunity.

Sports are what defined Oscar’s identity in his opinion; particularly soccer. He shares experiences with other soccer enthusiasts, such as the excitements and disappointments during the World Cup, or during any important soccer game like other individuals around the world may have done. All of them have an allegiance and participation in a ‘set of distinctive practices’, such as watching games and potentially commenting on the social media about them. This aspect of Oscar’s identity is within an affinity perspective as he shares these practices with people with whom he may not have anything else in common, and who may not even live around the U.S.–Mexico border, but anywhere else in the world. In that sense, it is the sport of soccer that defines Oscar, as he said. However, I do not see it as an aspect that made him Mexican: “I see myself as a Mexican because it’s a matter like, the World Cup. I didn’t like the U.S. team. It’s like my nature is Mexican, I go for the Mexican team (...).” Rather than associating himself with the Mexican team per se, he associates himself with soccer lovers, those who do not

miss a game. His affinity in that sense is with soccer lovers not Mexican people. Oscar *chooses* to like soccer, he has a certain control over his taste, and his interest is not sanctioned by authorities; rather it is a deliberate choice to associate himself with other people who have the same affinity: soccer.

In my opinion, there are two distinct traits in Oscar's love for soccer and its association to Mexico. As I explained, his affinity is with soccer, but when it comes to preference he selects Mexico, like he has preferences among the various Mexican teams. He prefers the "Chivas," the Guadalajara team. Furthermore, it is interesting to ask one self: were the U.S. team an outstanding one, would Oscar be more willing to associate himself with that team? In that case, his identity would be positioned quite differently, as maybe a more American one?

Other than his passion for soccer, Oscar has friends like any other teenager and likes to go out. Oscar's friends are mostly Hispanics of Mexican descent. At first glance, it is tempting to think that due to some sort of affinity, Oscar chooses to only associate with them. That is not so. As I explained for Icela's case, Isler does not have a diverse population, Delicias does not either. Isler's population is actually 83% Hispanic and IHS is 95 %. If a student does not leave the area for an amount of time, it is unlikely he/she will meet people of other ethnic background. Oscar, like all the other young people around him, does not have a choice: the situation is imposed on to him. The "rational individuals" that had businesses in Isler providing jobs to the community decided to leave the area, creating an *exodus* from Isler of all ethnicities." For one reason or another they

decided that Isler was not suitable for business anymore, leading Isler to become and be ascribed the position of a mostly Hispanic town, whereas in the 1960's and 70's, Isler was Hispanic and White.

I propose that Oscar is imposed an affinity with other Hispanics not because he chooses to, but rather it is imposed on to him. To an extent, the *exodus* that happened when businesses left, has engendered a limited exposure to other ethnic groups for the local population; so Oscar's place of residence, a rural town on the U.S.-Mexico border, is the leading cause to only knowing Hispanic people. Therefore, the "forces in nature" have "unfolded" outside of Oscar's control, or the control of society. It is only when Oscar goes to college that he will be exposed to other ethnic groups and will have a chance to choose friends of various heritages.

Delicias is a tranquil town according to Mrs. Torres, but for Oscar it is also a place to *party*. When Oscar goes out it is usually in Mexico because "Delicias is for nighttime, to go out, there are no curfew, no cop trouble because of alcohol, not that I really drink. It's kind of like, there are no parties here [Isler]." Oscar associates fun time and parties with Delicias and creates for himself an affinity identity with other teenagers who want to *party* on the Mexican side.

Residency and Border Crossing Experiences

In order to comply with his residency requirement, Oscar spends most of his weeknights in Isler. Only students who reside in the State are allowed to attend public school districts, according to the law. This is a position sanctioned by authorities; therefore, Oscar must negotiate his identity around it to create for himself an institutional identity by actually calling Isler his home.

Being a border crosser is a normal part of life for Oscar who has grown up going back and forth between Mexico and the United States, like his mother did as a child. The main reason Oscar views it as normal is that everyone around him crosses too: “I think if it was only me, I would feel weird, but it’s like everyone around me.” There is an affinity among them, they all have the same experiences of crossing every day or every week and being asked the same questions. They are all accustomed to waiting in line and potentially being late to school if the line goes slow. It is not uncommon to hear students comment to each other about the line and how long it took to cross. His experiences are similar to the ones of local border crossers and border crossers all over the border; however, he shares his experiences (commenting on the long line for example) only with local border crossers. He does not have “an allegiance” to an outside the area group with whom he shares his experiences. Interestingly, the town of Delicias has a special TV channel that monitors the lanes and the cars entering the United States; before heading to the border, individuals can check if it is the right time to cross the border, or which lane to take and make sure to avoid the slow one (the one where the inspection takes longer, as explained by Icela).

Gee (2001) mentions the idea that an affinity may not always be a choice on the part of the member who shares a “set of distinctive practices” (p. 105). He contends that in “new capitalism” affinity groups may sometimes be created by institutions (businesses, schools...) to give a seemingly sense of power and independence to their people who are organized in various work related ‘clubs’ such as “quality circles” or “communities of learners” (Gee, 2001; p. 106-107). In that case, “I will say that such institutionally created A-Identities [affinity identities], whether orchestrated by businesses, schools, or other institutions, are “institutionally sanctioned”” (Gee, 2001; p. 107). I propose that the Delicias leadership creates an affinity among border crossers, it “socially engineers” practices among people who cross the border. The leadership is in the form of institutions with a TV station and quite likely politicians, who ‘orchestrate’ how people talk among each other, about border crossing to the United States. With the wide availability of electronic devices, it is easy for border crossers to communicate with each other and comment on their experience crossing on that specific day or specific period of the year. I submit that by creating these affinities, the Mexican leadership makes a seeming effort in helping its citizens with the crossing process into the United States.

At the border itself, Oscar like other student border crossers has to negotiate his identity again to be authorized by the set of rules upheld by the institution. The institution functions by its official rules and laws but also by its traditions and principles (Gee 2001, p. 102). Those principles and traditions also guide the agents into considering -based on their experiences-- what is law. It is not saying they make up their own laws of course;

rather that experience and practice have led law enforcement agents at the border and the institution that oversees them to direct their duties in a certain way. Therefore, when they see teenagers crossing the line, they stop them more frequently than some other people, as teenagers are more likely to be those passing drugs according to Oscar: "When they see young people, they have a tendency to check you because they look at people who are more prone to do bad or illegal things." Whereas, when he is with his mother he is usually not stopped. At that time, he is judged discursively as a middle class school boy who has been shopping with his mother and who is not the kind of person to be concealing drugs. Therefore, Oscar is ascribed an identity according to how he crosses the border: as a teenager who is a potential criminal or as a son who went shopping with his mother. Here, his identity may be viewed two ways: discursively and institutionally.

The institution is authorized by laws and rules, but the agents who enforce them are also "rational individuals" who make decisions -particularly at the border or in law enforcement situations-- using their training but also their common sense. This is that common sense that also tells them that Oscar might be passing drugs, because he is a teenage boy. As a teenage boy he is recognized as a potential criminal. They ascribe that identity to him. It almost becomes an individual trait even though he did not choose it. Some other teenagers are doing criminal activities; therefore, the dialogue of other people affects Oscar regardless of his real identity.

Consequently, the process of crossing the international line creates situations where Oscar must negotiate his identities according to where he is and with whom. As he is about to leave Delicias, he is recognized as a regular individual by Mexican institutions

who facilitate the crossing process by providing information about the traffic at the border. Once he is inspected at the U.S. Port of Entry, he must take on the discursive identity of an honest young man who is not involved in any illegal activities.

The Port of Entry and the fence are the two physical elements separating Mexico from the United States. Mrs. Torres, Oscar's mother does not like the fence. It is not the separation between both countries, per se, that she does not like; it is the extreme connotations implied by the fence that she dislikes: "Visually, I don't like it. Seeing the fence, I don't like it because it's like the Berlin Wall." The fence imprisons the people of one side, who cannot cross freely. If one takes the example of France and Spain, the two countries have a natural border created by the Pyrenees Mountains. That separation was developed by the forces in Nature; the French and the Spaniards had no control over these Mountains, but to an extent they used them to create a border. Between the U.S. and Mexico, in the area of the Arizona and Sonora states, the border was created by the institution to separate (or maybe divide) people. It is a position that has been sanctioned by the authorities of the Federal government.

When Mrs. Torres grew up, the fence was a simple barbed wire and crossing even while having forgotten one's papers was not an issue. At the time, the international line was a place where identities were not contested as they are now. Nowadays, one must prove without the shadow of a doubt who he or she is (and that applies about everywhere around the world). Every individual is ascribed the identity of a potential criminal, and it is the individual's responsibility to prove otherwise. In Mrs. Torres youth, the principles

and rules set by the institution were not very strict, and the discourse of “rational individuals” likely was that people from Mexico could cross to the United States and return home to Mexico at the end of the day. In the borderlands, border crossers may not have been ascribed an identity; in my opinion, they were simply ignored because the U.S. economy was good, and drugs to an extent were likely ignored as well.

Nowadays, it is quite different, and that is frustrating for Mrs. Torres who does not like what her children are seeing; not only in the fence itself but in what the fence means: “When I was a child (...) I knew every single custom agent and everybody knew us (...), they treated us like family (...) I do see a difference growing up and now what my children are seeing and everything.” As a child, Mrs. Torres must have felt respected, and her identity as an upstanding Mexican citizen must not have been doubted. Because of that, it is likely that she has established a respect for the border crossing process and for the American people. Her children on the other hand are exposed to a different experience crossing the line. They must negotiate an identity around the idea that the laws and rules authorized by the institutions are stricter, and everyone is now viewed as a potential criminal for one, but also the “regular folks” assume the same about border crossers and ascribe them that identity. Oscar has received that discursive identity because others have achieved that individual trait; individuals cross the border between both countries without the proper paperwork, “the illegals” or “the undocumented” as they are usually referred to; or the drug dealers who use various mules (people hired by dealers) to pass their drug loads into the United States. Of course, the decline in the U.S. economy affects the perspective “regular folks” have on immigration, legal or not.

Regardless, people who share a common background (Mexican border crosser) are imposed the same identity as some of their fellow border crossers achieve because of their illegal activities.

Mrs. Torres is frustrated –although discreetly--by the fact that nowadays being a border crosser from Mexico is almost like living on the “wrong side” of the fence: “It’s different (...) it was a wire fence, you could even cross [the fence] and you would come back. There was nothing wrong or any problem.” Now, crossing at a place other than a port of entry is not only wrong, it is illegal and a major offense to the United States (and it is probably the same for Mexico). She sounds frustrated by the unwanted recognition that affects her children.

Language, Cultural Identity and Citizenship

Spanish is Oscar’s native language, the language used at home with his family. The forces of nature had Oscar raised by his Spanish speaking family. He had no choice in the matter, no control over his language. It is not something he accomplished. Then, he went to school in the U.S. and again, the choice of studying in English was not his. Now, however, the quality of his Spanish and English are mainly his achievement. Being fluent in both languages is something that Oscar has achieved, maybe not entirely on his own (he had teachers and parents who were pushing him to succeed) but mostly through his work; it now has become an individual trait, an aspect of his individuality that he is a true

bilingual. The discursive perspective on Oscar's identity is based on the fact that others recognize him as bilingual.

As Oscar has the ability to use both languages almost equally, he lets others choose the language they want to use to communicate with him: "If they [people] address me in English I speak English, if they address me in Spanish, I will speak Spanish. It's just...it's their decision." Here, Oscar negotiates his own identity, he positions himself around which identity others ascribe to him; if they view him as a Spanish speaker mainly, he will go with the flow, follow the lead and speak Spanish. If on the other hand, the individuals view him as an English speaker, he will oblige and speak English. Because Oscar is comfortable with the discursive identity "rational individuals" ascribe to him, he does not feel the need to fight the ascription.

Oscar himself ascribes an identity to people based on their ethnicity. When he is the one who addresses people first, he will speak Spanish if the individual looks Hispanic and English if the person looks Anglo; therefore, he assumes what the nature identity of others is. Based on that perspective he ascribes a discursive identity to the individuals, assuming they are more likely to speak a specific language based on their ethnicity. He ascribes that identity to others based on his own reactions to both languages. Although he is bilingual, Spanish remains his first language and the one he prefers to speak. Gee (2001) considers that nature forces are important to the extent that they are recognized as such by ourselves, others or institutions. However, the natural forces in this case are based on Oscar's assumptions: looking Hispanic means being a Spanish speaker and looking White means speaking English. Those assumptions are not always correct. Still

others view Isler and its population the same way Oscar does: based on looks and assumptions. Part of people's identities is based on the "discourse or dialogue of other people" (Gee, 2001; p. 103), on how the "rational individuals" recognize people to be; but it does not mean they are accurate. "Rational individuals" use "everyday' theories" (Gee, 2001; p. 104) to ascribe identities, but these theories may be based on stereotypes.

Oscar mentioned that most people in Isler speak Spanish: "I know there are people that don't speak Spanish [in Isler], but like, it's impressive to see how many people actually do speak Spanish, even if they live in Isler, they still speak it." Individuals from Arizona major cities also ascribe an identity to Isler residents, but the critical difference is that Oscar knows by experience: 'Isler residents speak Spanish more than they speak English,' whereas the discourse from "rational individuals" is that "they" --as the Isler population is referred to-- speak Spanish when they should speak English, because Isler is in the United States. This discourse is often heard in the news or in the political discourse. Therefore, these regular 'folks' ascribe a negative identity to Isler residents including Oscar. The ascription is not mainly based on the achievement of the population --having learned Spanish-- but on their inability to speak English, according to folks who do not live in Isler. In fact, this discursive identity is based on the place of residence, the border with Mexico.

Oscar is a Mexican at heart as previously mentioned. He also wants to be an American and be perceived as such. To be an American one has to speak English in Oscar's opinion even if one is an American legally: "It's very important to be taught

English, so you can be like Americans. Because if not, you can't, you are not American culture wise. You are only like... the paper says you are American. But, I think it's more important who you are." In this statement, Oscar creates for himself three perspectives on identity. Speaking English allows an individual to be more than just American on paper but also in its culture according to Oscar. In my opinion, however, language is what people usually notice first about a person they do not know; it often is an indicator of citizenship, but not necessarily of culture. Oscar wants to be recognized as an American through his discourse. Through his knowledge of the English language that he has worked on acquiring and even exceeding on state tests, he wants to achieve that recognition by others as an American. He is already recognized as such by the institutions through his citizenship, but it is not enough. He wants to negotiate the identity of an American, as he sees it, not one on paper, but one that would represent who he really is. In Oscar's quest to be "like Americans" another aspect of his identity emerges: his desire for sharing practices with other Americans through language to reach the American culture; therefore, the American status. English represents the process to become an American, and so Oscar wants to "participate" and "share" language "practices" with other people to be part of that group that is called Americans.

Interestingly, Oscar pointed out that people, "rational individuals" in Mexico may view him as a Mexican-American through his discourse. Again, language plays an important role in his identity: "If they know the facts, I live in Isler, I am taught in English, and also if you say 'soccer,' they know you are from the U.S." Because of how

he expresses himself, the words he uses, and the language in which he received his education, he is perceived as a Mexican-American. It is not a discursive identity he seeks out, as he views himself as a Mexican. Yet, he does not fight the ascription. He understands that the ways he presents himself to others make him fit the portrait of a Mexican-American.

Oscar's mother does not perceive her son as being Mexican-American, rather as a Mexican who is comfortable in both cultures and countries. She indicated that she positions her son as Mexican based on his upbringing, but she noticed that he knows how to handle himself in both Mexico and the United States. She mentioned the example of her son driving like a Mexican in Mexico, but like an American in the United States:

Here in Mexico, you don't respect much, uh...for example the signs, the traffic signs and everything and as soon as he crosses over, he respects everything, traffic signs...and he behaves more...differently, I think. In that sense that's when he's crossing the line, American and Mexican.

Gee (2001) distinguishes between an ascription (by others) and an achievement (something one has accomplished) in the way an individual negotiates his/her discursive identity. In my opinion, Oscar in the example provided by Mrs. Torres is *ascribed* this identity by his mother and quite likely by others as well. But he also achieved that identity. Oscar understands the differences between Mexico and the United States and is able to abide by each country's "rules", "traditions" and "laws." In a way, Oscar has learned how to negotiate his identity around the institution of each country while

presenting a certain discursive identity through his interactions in Mexico and the United States.

Gee (2001; p. 104) considers that institution identities and discursive identities “can be placed on a continuum in terms of how active or passive one is in “recruiting” them, that is, in terms of how much such identities can be viewed as merely ascribed to a person versus an active achievement or accomplishment of that person.” Oscar “recruits actively” to construct the identity of an American through his discourse; he negotiates that identity for others to see in the United States, and an identity for himself as a Mexican. He wants to be recognized by others, the “regular folks” as an American, but his nature remains Mexican: “It’s like my nature is of a Mexican.” When he is in Delicias, he is likely ascribed the identity of a Mexican-American by the local people. When he goes further south in Mexico, Mexicans will be likely to question his discursive identity as a Mexican, remarking his Spanish is influenced, as Oscar notes, by some English words: “In Spanish you have ‘soda,’ ‘soccer,’ ‘sandwich’ and many other words. They are totally English and are used only in Northern Mexico and by Mexicans in the United States.”

Oscar’s parents made sure their son would be legally positioned as an American - they had him the United States. However, Mrs. Torres ascribes her son through his discourse, the discursive identity of a Mexican in his upbringing, although he is versatile in his cultural behaviors. Oscar negotiates his identities to fit and blend in his

surroundings. Using Martinez's (1994; p. 61) terminology, one could argue that Oscar is a biculturalist, that is, a person "whose lifestyle and mind-set reflect two cultures."

Conclusion

The three focus participants in this study were U.S. born; two were also citizens of Mexico. Their parents were Mexican citizens allowed to enter the United States. The focus students had lived their entire life in the border area of Delicias-Isler. They were bilingual, usually more comfortable speaking in Spanish as it was their heritage language but more proficient in English when writing.

To establish residency in the state and attend the local school district, the boys had a legal guardian in Isler, whereas Icela's parents owned a property. However, the three of them returned home to their parents in Delicias, Mexico, daily for Icela and most days for the boys.

Crossing the border about everyday, twice a day, is a time-consuming affair and may be a stressful adventure that certainly affects the enactment of identities. Icela and Rogelio regularly mentioned in their journal the amount of time spent waiting at the border going either way. Rogelio was frustrated by the amount of time "wasted," and Icela was quite anxious; she was afraid she would be late to school. Oscar did not

mention much the crossing of the border. He may have thought that it was not really important, he perceived border crossing: as a normal part of life.

However, the three student border crossers had to negotiate their identities at each crossing. Their institutional identity as U.S. citizens was questioned each time they crossed the border, and at each occurrence they had to prove their U.S. citizenship. Their discursive identity was challenged regularly by officials who used not only their training but also their knowledge as private citizens to inspect border crossers. Icela, was nervous about having to lie about actually living in Delicias instead of Isler. Therefore, each time she had to negotiate the discursive identity as an Isler resident and convince the border agent that she did live in Isler. Both boys had their discursive identity challenged in a different manner. They felt that they were often viewed as potential criminals when they crossed the border. Rogelio was quite frustrated and aggravated with the constant interrogation and the negative ascription he was receiving. Oscar was often searched when he was by himself, but his perspective was that teenagers tend to be the ones passing drugs, so he understood that as a teenager he was likely to be searched and have his discursive identity (as a law-abiding youngster) questioned. He was quite philosophical about the daily treatment by border officials, and was not offended by the process commenting: "What am I going to say?"

Language was an important part of the identity for each of the three participants. Spanish as their heritage language was a fundamental part of their identities, and each felt more comfortable speaking in Spanish than in English. English was very important, too,

but used by Rogelio and Oscar as a tool in the interest of being part of the United States and an American. For Icela English was a medium to be able to study and likely work in the United States, though not necessarily to become more American.

Both, Rogelio and Oscar considered that because they were Americans and lived – to an extent-- in the United States, they had to learn the language and the culture of the country. For Oscar the main reason was that he did not want to be an American only “on paper,” and for Rogelio it was because he did not want to be ascribed the identity of a Chicano. Therefore, in order to recruit the discursive identity of Americans, Rogelio and Oscar strove to learn and master English. Furthermore, in an effort to be “like Americans,” they were seeking to share practices with other Americans (or Americans of foreign born parents for Rogelio) through language and culture to reach the status of an American. They formed an affinity identity with other Americans. Icela, on the other hand had no desire to reach that status. The institutional identity of an American was sufficient for her; she did not try to negotiate for herself the discursive identity of an American.

Icela was not concerned about the identity “rational individuals” might ascribe her. She self-identified as a Mexican, and it was what mattered most to her. Thinking that she was not a Mexican citizen (she discovered later on that she actually was) was not important to her. An institutional identity as an American and a claimed identity as a Mexican were all she needed.

Rogelio and Oscar both felt they were Mexican at heart; they had been brought up in a Mexican culture. They wanted to be positioned that way within the Mexican

community, but they also wanted the recognition of an American identity within the American community. Rogelio, however, was adamant about not being ascribed the identity of a Chicano, as, he viewed Chicanos as unknowledgeable about Spanish and English as well as about the history and cultures of the United States and Mexico. He took pride in his knowledge of Mexican history and traditions, as well as in being proficient in English and Spanish.

In my opinion, Gee's (2001) theoretical framework was well applicable in this study of student border crossers' identity. However, my data suggests that the framework does not fully account for parental or external influences on people's lives. For example, the manner in which the parents have influenced their children in viewing border living cannot be fully explained through Gee's perspectives on identity formation.

The discursive view of identity reveals how "rational individuals" perceive others, and how one can "recruit" to be perceived a certain way. It does not explain or describe the important and relevant issue, however, of how people react to the perceptions and discourses others have of them.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore and explain the negotiation of identities of American-born Mexican descent high school students in a U.S.-Mexico border town. These students reside mostly with their parents and families on the Mexican side and, having legal American status, cross the border daily to attend high school on the U.S. side. This qualitative study was informed by social and historical perspectives and inspired by identities. This research emphasized the identity of border crossers and how they position and view themselves when faced with Americanization on the U.S. side and Mexicanization on the Mexican side. The study took place in Isler, Arizona a small town bordering Delicias in Sonora, Mexico. The towns are located right on the international line, a critical point for the findings in this research.

The data consisting of interviews and a focus group discussion, was collected from 19 participants spread as 3 focus students and 4 of their parents, 6 additional students, and 6 members of the high school faculty or staff. I interviewed each participant once, but I asked countless follow-up questions to the focus group participants. All participants were part of a sample of convenience as I recruited them at my place of work.

The three focus participants of this case study also provided more information for this research by writing a journal for a period of 30 days. The other participants were mainly used to triangulate data. The participants were all recruited in a high school on the U.S. side of the border.

The main participants consisted of:

- Icela, an 18 year old female, U.S. and Mexican citizen
- Rogelio, a 15 year old male, U.S. citizen
- Oscar, a 16 year old male, U.S. and Mexican citizen

Each of the three participants had either a legal guardian in Isler or the parents owned a property there to ensure residency in the state and thereby meet the state residency requirement for attending Isler High School.

I have examined the data through the theoretical lens of Gee's (2001) perspective on identity, which proposes four ways to view identity, or "what it means to be a 'certain kind of person.'" The four perspectives are: *Nature*, *Institution*, *Discourse* and *Affinity*. Each identity perspective is built within a certain society and within a context, none of them works alone; they are tied to one another. Gee notes, "things are not trivial or important all by themselves. We humans make them trivial or important or something in between" (Gee, 2011; p.177).

One's *Nature identity*, according to the author, is a state that is developed through the forces in nature, which means that the individual has no control over them. The second perspective is of an *institutional identity*, which is authorized by authorities within institutions (Gee, 2001). The concept of authorization is based on "laws, rules, traditions or principles of various sorts" (Gee, 2001; p.102) that allow an institution to exercise its power. The third perspective is of a *discursive identity*, which comes from the recognition of "rational individuals" (Gee, 2001; p. 100) through their discourse and dialogue.

Basically, it is the perception others have of an individual and the identity they ascribe to

that individual. Here, the recognition is made by people who are not professional in assessing who the person is but rather use “everyday theories” (Gee, 2001; p.104) to ascribe an identity. The last perspective is of an *affinity identity* focused on shared practices of people within affinity groups. The people belonging to the groups do not have to reside in the same area or have met one another, they may live on the other side of the world, but they share some “distinctive practices” (Gee, 2001; p. 105) that allow them to have that affinity.

The “four perspectives are *not* separate from each other” (Gee, 2001; p. 101) on the contrary, they are tied to one another; therefore, the participants of this study were able to form their identities using the four perspectives in various contexts.

In this concluding chapter I first summarize the main findings of this study. I then make a connection between the review of the literature and the finding, and finally I examine the implications of this research and its limitations.

Negotiation of an Identity at Border Crossing

The residency of the participants was a critical aspect of the study as it influenced the students’ negotiation of an identity. Being a U.S. citizen does not guarantee the right to attend a public school in the United States. Students can only attend a U.S. school if they have residency within the state boundaries; otherwise, the students, even those who are U.S. citizens, are expected to pay tuition, since public schooling is largely paid for by state and local property taxes. To comply with the requirement, the participants had a

designated member of the family as legal guardian or in the case of Icela, her parents owned a property in Isler.

Although the participants all had residency in the United States, they each crossed back to Mexico about every day to go home. Like any other individual, the participants were inspected as they crossed into the United States. For them, however, this was a daily event. Their institutional identity was questioned twice each day as they went to and from school. At each occurrence the students had to prove that they were authorized to enter the country because of their status as U.S. citizens.

The fact that his institutional identity was potentially doubted, and that he had to wait in line to go to school or go home aggravated Rogelio, who considered that the process should be easier and the agents nicer. As far as Icela was concerned, the possibility of an interrogation on each occasion was nervewracking. That her identity may be questioned was not what made her nervous in itself. Rather, it was the fact that she could be “discovered” for not physically living in Isler, and that she might as a result, be prohibited from attending school in Isler. Her parents, after all, had made the effort to have her born in the U.S. for that very purpose: an education in the United States.

Oscar did not really mind that his institution identity be questioned. He understood that because young people are more prone to smuggle illegal substances, border agents were likely to inspect him more and question his identity, both as a U.S. citizen and as a law-abiding youngster. Oscar was quite philosophical about the crossing process, and how he had to negotiate his identity while going through inspection. Maybe, it is because Oscar considered that what mattered most was who we think we are rather than how

others view us. He considered himself a Mexican while also being a U.S. citizen; therefore if his identity was questioned, it was not that important since he knew in his own mind that his institution identity was that of a U.S citizen, and his discursive identity was Mexican while in the Mexican community.

Language as an Instrument

The three participants, all of them bilingual, used language as a tool to be recognized as a “certain kind of person.” All three were more comfortable speaking Spanish, their heritage language, but were more efficient writing in English. They used English and Spanish everyday at school and with friends.

Their institution identity was that of a U.S. citizen, but it was not necessarily sufficient for them, they also wanted to embrace the discursive identity of a U.S. citizen. In order to be recognized by “rational individuals” as Americans, they found it necessary “to recruit” their discursive identities (Gee, 2001) through language, and for each of the three focus students, being proficient in English was an indispensable tool for achieving that goal. Icela, Rogelio, and Oscar thought that to be considered an American in other people’s discourse, they had to speak English: “If you want to be here in America you should learn the language of America” said Icela. Rogelio commented: “Well, I am a U.S. citizen so it’s something [English] I should know.” It was almost like a requirement towards being accepted and viewed as a citizen in other people’s discourse.

Through language the male participants were also trying to build an affinity with other Americans by being like them in their speech. In an effort to be “like Americans” they strove at sharing practices with other Americans (or Americans of foreign born parents for Rogelio) through language and culture to reach the status of an American. They formed an affinity identity with other Americans through their discourse. As an example, the boys belonged to school clubs like most other American students. Icela did not have the apparent desire to reach that status. Gee (2011; p. 177), however, mentions that:

When we enact an identity in the world, we do not just use language all by itself to do this. We use language, but we also use distinctive ways of acting, interacting with others, believing, valuing, dressing, and using various sorts of objects and tools in various sorts of distinctive environments.

Gee (2011) refers to language as “social language” (p. 177) that is the type of discourse one uses: “to be recognized as a devout catholic, you cannot just talk the “right” way, about the “right” things, you also have to engage in certain actions...you need to talk the talk and walk the walk” (p.177). The three participants engaged in actions that emphasized their discursive identities as Americans. Oscar was conscious of the fact that he changed his way of driving as soon as he crossed the border modifying his driving to follow the laws and rules of the United States. Rogelio adapted easily to the ways of life of each country; he would complain and get angry when people would cut in line at the border, his mother explained. Americans do not usually cut in line.

Knowing English well was such an important issue that although they all “confessed” to code-switching occasionally, they disapproved of code-switching by others, and felt they, too, ought to avoid it. Rogelio was the most adamant about the connotations associated with code-switching, or *Spanglish* as it is commonly called in Isler. Although it might be said that code-switching between English (the primary language of the United States) and Spanish (the primary language of Mexico) would establish one’s identity with both sides of the border, for Rogelio using code-switching was like belonging to neither the United States nor Mexico. He ascribed the discursive identity of ignorant Hispanics to those who code-switched, which he presumed was the product of knowing neither English nor Spanish well.

Rogelio and Oscar definitely wanted to be viewed as Americans in the American community through their discursive and affinity identities, using English as a tool. This desire was not so obvious in Icela, who considered that, living in the United States (to an extent), she should know English, but who viewed herself as a Mexican, and assumed she would be perceived that way in the discourse of “regular folks.” She mainly wanted to be viewed as an individual who respects the country and the language most people use. In that sense, however, she did not try to negotiate for herself the discursive identity of an American.

In addition to their desire to be ascribed the identity of Americans in the American community, Rogelio and Oscar both felt they were Mexican at heart; they had been brought up in a Mexican culture. They wanted to be positioned that way within the Mexican community. Rogelio was actually adamant about not being ascribed the identity

of a Chicano, as he viewed Chicanos as unknowledgeable about not only their two languages, but also about the history and cultures of the United States and Mexico. He took pride in his knowledge of Mexican history and traditions, as well as being proficient in English and Spanish.

Perspectives on the Border

As the participants exposed in their journal, crossing the U.S. –Mexico border may at times be a challenging process (Martinez, 1994; 2006) both because of the time involved waiting in line and because of the intrusive questioning about where the participants are going, and whether they are carrying over a certain amount of money, or weapons. Martinez (1986) also mentions that the paperwork involved in crossing the border engenders apprehension and difficulty for some, and that was the case for Icela who was apprehensive each time she crossed the border on either side. She was nervous about being “discovered” as living in Mexico, when, as a high school student, she should have been living in the United States.

The border or boundary (Kearny, 1998) separates the two countries administratively as one can see in the Isler/Delicias area. The fence itself is becoming like a wall between the two nations, a point that supports the description Ganster and Lorey (2008; p.8) are making of the border fence in the San Diego area where the “single fence or steel wall is now being replaced [...] with multiple fences.” In spite of the fact that many individuals living in these borderlands have family, friends and commerce on the both sides, the border separating these aspects of their lives is not progressing toward

“dissolution,” the 4th and last stage a border goes through according to Ganster (2005; xv). Quite the contrary. The U.S. –Mexico border is being fenced even more every day. Walking along the Delicias/Isler line, one can see that the border is reinforced with “multiple fences....stadium lightning, and video cameras and other technology to detect illicit crossing” (Ganster and Lorey, 2008; p. 7). The U.S.-Mexico border around Delicias/Isler would be at the 3rd stage where a “distinct border region is formed with clearly demarcated boundaries and definable social and political responses to the boundary” (Ganster, 2005; xv). Mrs. Torres and Mrs. Nuñez, Oscar’s and Rogelio’s mothers, remember the fence of their youth as a simple barbed wire where they could cross to pick up a ball without getting into any trouble. Maybe, at that time it was still the 2nd stage, when the borderlands area developed with the mixing of people (Ganster, 2005).

A border is a physical separation between two countries, and it is also a place where identities are formed or ascribed. The border today is very political and is not viewed by people and authorities as it was in the youth of Mrs. Torres and Mrs. Nuñez. Times have changed, and now populations react and tend to associate the border with drug and people smuggling, and with public services being provided for free to Mexicans when they should be for Americans (Morehouse and Salido, 2004). In the case of Isler/Delicias, the political and social response to the boundary is viewed in Isler with residents complaining about students being dropped off at school from cars licensed in Mexico. It also reflects in the actions taken at the state level that require school districts to obtain three proofs of U.S. residency from students. The social and political responses

are not obviously felt in the participants' lives other than when crossing the line and being considered potential criminals, like any other border crosser. A possible explanation for their not feeling the social and political pressures of the 3rd stage may be because of Isler/Delicias being fairly small communities away from the agitation of major border towns. Also, the participants have an actual legal guardian or a property in Isler; therefore, in that sense the political tension does not affect them.

The Isler-Delicias area is also the borderlands that Morehouse (2004) describes as “spaces where the everyday realities of boundaries are played out. They are the proximate spaces of flows across the dividing line. They are spaces where cultural identity, sheltered by the boundary, becomes blurred, mixed, creolized.” The dividing line that runs across the desert does not stop the culture from Isler and Delicias from mingling, still, when crossing the international line, Icela, Rogelio and Oscar leave behind part of their identity to embrace the other one. Oscar drives like an American in the United States, following all the rules he says he ignores in Mexico. Rogelio is unlikely to be jaywalking in the streets of Isler, but does in Delicias.

Identities

Identities are context-driven (Rolón-Dow, 2004). The participants of this research formed their identities in the context of the border, and of the Hispanic society of the Isler-Delicias area.

Identity theorists (Gee, 2001; Holland, Lachicotte Jr., Skinner, Cain, 2001) observe that people try to convince themselves they are a certain way, and act as if they were, for the purpose of “recruiting” others, to ascribe them the identity they want to have. The participants of this study wanted to be viewed as Americans in the United States, but Mexicans in Mexico. Through language in particular, they wanted to convey the message that they were Americans --that they belonged to the country as anyone else.

Norton Pierce (1995; 1997) contends that language is used as a power tool by native speakers to make those who do not speak the language well or have an accent, feel inferior. Because she has an accent, Icela sometimes felt uncomfortable speaking English and spoke Spanish more often, as it is the language she masters best orally. Oscar and Rogelio also preferred to express themselves, orally, in Spanish as they have a wider range of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions, though were comfortable expressing themselves in English as well. Unlike new immigrants or many sojourners, as fluent bilinguals, the students in this research are the ones who did have choice over native English speakers. All three were able to address American native English speakers in English if individuals were monolingual, or in Spanish if they were bilingual; and if they preferred to use Spanish, in fact “it’s [was] their choice”(Oscar).

Unlike the participants in Shinnar’s study (2008) who felt that even though they spoke English they were treated as second class individuals in the hospitality industry of Las Vegas; Oscar, Rogelio and Icela each claimed to have never felt “put down” by other English-born speakers. Two aspects separate Shinnar’s participants from those in this research. Icela, Rogelio and Oscar were each born in the United States, and had lived or

been exposed to this country's culture and language from the beginning of their lives. They have had that awareness that their institutional identity is of Americans, not immigrants contrary to Shinnar's participants who –in the back of their mind- knew they were immigrants. It was an identity, which was reinforced by the type of service industry employment they felt stuck in. An important factor also is that Icela, Rogelio and Oscar negotiated their identities in a community that is mainly Mexican or of Mexican heritage, and where being Anglo is being a minority. Therefore, in some aspects of life, Anglos in Isler, cannot treat as second class citizens the local Mexican and Mexican American people.

Language and Identity Formation

The students in this research considered that to be American one has to speak English. Although they used some code-switching they considered that it is not proper language and that they should use Spanish and English correctly. Icela used the word *parkear*, though she was certain that it is not a real Spanish word but a mix of English and Spanish; *Spanglish*, as people in Isler call it. For Zentella (2002) the identities of Latinos are not only created for them but also by them when they use code-switching (p. 329). In the author's view, because people create that language for themselves, it is a power that indicates that they "have a foot in more that one world" (Zentella, 2002; p. 327); they are mixing the language of one's homeland with the one of the new one. She considers that code-switching reflects a multicultural world. On the contrary, the border crossers in this study were quite reluctant to say that they code-switched. They viewed

code-switching as being a Chicano (in particular Rogelio), a person who is unknowledgeable about English and Spanish and about the two countries respective cultures. They viewed it as a flaw rather than a way to show pride in their belonging to two nations. The participants lived along the U.S. –Mexico border, therefore, they did not experience that nostalgia that immigrants or their children have about the home country. For the border crossers in this research, Mexico was right there, on the other side of the line. The participants were involved in both countries in their everyday lives; as a result, code switching was not showing pride in belonging to two worlds, in their opinion, rather it was demonstrating a lack of adaptation to either one. Their parents made the choice to have their children in the United States, giving them automatic U.S. citizenship, but also providing them with opportunities. The participants can only fully enjoy the opportunities if they are acculturated, and that includes speaking English well (Rumbaut, 1996). Zentella (2002) wonders if one can be a Latino without speaking Spanish; for the students, one could not be an American without speaking English.

Language also represents a means to transmit culture through generations (Zentella, 2002) as well as to unite different cultures who share a common language, such as to form the Hispanic community in the United States. The participants wanted to know English to be viewed as full-fledged Americans but they also considered knowing Spanish as important. Rogelio's mom was shocked by her niece's lack of interest in her language and cultural heritage; the young girl did not want to speak English because she was American, in spite of her mother being from Mexico. Mrs. Nuñez did not want that for her son; she wanted a young man who presented himself as a Mexican-American and

was informed about both countries. It is by speaking English and Spanish well and knowing American and Mexican cultures that Rogelio may be able to become a binationalist (Martinez, 1994).

Ethnicity and Identity

The concept of ethnicity only applies to nations that have a multicultural diversity. And yet, all nations that have a multicultural diversity might not assign an ethnicity label to its people. In the United States, people are labeled Caucasian, Asian, Black, Hispanic or Latino among others. Torres-Saillant (2002) contends that in their original land, Mexicans, Dominicans or Puerto Ricans do not consider themselves Hispanics or Latinos. In the United States, however, they are *othered* through the assignment of an ethnicity label. In this research the participants' attitude toward ethnicity supports Torres-Saillant's point (2002). The participants assigned themselves the "Hispanic" ethnicity. For Icela it was because that is the only one she knew; whereas Rogelio rejected the label of "Chicano." However, each accepted the ethnic label as part of their identity --or as part of being an American.

Although the participants had a very limited experience with Anglos, when they did, it does not appear that they felt "othered" from the dominant group. The participants felt comfortable with who they are in the United States. It is not necessarily the case of their parents. Mrs. Fimbres, in a way, *othered* her daughter as someone who did not fully belong to Mexican society. She used her own cultural lenses and experiences to judge the other (Todorov, 1982). She considered that her daughter was not really a Mexican;

she was an independent young American woman, not one characterized by the “misbehavior” Mrs. Fimbres ascribed to American girls, but nevertheless she was from the other side of the line. Mrs. Fimbres portrayed American students as badly-mannered and dirty-minded drunks.

In fact, Mrs. Fimbres used her Mexican cultural lens to judge American girls, in much the same way that educators in Rólon-Dow’s study (2004) assigned a negative identity to Puerto Rican girls using their own cultural lenses. Using Mexican tradition as her point of reference Mrs. Fimbres ascribed an identity to American girls, maybe not all girls but most, the exact same way, Rólon-Dow’s educators did. The latter considered that, as teachers, they should not pass a judgment on students based on ethnicity; nevertheless they *did*. Based on their own dominant group perspectives of appropriateness, they disparaged their students’ modes of dress and self representation. In Mrs. Fimbres’s case the dominant group was Mexican society.

By her reaction to her daughter’s ways as an American, Mrs. Fimbres seemed to reject the idea that her daughter could be Mexican and American. She joked that her daughter was American-Mexican (*not* Mexican-American) because she was more American than Mexican in her opinion, but she did not really adhere to the idea that her daughter could really be equally American and Mexican.

The participants of the study thought they could be both although what is most important is “who you think you are” (Oscar). Like Nieto (2000), they did not want to choose to be either Mexican or American, they wanted to be both, even if at heart they may have been a little more Mexican, at least at this point in their lives.

Identities on the Border

Contrary to other studies (Pugach, 1998) which took place in the borderlands, a thirty minute drive from the international line, this research took place right on the border. Life on the border is unique. The population, the town atmosphere, and the interactions among people are different when the community is right on the line with another country. The language most commonly used, even in Isler, is Spanish.

The participants in this research were able to cross back and forth twice a day, have a Mexican influence in Isler and the "real thing" in Mexico. Contrary to some immigrants (Pavlenko, 2004) who idealize their homeland or the land of their parents, and in so doing may experience difficulties adjusting to life in the United States, the participants in this research were constantly exposed to life in Mexico (or at least the border area) and were able to joke about some aspects of life in the land of their ancestors (such as driving, corruption, dirty streets...) instead of idealizing a culture, a country and its population.

Martinez (1994) pictures very well life and identity on the border. He associates identity formation to the proximity of the border, in other words identity is influenced by location. The participants of this research were all exposed to both Mexico and the United States, and through their involvement in each culture have become who they are now. Their identity formation has been influenced by the degree of exposure they have had to the other country. It has also been influenced by the discourse their parents have of the United States and Mexico; therefore, influencing the child's choice of ethnic identity (Rumbaut, 1996).

Implications

The student border crossers who participated in this study were bilingual in Spanish and English. Their oral Spanish was excellent, as they used the language everyday with their family and friends; however, their Spanish writing skills were not as good, as none of the students had attended school in Delicias (or in Spanish). Instead, they were fully proficient in English not only orally but mainly in writing. Despite the commonly held idea that students in border towns cannot speak or write in English, these participants, demonstrate the contrary.

In this study, where schooling is in one language and home in another, the students became proudly bilingual and proud of their heritage, while embracing the English language and the American culture. It is when they enter kindergarten that student border crossers start learning English. Students need to be proud of their native language and not ashamed of it, thinking that as Americans they should only speak English, as Mrs. Nuñez's niece does.

Moreover, this research shows that border crossers are very involved in both sides of the border and have a bicultural outlook. Isler and Delicias are modest in size, consequently the cultural outlook is not as noticeable as it may be for larger border cities. Still, small town border crossers have the experience of two cultures and have learned how to adapt to each one. That is an experience that should not be neglected by educators.

Quite often, people assume that student border crossers are Mexican citizens. Many Isler teachers hold that belief. Based on this research (and various opportunities I had to learn about students' "legal" status; I took many students on trips to Europe and among them only two were not U.S. citizens but Mexican ones) I found out that most student border crossers are U.S. citizens and not Mexican. Considering the present discourse on legal and illegal immigration it is critical, in my opinion, that one be aware that these students are American citizens and as such they do not take advantage of the U.S. schools. Of course, it could be argued that their parents pay their taxes in Mexico and not in the United States, consequently they do not participate in the economic growth of this country. On the other hand, it is a United States judge who grants guardianship to border crossers whose parents live in Mexico. The responsibilities involved in who attends U.S. public schools lies in both Mexico and the United States. And of course, Mexican women can give birth in the U.S. providing their child with an automatic U.S. citizenship, and everything that citizenship involves.

As the participants in this study were constantly involved in both countries where they felt they belonged, it would be interesting to investigate the concept of national identity and the role it plays in the students' negotiation of their own identities. Cameron (1999; p.1) poses the questions: "Is national identity synonymous with stereotypes? The French eat frogs and snails....Is national identity something of which we ourselves are aware or is it an identity which others bestow upon us?" Cameron (1999; p.1) also notes that context plays a role in national identity: "The relationship we establish between ourselves and the ambient society, the way in which we identify with objects, institutions,

behavioural patterns, common traditions and history.” Williams (1999; p.9) observes that language is a factor used by governments to “construct a single cultural [national] identity.” In the same vein as Cameron (1999), Huntington (2004; p.30) defines national identity as including: “a territorial element....one or more ascriptive (race, ethnicity), cultural (religion, language), and political (state, ideology) elements....or social (networks) ones.” Exploring these perspectives of national identity of border crossers would help better grasp how they self-identify in the context of two nations.

Icela, Rogelio and Oscar had learned English to get recognized as Americans or to be able to study and work in the United States. They invested a lot of their time and put a lot of effort in learning the language well. The boys also belonged to various clubs, where they invested energy and enthusiasm. In the future, these participants’ identities might also be usefully examined in relation to the concept of “investment.” Norton (2000; p.11) mainly conceives the concept of investment in relation to speaking a (foreign) language and its effects on identities:

The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space.

McKay and Wong (1996; p.604) concentrate more on the investment in relation to the four skills of language and how “the four skills also have different values for the learner in terms of how his/her identities are defined.” In various ways, the participants in this study emphasized some of their language skills, in particular speaking and writing based on how they wanted to invest in the formation of their identities.

Limitations

There are limitations in the information I was able to gather (Creswell, 2009). I was not able to choose the educators who participated in the research as, in order to preserve their rights to privacy, in recruiting I had to email a pool of potential participants, but not single out anyone.

Additionally, participants and their parents may have seen me as intrusive and have felt the need to be less than completely truthful in the information they provided. The information gathered through interview was filtered through the participant’s views.

Also, this is a case study, thus the sample was very small and is not necessarily representative of all border crossers and generalization may not be appropriate. Finally, all of the student border crossers were from middle class families, which is common among border crosser students. It would be interesting to reproduce this research, but with participants whose parents are of much more modest means, to see if the results would match those found in this one. Moreover, it would be of use to follow-up on the

participants, and investigate how they adjust to life away from the border once they attend college. It would quite useful to see how they negotiate their identities when faced with a more diverse population. The affinities (Gee, 2001) they formed while living in the Delicias/Isler area might be different and based on other criteria.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Please, complete the following sentences:

1. I speak Spanish with....
2. I speak English with...
3. I speak Spanish at (location/situation)...
4. I speak English at (location/situation)...

Note: Once the student is done completing the form, we will discuss the answer. I will ask the student to explain his/her answers.

Demographics:

Gender:

Age:

Grade level:

Nationality:

Nationality of Parents

Length of time living in AP:

Length of time at DHS:

Location of middle school schooling:
schooling:

Location of elementary

1. What language do you use most? With whom?
2. What language(s) do you speak at home? At school?
3. Do your parents and siblings speak English?
4. How did you learn English?
5. About your knowledge of Spanish and English:
 - a. How well do you speak Spanish: Excellent Very well Fair Poor
 - b. How well do you write in Spanish: Excellent Very well Fair Poor
 - c. How well do you read in Spanish: Excellent Very well Fair Poor

- d. How well do you speak English: Excellent Very well Fair Poor
- e. How well do you write in English: Excellent Very well Fair Poor
- f. How well do you read in English: Excellent Very well Fair Poor
6. In Isler, do you address people you don't know in English or in Spanish? And in Delicias?
 7. How important is the Spanish language for you? The English language?
 8. Do you think it is necessary to speak English to be an American? Do you think Americans should speak other languages?
 9. Do you see yourself acting (/behaving/ handling yourself) or thinking *differently* when in the United States and when in Mexico?
 10. Are there situations when you feel obligated to speak one language over the other?
 11. In your point of view how important is Spanish in Isler? And English?
 12. In your point of view how do people who live away from Isler (Tucson, Phoenix) view this town? Why?
 13. What does it mean for someone to call themselves an American? A Mexican?
 14. Describe your feelings about being a border crosser?
 15. How do you view yourself? As an American or as a Mexican?
 16. Do you think you should choose whether you are American or Mexican?
 17. Do you see yourself more as a Mexican, an American, Mexican-American, Chicano, Latino? Other?
 18. Do you sometimes feel pressured to be more like an Anglo-American? How do you react to that?
 19. Do you consider yourself an immigrant? Do you think others do?
 20. Where do you enjoy spending time? Why?
 21. When you go to places (in the U.S.) other than Isler, how do you think people see you?
 22. How is your life different when are in AP and when you are in Isler?
 23. How do you feel about Mexican history not being taught at school? Should it be taught?
 24. What do you think about that new bill (SB1070) in the state of Arizona?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR EDUCATORS

Demographics:

Gender:

How many years teaching?

How many years in a border town?

Ethnicity:

How many years in this district?

Are you from Douglas?

Please, describe student border crossers. If you are not sure which ones are, describe those you believe are border crossers.

Example: If you were talking about me, SR, maybe you would say:

She is a person with an accent/ She is an immigrant/ She is **not** monolingual/ She is **not** an American...

Student Border crossers

Are:

Student Border crossers

are NOT:

Interview

1. In general:

How well do the students speak English:	Excellent	Very well	Fair
Poor			
How well do the students write in English:	Excellent	Very well	Fair
Poor			
How well do the students read in English:	Excellent	Very well	Fair
Poor			
2. And compared to students who are not border crossers how would you rate their English?
3. What language do you think they use most in your class when talking with classmates?
4. Do you think these students are U.S. citizens or Mexican nationals?
5. Do you think it is necessary to speak English to be an American? Do you think Americans should speak other languages?
6. What does it mean for someone to call themselves an American? A Mexican?
7. Could you define the word "immigrant" as you see it.
8. Do you think border crosser students can be considered immigrants?
9. Do you see student border crossers acting (behaving, handling themselves) or *thinking* differently than other students whom you know live in town?
10. In your point of view, how important is Spanish in Isler? And English?
11. In your point of view, how people who live away from Isler (in Tucson or Phoenix) view this town? Why?
12. Do you think one should choose whether to be an American or a Mexican? Or can we be both?
13. The students you think are border crossers, what makes you believe they are actually border crossers?
14. What do you think of SB 1070? Have you read the bill?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS

Demographics:

Gender:

Occupation (type of):

Nationality:

Allowed to enter the U.S.? (if yes
under what status?)

1. Do you speak English?
2. What language(s) do you use at home? (if more than one I will ask the parent to whom the language is spoken: spouse, child...)
3. How good is your child's Spanish at this time:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Speaking	—	—	—	—
Writing	—	—	—	—
Reading	—	—	—	—
Oral comprehension	—	—	—	—

4. How did your child learn Spanish?
5. Do you think your child acts (behaves/ handles him/herself) or think more like an American or like a Mexican?
6. What would you prefer?
7. Do you see your child acting (/behaving/ handling him/herself) or thinking *differently* when in the United States and when in Mexico?
8. In your point of view, what does it mean for someone to be called an American? A Mexican?
9. Do you think it is important or necessary for your child to know Spanish? And to know English?
10. How is it to live on the border?

APPENDIX D
DESCRIPTION PROTOCOL FOR STUDENTS

➔ Please, describe yourself by telling me who you are (you don't have to fill out all the lines but use as many as you can):

Example: ➔ I (Sophie Renoult) might answer this way:

I am a person with a French accent/ an immigrant

I am not American yet/ ...

I am:

I am NOT

APPENDIX E
DESCRIPTION PROTOCOL FOR PARENTS

Please, describe your child.

Example: If you were talking about me, SR, maybe you would say:

She is a person with an accent/ She is an immigrant/ She is **not** monolingual/ She is **not** an American...

My child is

My child

Is NOT:

APPENDIX F

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How important is the Spanish language for you? And English?
2. Do you think it is necessary to speak English to be an American?
3. What does it mean for someone to call themselves an American? A Mexican?
4. Describe your feelings about being a border crosser.
5. Do you think you should choose whether you are an American or a Mexican?
6. Do you consider yourself an immigrant? Do you think others do?
7. In your point of view, how do people who live away from Isler (Tucson, Phoenix...) view this town? Why?
8. When you go to places (in the U.S.) away from Isler, how do you think people see you?

APPENDIX G

FLYER

Dear Student,

I am the French teacher, doing research for my PhD degree. I am interested in learning about the identities of border crossers as they are exposed to Mexican and American cultures. I am looking at interviewing some of those border crossers. If you live in Mexico and cross daily or weekly would you be interested in participating in my study?

I will interview you three times, and I will audio-tape it, and I may ask you to write a diary on your experiences as a border-crosser for a period of a month. To those who may be main participants I will need to interview your parents.

You do not have to do it, it is voluntary, that is, it's your choice. Whatever you choose, it is fine. Even if you decide to participate, and then you change your mind you can drop out of the project at any time. Also, your name will not be used, instead I will use a pseudonym, another name if you want, so that nobody will know it's you.

If you are interested in participating, let your counselor know and she will give me your name, then I will contact you. I will give a form for you and your parents to sign. On that form you have my name and how to contact me and the name of my advisor, at the University of Arizona, whom you can also contact if have questions about the project. If you have any doubts you should not hesitate to talk to your counselor too. Thank you.”

Sophie Renoult

APPENDIX H
EMAIL TO EDUCATORS

I am doing a research for my PhD dissertation, and I am interested in learning about identities of border crossers as they are exposed to Mexican and American cultures. I am looking at interviewing some of the border crossers but also the staff. It won't take a lot of your time, very likely less than an hour, at your convenience. Your name won't be disclosed, I will use a pseudonym for everybody as well as the location of the school. If you think you might be interested in participating, please contact me in room 100 or email me, and I will give you a consent form to sign. However, there are no obligations whatsoever for you to participate. Thank you.

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