

EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE: AN EXPLORATION OF
POPULAR EDUCATION ALONG THE MEXICO - U.S. BORDER

by

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ABSTRACT

During the past few decades, anthropologists have become increasingly interested in how different cultural frameworks come together. One opportunity to view such interactions is presented by travel seminars based on a transformative education model, which aim to educate middle-class people about conditions in economically depressed areas through travel.

The task of this thesis is to examine the experiences of U.S. participant groups in one transformative education program, paying particular attention to interpersonal contact, both within groups and between them and local people, and to how participants experience the location of poverty. I argue that multiple factors play a role in terms of whether, how, and why trip participants appear to form new meanings based on their experiences. These factors include the individual's ability to empathize with the 'Other' (i.e. local people) met on the trip and previous experience in and knowledge of economically depressed areas, especially the Third World.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Across the Western hemisphere and particularly in North America there exist non-profit organizations, mostly faith-based, which aim to educate middle-class Americans and Canadians about conditions in economically depressed areas, both within and outside of their home countries, through travel. These programs frame themselves as distinct from both missionary and tourism-oriented organizations, and often consider themselves as part of the transformative education movement. This movement, based primarily in Christian churches, aims to bring learners to critically examine their worldviews, and by extension to bring about social change.

The focus of this thesis is one such program, run by a non-profit organization called BorderLinks, based in Tucson, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Since the early 1990s, BorderLinks has organized and led short (1 – 15 day) guided trips to locations in the Mexico-U.S. borderlands area, primarily in the state of Sonora, where issues of migration, the global economy, and differential distribution of material wealth and of its associated benefits are particularly visible. Most of the individuals who participate in these trips are middle-class Americans, and they often join trips as a part of church, school, and seminary groups, among others. These trips place the participants in sites of poverty and allow for interpersonal contact with poor residents in the borderlands area and, on occasion, with migrants who are planning to cross into the United States. BorderLinks' hope is that the trips will inspire those who participate in them to reflect upon the relationship between privileged and marginalized groups, both in and outside of the borderlands area, and ultimately to act for social change.

Organizations that conduct such travel seminars are of particular interest to anthropologists due partly to relatively recent shifts in anthropology. During the past few decades, cultural anthropologists have become increasingly interested in the process of how people within different cultural frameworks come together to form new meanings. As Chambers explains (2000:3), “culture is no longer bound to place or ethnicity but is also reflective of the processes and encounters that link different places and diverse people.” This shift is exemplified by anthropologists’ increased interest in borderlands areas (e.g. Gupta and Ferguson 1992), where seemingly distinct groups of people often coexist and interact. For similar reasons, anthropologists have also shown increased interest in tourism, a process in which disparate groups of people come into contact with one another in particular ways, often for short periods of time. Likewise, travel seminars based on a transformative education model, such as those conducted by BorderLinks, offer a view of groups interacting in ways that have the potential to yield new meanings for all involved. However, such travel seminars have not yet been the subject of anthropological study.¹ Further, while anthropologists have recently become more interested in travel in general, many have not considered it from the perspective of Western travelers themselves (Nash and Smith 1991; Pearce 1982b; Stronza 2001), while others (e.g. Bruner 1991) have oversimplified the experiences of travelers.

The time has therefore come for anthropologists to investigate educational travel seminars, both for the view that they offer of distinct groups interacting in a particular context, and the potential they hold to further add to understanding of Western travelers’

¹ There have, however, been a few studies of this kind of organization in other disciplines, which I discuss in Chapter 3.

experiences. Further, cultural anthropologists are in a unique position to contribute to understanding of the interactions and processes that take place on and as a result of such trips, due to anthropology's emphasis on holism, a long history of using ethnographic methods, and a unique understanding of and interest in culture and cultural change.

The task of this thesis, then, is to examine BorderLinks' trips from the perspective of the North American participants. Specifically, I focus on four groups that attended BorderLinks trips during the summer of 2002, and I pay particular attention to interpersonal interaction that these group members had with local people and with each other, and how they reacted to the location of poverty. In order to contextualize the research and clarify the methods used, in the second chapter of this thesis I describe the research setting, the background of the BorderLinks organization, and the research methodology. In the third chapter I review relevant literature, turning first to the literature in anthropology on intercultural contact and then more substantially to literature in anthropology focusing on tourism. This literature addresses how groups interact for short periods of time involving travel, and thus offers particular insight into many of the processes that occur on and as a result of BorderLinks trips. I also briefly consider writings from social psychology and other disciplines on empathy, a concept that will prove important in understanding how trip participants react to interpersonal contact with local people on the trips. I also consider literature related to transformative education in general and to travel seminars based on this model in particular, as this literature also offers insight into the processes that occur on these trips, and has not previously been considered by anthropologists. In Chapter 4, I examine data from my own and another

researcher's field experiences and our interviews with trip participants. Broadly speaking, it appears that interpersonal contact, both with local people and with other members of the travel group, and the experience of place are two key components that impact trip participants in such a way that they alter the meanings they ascribe to certain situations. However, as I show, these effects are not homogenous, and it appears that certain factors in particular affect the nature and extent to which trip participants feel they have changed as a result of the experience. These factors include the ability to identify or otherwise connect with the 'Others' (i.e., the local individuals) encountered during the trip and the individual participant's level of knowledge and experience prior to taking the trip. In addition, I consider the role of interaction within the travel group and the groups' and individuals' religious affiliation in how trip participants respond to the experience. I also examine these experiences in relation to Nash and Smith's (1991) description of travel as a rite of passage. In contrast to some previous anthropological studies of travel from travelers' perspectives, which emphasize homogeneity of travelers' experiences (e.g. Bruner 1991), I show that individuals interpret and respond to these trips in diverse ways.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

Setting of the research project – the U.S. Mexico Border

Before outlining the research methodology I would like to briefly discuss the physical context of the research: the Mexico – U.S. border region between Arizona and Sonora. Examining this context will help to locate the field research and also will clarify some of the issues on which the BorderLinks organization focuses. Figure 1 below shows Tucson, Arizona, and Nogales, Sonora, where the BorderLinks organization maintains offices and other facilities.²

During the 20th century, Nogales, like other Mexican cities along the U.S. border, was to a great extent defined by its proximity to the U.S. and U.S. populations. This influence has become more pronounced in recent decades, however, beginning with the institution of the Border Industrialization Program in 1964, which enabled the establishment of U.S. *maquiladoras* (assembly plants, usually foreign-owned) in Mexican cities. This program allowed U.S. manufacturers to take advantage of relatively inexpensive Mexican labor for product assembly while paying minimal customs taxes. Devaluations of the Mexican peso during the 1980s rendered Mexican wages even lower from an international perspective, causing a huge rise in the number of *maquiladoras* in Mexican border cities during this time period. The North American Free Trade Agreement, adopted in 1994, further increased this presence. These increases in *maquiladoras* brought about an additional shift in the nature of U.S. economic influence

² While Nogales actually is a twin city with municipalities on both sides of the border, unless otherwise indicated, “Nogales” in this thesis refers to the significantly more populous Sonora side.

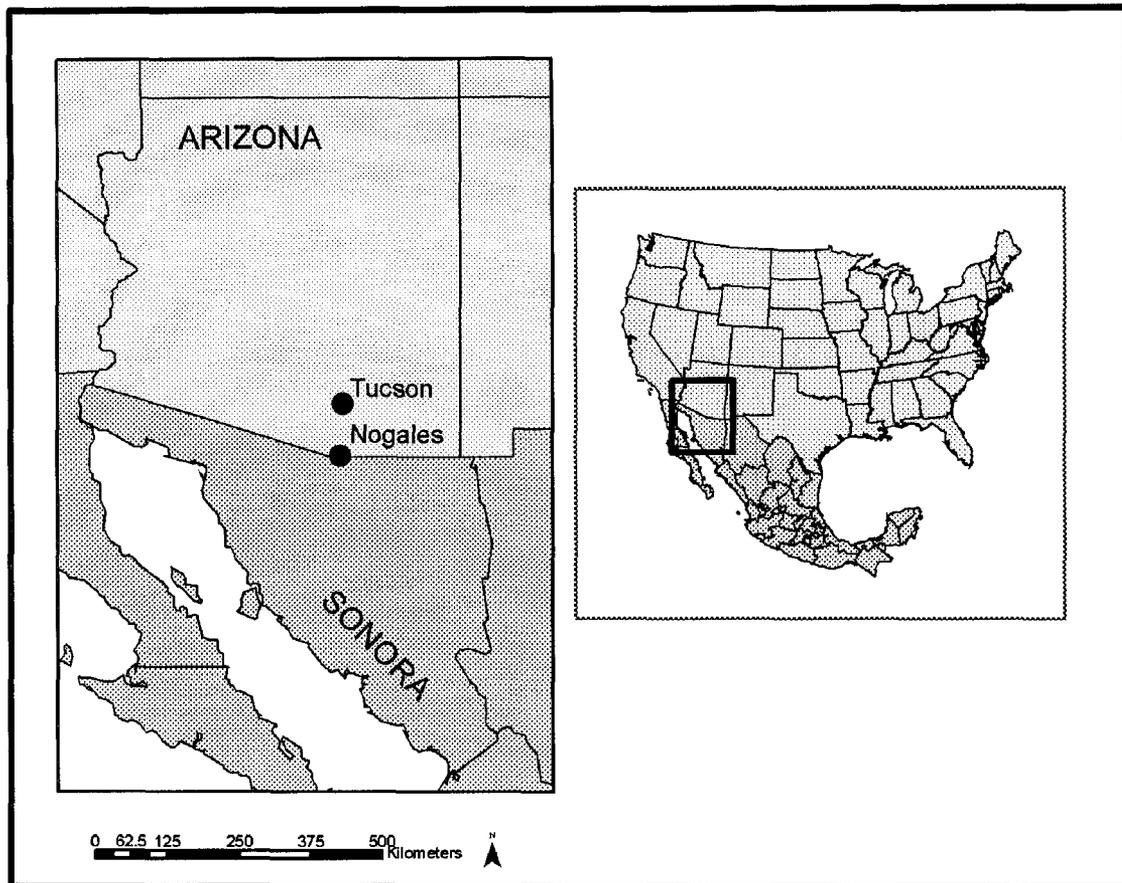


Figure 1. Map of Arizona and Sonora

along the border, and resulted in enormous internal migration within Mexico to the border cities, including Nogales, as people were drawn to maquiladora jobs.³ This huge population increase has meant serious shortages of housing and services in Mexican border cities, and the city of Nogales has struggled, often in vain, to maintain utilities

³ Estimates in the mid-1990s placed the population of Nogales, Sonora at over 200,000 people (Ingram, Milich, and Varady 1994, qt. Finco, Hepner, and Miller 1994), but BorderLinks staff and others claim that there is vast undercounting of the population in Nogales. At any rate, populations in Mexican border cities more than doubled between 1980 and the mid- 1990s (prior to NAFTA), and were predicted to double again over the following two decades (United States General Accounting Office 2000).

such as phones, sewers, electricity, and garbage collection. Water provision has been especially difficult, and many Nogales residents face acute water shortages, particularly during the dry season.

Undocumented migration has also been a salient issue along the Arizona-Sonora border. Stricter U.S. immigration policy enacted in 1996 resulted in Border Patrol crackdowns at popular crossing locations like Tijuana and El Paso, driving would-be migrants away from these larger border cities, and towards less populous areas like the stretch of border near Nogales. This large-scale migration brings its own concerns to the Mexican side of the border, as huge numbers of migrants pass through these areas. In Sásabe, Sonora, which is west of Nogales on the border and is sometimes included as a destination in BorderLinks trips, municipal authorities estimated the number of undocumented individuals crossing every day on foot to be 1200 during the summer of 2002 (personal communication).

These issues—migration, maquiladoras, U.S. economic influence, poor conditions due to overcrowding—all shape the context in which the BorderLinks organization operates, and these are some of the key issues that BorderLinks aims to educate its program participants about. To better understand the goals and methods of the organization, however, I will now turn to a brief consideration of its history, which is also helpful in contextualizing this study and in understanding what the organization hopes participants will take away from the trips.

History of the BorderLinks Organization

BorderLinks history is characterized by a focus on the Sanctuary Movement to aid political refugees from Central America at the organization's inception in the late 1980s. During the 1990s, this concentration shifted to issues of migration and the global economy, which remain the focus of the trips at the time of writing. Originally headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, over time, BorderLinks has grown in size and scope to become a binational (American and Mexican) organization, and it has expanded beyond educational trips to include grassroots community and development work in Nogales and Agua Prieta, Sonora. Travel seminars for the non-poor, however, remain a primary focus, and also constitute a large source of funding for the organization.

The rationale and the motivation for the formation of the BorderLinks organization evolved as part of the Sanctuary Movement of the early 1980s. Jerry Gill (1999), who at the time this research was conducted (summer 2002) ran the BorderLinks semester program for college students, offers a more detailed history of both the Sanctuary Movement in Tucson and of the origin of the BorderLinks organization, and I will attempt to summarize the latter here. In the interest of space and time, I will not treat the Sanctuary Movement, a fascinating and highly worthwhile subject in its own right, at length (for further reading on the Sanctuary Movement in Tucson, see Davidson 1989).

The Sanctuary Movement arose in the United States in the early 1980s as a response to the large numbers of refugees fleeing Central America to escape political repression and violence there. Individuals and church communities in the United States formed a loose network in an attempt to aid these undocumented immigrants coming into the U.S. by housing them and assisting them in applying for political asylum. There was

significant Sanctuary activity in Tucson, and in 1985 some of the individuals associated with the movement there were tried for harboring undocumented immigrants. The ensuing 5-month trial garnered enormous publicity for the movement.⁴

This was undoubtedly one of the impetuses for an informal affiliation of Presbyterian Church leaders on the east coast to respond to these events by putting together support and funds to send volunteers to aid the refugees. This group formed a relationship with another newly formed non-profit organization, the Tucson Refugee Support Group, and arranged to supply the latter with interns. After passing through Tucson upon return from travels in Central America, Rick Ufford (now Ufford-Chase, and the international director of BorderLinks at the time of writing) was hired to coordinate this internship program from Philadelphia. He helped to design the program, initially called the “Border Visitation Project,” to provide short-term educational experiences for people interested in learning more about life along the Mexico-U.S. border. The first official trip took place in January 1988 (Gill 1999). In 1989 Ufford moved to Tucson as a “mission volunteer” to coordinate the trips from there. Later, a private Tucson foundation provided funds to help pay for support staff in Tucson, and the Philadelphia office closed in 1993. Early trips focused on educating churches in the United States to understand the conflicts that were taking place in Central America at that

⁴ Although some of the accused were found guilty and sentenced to 5 years probation, afterwards the federal government, likely for a variety of reasons, chose to ignore the considerable immigrant traffic through Tucson’s Southside Church. In December 1989 the original Sanctuary defendants initiated a suit against the federal government, which responded by agreeing to give Central American refugees temporary work permits and residency status and to reform the political asylum process. Gill (1999) points out, however, that these promises were not wholly fulfilled.

time and the difficulties encountered by Central American refugees who were fleeing the wars to come north.

In the 1990s with the passing of NAFTA and the rise of the border economy, BorderLinks began to shift its attention from Sanctuary issues, which had lessened in intensity, to issues of the global economy as experienced along the Mexico-U.S. border. Gill (1999) characterizes this shift as a change from a focus on political oppression to a focus on economic oppression. Between 1991 and 1995, BorderLinks trips began to include church groups and seminary groups, and community organizations in Agua Prieta and Nogales also became involved in the organization. In 1998 BorderLinks became fully binational when it acquired property in Nogales, Sonora, and it now includes staff in both Nogales and Tucson, numbering approximately 15 people in each site (Katie Hudak, personal communication). It is recognized as a non-profit organization by both the U.S. and Mexican governments (BorderLinks 2002). In addition to trips, the organization also currently conducts a semester-long immersion program for college students in conjunction with several private colleges; *encuentros*, or meetings bringing together people from both sides of the border; an internship program for both Mexican and U.S. residents in Nogales; and other grassroots community work. The organization's web site currently identifies three primary areas of focus: "experiential education for North Americans," "opportunities for encounter between North and South," and "leadership training and development" (BorderLinks 2002). Funding for all of the organization's activities currently breaks down in the following way: 10% from grants, 30% from

donations, and 60% from the programs, which are primarily trips but also include the college semester program and fees paid to attend encuentros (BorderLinks 2002).

Origin of the research project

I will now briefly explain the development of the research project on which this thesis is based, as it will help to shed light on the methodology and data used. Jessica Piekielek and I, both MA-level anthropology students in the University of Arizona department of anthropology at the time of writing, independently arrived at an interest in the BorderLinks organization and its travel-seminar program. Upon realizing and subsequently discussing our mutual interest in the fall of 2001, we agreed to pursue the research as a joint project. We began by meeting with Catherine Ufford-Chase, who had worked closely with the BorderLinks organization in the past and had written an MA thesis based on survey work with BorderLinks trip participants, measuring change in cultural tolerance (Ufford-Chase 2001, discussed below). She encouraged us to continue investigation into the effect of the trips by using in-depth interviews with trip participants. With her facilitation, Jessica and I then approached the BorderLinks organization, and the U.S. director Sarah Mezzah was receptive to our suggestion that we attend trips during the summer of 2002 and conduct follow-up interviews with select trip participants. Dr. Diane Austin, a research professional with the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology at the University of Arizona, agreed to advise us on this work

and to be the principal investigator.⁵ Dr. Austin gave us considerable advice and feedback on this work, but her primary role was that of advisor, and she did not plan or conduct any of the research or analysis related to this study.

During the winter of 2002 Jessica and I met briefly with BorderLinks' founder and international director, Rick Ufford-Chase. He encouraged us to pursue the research and also helped us solve our dilemma on how to conduct post-trip participant interviews by suggesting that we do phone interviews.

During the winter and spring of 2002, Jessica and I applied to various sources for funding, filed forms with the University of Arizona Human Subjects Committee in order to ensure that we comply with university policy for research with people, and continued to communicate with BorderLinks bi-national staff members to schedule trips during the summer. We also gave an informal presentation to BorderLinks staff in April 2002 about our research plans and received some helpful feedback from them. We were fortunate enough to receive some research funds from the University of Arizona, and, further, the BorderLinks organization asked us to cover only the direct costs of the trips we were to attend. This included only money paid to home-stay families for meals and lodging, or the equivalent thereof for each day of the trip (trip participants normally are expected to cover the whole of the costs incurred to BorderLinks). The combination of the funds we received and the generosity of the BorderLinks organization allowed us to attend a total of four trips and to conduct post-trip interviews with 36 participants, in both cases, more than we had originally planned.

⁵ According to University of Arizona policy, the principal investigator of any research project must have a Masters or PhD degree, so neither Jessica nor I could fulfill this role.

Overview of the data collection

Our data collection took place during the summer and fall of 2002, and it was comprised of participant-observation on four BorderLinks trips, an open-ended questionnaire given to all participants (Appendix A) at the beginning of each trip, and phone or in-person interviews with select participants from the trips we attended. Although most of the participant groups came from outside of Tucson and thus required phone interviews, Jessica was able to interview some participants from one of the trips in person. The post-trip interviews all occurred between three weeks and two months after the last day of the trip. Appendix B contains a list of all of the groups, identified by a number, and the number of individuals interviewed and in what format they were interviewed (phone or in person), for each group.

Jessica and I separately attended two trips each that ranged in length from three to six days. In total, we attended one three-day trip, one five-day trip, and two six-day trips. Historically, BorderLinks trips have varied in length from one day to ten days, but staff members encouraged us to focus on longer trips, as we would be more likely to see effects. Further, longer trips gave us more time to get to know participants. The four trips that we attended included a total of 46 participants (20 men and 26 women), ranging in age from the teens to the 70s.

Trip selection

Working in conjunction with BorderLinks staff, Jessica and I chose trips to attend based on our own schedules and on the willingness of participant groups to allow a researcher to join them. Although financially our presence was not a burden to these groups, it could understandably be seen as invasive and potentially logistically problematic as well. For example, on one trip that I did attend, I brought the van used for our transport up to maximum capacity in the height of summer. Fortunately, this group was very gracious and never called attention to the extra space that would have been available in my absence. The BorderLinks organization, however, and Jessica and myself as well, were concerned that we only attend trips with groups who were receptive to including us.

The nature of scheduling BorderLinks trips is also that some groups will cancel or change their trip dates; this, combined with some groups' reluctance to include an outsider who would be studying them, meant that scheduling took some time. Fortunately, through the mediation of BorderLinks staff members, Jessica and I were able to finalize a schedule during the summer that included four trips with willing groups.

Questionnaire and participant-observation

At the beginning of each trip Jessica or I administered a short, open-answer written questionnaire (Appendix A) to each of the participants. The questionnaire helped to give us a feel for individuals' motivations for attending the trips and their pre-existing ideas about conditions in the Mexican borderlands area. During the trips, we took extensive field notes where possible and participated in all group activities on the trips.

In all cases, we were very fortunate that the participant groups welcomed us and included us as part of their group. Attending the trips thus provided rich participant-observation data on facets of the trips such as what trip participants talked about, how they reacted to the activities, and how they interacted with local people and with one another. Further, participating in the trips was also key both to experiencing the activities and context of the trips first-hand and to getting to know the participants in order to establish a rapport for later interviews.

Interviews

As mentioned above, Jessica and I had decided to use phone interviews as a follow-up to the trips because we anticipated that most trip participants would live outside of Tucson, and our limited resources and logistical difficulties would thus make in-person interviews impossible. Jessica, however, was able to make a small number of in-person interviews because one of the groups she joined was based in Tucson.

In all cases, I interviewed only trip participants with whom I had been on trips, and Jessica did likewise. The combination of both attending the trips and interviewing the participants afterwards was a powerful one, because it allowed us, having experienced the trips ourselves along with the interviewees, to relate to and better understand their descriptions and discussions of the trips.

Our sample of participants to interview was based on convenience and was not a random sample. Jessica and I asked all 46 participants on the trips that we joined, either individually or as part of their respective groups, if they would be willing to participate in

a phone, or if possible, an in-person interview, approximately one month after the end of their BorderLinks trip. Out of the 46 participants, 44 (96%) agreed to be interviewed. Of those who agreed to be interviewed, 8 proved difficult to contact for various reasons and were not interviewed; unfortunately it is unclear whether the inclusion of this group might have altered the research findings. In total, then, we interviewed 36 people, or 78%, of all participants on the trips we attended.

Jessica and I tentatively scheduled the interviews with participants before they returned home, and although ideally the length of time elapsed between the end of the trip and the interview would have been a standard one, this was very difficult to achieve given the time of year, participants' vacation and work schedules, and our own schedules, as well. We therefore conducted the phone interviews between three weeks and two months after the last day of the BorderLinks trips; this length of time seemed sufficient to allow participants to settle back into their own milieux, but was short enough to complete our research and to have remained familiar with the research participants. Interview times ranged approximately from ten to sixty minutes, and were comprised partly of reviewing the questionnaire (Appendix A). We also asked participants to discuss the trip activities that had had the biggest impact on them and their expectations prior to attending the trip. The length of the interview depended primarily on the participants and how much they had to share with us. With the participants' written permission, we tape recorded all of the interviews and partially transcribed the recordings ourselves.

The Research Participants

The individuals attending these trips were diverse in many respects, including in their Spanish language ability and in their prior experience outside of the United States. However, it is my understanding based on discussions with BorderLinks staff that they were fairly representative demographically and in socio-economic background of the kinds of groups that take trips with BorderLinks. That is, participants from all four trips were predominantly of middle-class, professional backgrounds, and most were U.S. citizens.

For the sake of simplicity and to protect the privacy of these groups, I will identify the groups by a number rather than a name. Appendix B provides a brief schema describing each group and identifying the researcher who attended each trip. Group 1 was made up of teachers and school administrators, mostly from an inner-city high school in a Western city. Group 2 was a Catholic Church group of older teens and adults from a small town in the Mid-west, accompanied by their parish priest. Group 3 was a Protestant church youth group of teens from a West Coast city, accompanied by adult chaperones; and Group 4 was a group of adults from around the U.S. who took the BorderLinks trip in relation to a university summer course in public health.

Without stepping into a lengthy discussion of ethnicity, a complex subject outside the scope of this thesis, I will mention that it appeared to the researchers that the majority of the trip participants were of White, European-American, largely non-Hispanic backgrounds. However, it is also worth noting that Group 1 included several individuals whose parents and/or grandparents had been born in Mexico, and also included

participants who had themselves been born in and/or spent some or all of their youth in Latin America.

The groups also differed somewhat from each other in the activities they scheduled. Namely, Group 1, a group of teachers, had planned a two-week trip that included one week with BorderLinks and a second week on their own visiting schools in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. My participant-observation with this group was limited to the BorderLinks portion of their trip, but not surprisingly, the effects of the BorderLinks trip were difficult if not impossible to separate from the Chihuahua portion when I conducted the phone interviews. Given that the Chihuahua portion of their trip, although more focused, was in spirit similar to the BorderLinks trip, I do not necessarily see the addition of this trip as a weakness in terms of my research, nor did I sense any particular differences between this group and the others that were obviously linked to the additional week in Chihuahua. However, it is worth bearing in mind when reading my interpretations of the research results.

Another difference in group activities was that Group 3, the church youth group, partook in a BorderLinks “action-reflection” trip, which combined elements of both education and volunteer work. BorderLinks has been conducting these kinds of trips for only a few years, usually with church youth groups. Group 3 spent approximately half of their time building composting latrines at BorderLinks’ facility in Nogales, and the rest of their time in Nogales participating in educational activities like the ones experienced by the other three groups (trip activities are discussed below and listed in Appendix C). For the other three (predominantly or exclusively adult) groups, in contrast, there was no

explicit “action” element in their trips. BorderLinks, in fact, has to some extent been reluctant in the past to include volunteer work with their trips for fear that it might detract from the educational aspect of their program (Sara Mezzah, personal communication), although church youth groups in particular seem to be drawn to these kinds of trips. It was interesting for Jessica and me that we were able to include one of these “action/reflection” trips in our study, both for the opportunity to compare trips with and without an “action” component, and for the opportunity to compare a trip with predominantly teenagers versus predominantly adult trips. Such comparisons are not the focus of this thesis, but they may be addressed in other research products.

Trip Descriptions

Appendix C includes a detailed schedule for each of the four trips covered by this research, but here I would like to outline how the trips were organized and funded, and to discuss some of the activities.

BorderLinks staff and guiding trips

As is typical, two BorderLinks staff members (“trip leaders” in the language of the organization) organized, attended, and facilitated each trip that Jessica and I attended. In each case, one U.S. trip leader, who was fluent in Spanish, and one Mexican trip leader, who in some cases was fluent in English, attended each trip. This arrangement is standard for trips and it conforms to BorderLinks’ philosophy, which emphasizes its binationality, and likely is logistically useful as well. Although our research did not

focus on how trip leaders organized the trips, it was my impression that this is a very time-consuming and challenging process. Trip leaders and other staff were particularly helpful to Jessica and me in trip scheduling and logistics, and their reflections have also helped to inform this thesis.

Trip cost

During the summer of 2002 BorderLinks charged individuals \$75 a day to attend a trip.⁶ This covered administrative costs, money paid to local host families for lodging and meals, other food costs, and transportation for trip participants once they arrived in Tucson. It did not include transportation to Tucson, where applicable. The groups included in this research covered these costs and others associated with the trips in a variety of ways. Group 1 applied for and received a grant to cover all of their trip costs; Group 2 organized a variety of fundraising events with its church to raise money for the trips, with individuals contributing approximately \$100 each to the total cost; members of Group 3 received some money from their church to help cover the trip costs, with the rest covered by the participants themselves or their families; for Group 4, a few individuals received scholarships to cover the costs of the trips, but most paid for the entirety of the trip themselves.

Trip format and activities

⁶ At the time of writing these costs have risen to \$100 per day (BorderLinks 2002).

Although the schedules of the four trips we attended differed from each other somewhat, activities for all BorderLinks trips focus on the following themes: immigration policy, Mexico-U.S. relations, labor conditions, human rights, environment, health issues, free trade, poverty, economic structures, and international politics (BorderLinks 2002). The format of activities varied, but often included lecture/question-answer sessions with local people and visits to key sites such as a location of undocumented border crossings, INS (U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service) facilities or a maquiladora. By design, BorderLinks trips also include scheduled time for reflection/discussion among trip participants. All four of the trips discussed in this thesis included such reflection time; for religious-based groups this time was often used for prayer as well as for group discussion.

The trip schedules were tiring for most if not all participants (including the researchers!), and both the amount of information imparted and the general intensity of the experience were high. A message from the BorderLinks organization to prospective trip participants on the BorderLinks website illustrates and explains the rationale behind this:

It is important for you to recognize that this trip will be physically and emotionally draining. You will be expected to adapt quickly to living with a new group of people, some of whom you may never have met before. You will be bombarded with a lot of new information and experiences—much of which may be difficult to understand and process fully. You may experience some level of culture shock—the poverty that we will see will probably be difficult to absorb—and feel uncomfortable some of the time. We believe that feeling uncomfortable is an important part of learning.
[BorderLinks 2002]

As I discuss in Chapter 4, some of the participants did report feeling uncomfortable on the trip for the reasons outlined above, and also reported that this discomfort made them more sensitive to the experience of the trip.

From the perspective of the participants, the trips began either in Tucson for those based there or in the hometowns or cities of the groups, where they departed by plane for either Tucson or Phoenix. Once in Tucson, the groups proceeded more or less directly to the BorderLinks facilities in Tucson. BorderLinks currently uses a series of buildings that serve as meeting rooms, kitchens, and dormitories for trip participants, as well as offices for the U.S. branch of the organization. Jessica or I joined the groups soon after their arrival at these facilities and stayed with them for the length of their BorderLinks trip.

Upon arrival at the BorderLinks facilities in Tucson, trip participants were given a chance to relax and settle in for approximately a half an hour or an hour, and then BorderLinks trip leaders began a short orientation, outlining what the trip activities would be and discussing questions and concerns. At this time they also passed out trip schedules and addressed cultural issues such as politeness, how the language interpretation would work (BorderLinks trip leaders provided simultaneous Spanish-English interpretation for all activities), and issues with host families, who would be housing trip participants for some of the trip.

At this point Jessica or I briefly explained our interests and purpose (understanding and evaluating BorderLinks' work), that we would be attending the trip as participants, taking notes, and that we would be conducting interviews, mostly by phone,

after the trip with those who were willing. The groups presumably all knew ahead of time that Jessica or I would be joining them. We also briefly explained that there would likely be multiple products based on our research, including separate Masters theses for us both and possibly academic presentations and published papers. We then passed out our project descriptions (Appendix D). This short presentation time also gave trip participants the chance to ask us questions. Some participants did have questions for us, mostly concerned with how the research would fit in with our academic program and with what specific things we were interested in learning. After responding to questions, we administered the written questionnaire.

Some groups spent the first night of their trip in Tucson while others proceeded directly to Mexico. In all cases, however, the majority of the groups' time was spent in the state of Sonora, Mexico. Groups 1 and 2 visited the cities of Nogales, Altar, and Sásabe, Sonora, while groups 3 and 4 spent the entirety of their trips in Nogales. All of the trips included a visit to the United States Border Patrol office in Nogales, Arizona, and a presentation by a community relations officer there. All four trips also included at least one night in a host family's home in Nogales, and an activity called a 'market basket survey' involving a trip to a Nogales supermarket, aimed at educating participants about high food prices on the Mexican side of the border. Home stays were usually scheduled in relatively established *colonias* (a term used in the U.S. to mean unincorporated neighborhoods), and conditions at host families' homes varied considerably. Other examples of activities that some or all of the groups participated in included visits to

maquiladoras, meals with families in colonias, talks given by activists in Nogales, and a skit about international debt put on by BorderLinks staff.

Group 1 and Group 2, the two groups that I joined as a researcher, spent two or three days in Nogales and two or three days in Altar and Sásabe, all in Sonora. Altar is a town that serves as a transportation node for migrants, mostly from southern Mexico, who plan to cross the desert into the United States. BorderLinks has ties to a migrant shelter in Altar, and both groups 1 and 2 spent at least a night at this shelter where they had the opportunity to interact informally with migrant people, participated in activities where they spoke with migrant people in the town square of Altar, and toured certain locations, such as guest houses where migrants stay while waiting to cross.

All of the trips ended back at BorderLinks facilities in Tucson. Trip participants from groups 1, 2, and 3 had one night at the BorderLinks dormitory facilities there, and then the following morning either continued on their own with their travels (as Group 1 did) or caught flights back to their home towns or cities. Group 4, which joined the BorderLinks trip as part of a UA course, simply returned to their Tucson residences on the final day of the trip.

Researcher's perspective

Another point that bears some discussion in this thesis is my own perspective as a researcher. In particular, I must draw attention to my lack of exposure to the Mexico-U.S. border area prior to beginning this research. Although I had lived in Tucson for two years at that time, I had visited Nogales on only a few occasions, and had never spent the night there. Further, while I had previously spent considerable time outside of the United

States as a student, tourist, and English teacher, little of that time was spent in Mexico specifically, nor even very much in Third World countries. Also, I was not a fluent Spanish speaker. Although it was not the first time I had been exposed to what in the U.S. would be considered extreme poverty, I was hardly an authority on life along the Mexican side of the Mexico-U.S. border, or on issues pertinent to this area in general. In this sense, I was as much a participant on the trips as I was an observer. It is therefore difficult for me to completely separate the effects of the trip that I see on the participants whom I got to know, versus the effects of the trip on myself. One participant teased me, in fact, saying that I only did the research because I wanted to go on the trips and learn about the border! While this was not the case, I do admit that I found the trips enormously rewarding in multiple ways. I also feel that the trips exposed me to issues along the border that I now feel much more aware of after having viewed them first-hand. However, I also approached these trips with the specific aim of trying to examine their effects on participants. I took notes both on the activities and on how the other participants responded to them, and I interviewed participants after the trips. Thus, although my knowledge on these trips is far from complete, my perspective is somewhat specialized.

Limitations of the research and “transformation” considered

Despite the opportunity to attend multiple trips and to have the perspective of two researchers and insight from BorderLinks staff members, there are limitations to the study in general and also to this thesis, and many further areas for research exist, both in anthropology and otherwise, with BorderLinks and other organizations like it. I will

discuss potential further areas of study in my conclusions, but I would like to address some of the limitations of this work here.

First, the explicit focus of this research was on the trip participants, rather than on the host population in northern Mexico. Jessica's fluent Spanish and greater work experience in the border region would have allowed her relatively more access to this population than I had; however, neither of us focused specifically on the host population. Any discussion of hosts' reactions or of effects on hosts in this thesis, then, is largely speculative.

Second, given that the sample of trips and interviewees from those trips was non-random and based on convenience, it is questionable to what extent the findings can be generalized to other BorderLinks trip participants, let alone to participants in similar programs. Previous research on such organizations (Rankin 1991; Graybill 1989) does offer some basis for comparison, which I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4. However, at best I can address only the BorderLinks trips that Jessica and I joined in the hope that our research may help to inform broader studies.

Third, it is possible that Jessica's and my participation in these trips and our subsequent research have altered the experience and/or participants' reaction to them in some way. As I discuss in Chapter 3, in contrast to previous studies of such organizations, Jessica and I had no formal affiliation with BorderLinks, and thus we were essentially disinterested observers. We had hoped that this would help encourage participants to be honest with us in their reactions to and assessments of the BorderLinks trips; however, our lack of affiliation with the organization offers no guarantee of this.

Further, while Jessica and I did our best to be unobtrusive in our participant-observation, trip participants were made aware, as research ethics require, that they were being observed, and it is unclear to what extent, if any, this might have affected their behavior. Graybill (1989), in his study of an educational travel seminar in Cuernavaca, Mexico, also points out that participating in such research can give trip participants more structured time for reflection, which may actually increase the perceived benefits of the trip (i.e. the “Hawthorne effect”). In our case, however, this “extra” structured reflection time occurred only once, after the trip had finished, so such benefits would likely be less than those described by Graybill.

In spite of the limitations detailed above, the research project did obtain rich qualitative data through two researchers attending trips, interacting with the trip participants as participant-observers, and interviewing participants following the trips. Given the lack of anthropological research on these kinds of organizations and from Western travelers’ perspective in general, it is my hope that this work will help in some small way to raise questions of interest to anthropology.

A few other points related to the idea of trip participant “transformation” bear mentioning here as well. As transformation of trip participants, and ultimately, of society, appears to be a goal of the BorderLinks organization, I began to consider this issue before beginning fieldwork. In discussing the subject of participant transformation with fellow students and with professors, a few people suggested that “transformation” for trip participants might be a self-fulfilling prophecy—in other words, that participants would expect to be affected profoundly by the trip, and therefore the transformation

would be, in a sense, self-induced. In other words, participants would form new meanings based on their expectations rather than the experience itself. Although this in itself would be an interesting finding, I am personally skeptical of this view and argue that receptivity to or even expectation of change, by itself, is not sufficient to yield the effects that many of the trip participants reported to us. However, as this study did not include a control group (one told to expect transformation, that then spent a week at home in their normal surroundings), the idea that participant transformation rests solely on expectations is difficult to refute. I suspect, rather, that this expectation may have influenced individuals differently, and only to a limited extent.

BorderLinks trips are also self-selecting, and many people with whom I have discussed this work have pointed out to me that groups coming on the trips are therefore already sympathetic to the views that BorderLinks espouses. It then follows (it could argued) that these trips don't really "transform" the participants or society, that they merely reaffirm what participants already believe. As one friend commented, "You won't get George Bush coming on one of those trips"! This is clearly an important point. I argue, however, that receptivity to certain ideas does not necessarily equal adherence to them (Graybill 1989), and, as I explain in Chapter 4 of this thesis, many of the participants on these trips do appear to have found the experience transformative in the broad sense, and have formed new meanings, at least on an individual level, with effects manifesting themselves in different ways depending on the individual. This is broadly reflective of social psychology research, which has shown that interpersonal contact is consistently linked with an increase in groups' empathy for the "other," especially when

the contact is voluntary (McGuire 1985). Many of the trip participants, both adults and teenagers, had never been outside of the United States, while others with significant experience even in Mexico found themselves exposed to people and situations that were largely new to them. For most, the trip seems to have been very eye opening. Overall, participants seem to have experienced different degrees of understanding based on the trips, and it also appears that while many participants were initially receptive to the ideas presented, these experiences helped to provide a concrete basis for their perspectives. So while I do not argue that the possibility for “transformation” through BorderLinks trips, either of trip participants themselves or of society, is limitless, I will argue in the coming pages that it appears to be a possibility.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Having considered the context of the research and the research methods used, I will now turn to a review of pertinent literature in anthropology, social psychology, and transformative education, which will help to inform the analysis in the following chapter. The guiding themes in this review are contact between cultural groups, namely, how individuals in such groups respond to interactions with the ‘Other;’ and how travelers react to the experience of a new and different place. I will also consider another salient factor, interaction within the travel group. As we will see, these parameters appear to have the potential to impact individual travelers in ways that transformative educators have described as “transformation.” However, as few anthropologists have used anthropological methods, such as participant-observation or interviews, to examine the involvement in travel from Western travelers’ perspectives, these experiences and any formation of shared meanings as part of them are still poorly understood by anthropologists. Social psychologists and transformative educators offer insight into the experiences of travelers in general and in the latter case, participants in transformative education programs specifically, but they have not yet considered programs like BorderLinks within the broader framework of cultural contact, and the focus is largely on the individual. Further, they have not often considered many of the nuances of shared changes in meaning that result from such trips.

I will first examine relevant literature, arising largely in anthropology, on cultural contact and on tourism, focusing specifically on works that examine how individuals involved in travel experience interpersonal contact—with locals and with each other—

and place. I will then turn to a brief consideration of empathy in the social psychology literature, as this concept is also helpful in understanding individuals' reactions to encounters with the 'Other,' and the variation of meanings ascribed to similar situations. Specifically, examining empathy is helpful in explaining why participants react more strongly to certain interactions than to others. I will then examine the body of literature that exists on transformative education programs, which has yet to be considered by anthropologists. Like the literature arising in anthropology on tourism, the transformative education literature addresses cultural change (although it is rarely framed as such), and in some cases, it discusses disparate groups coming together in the particular context of programs like BorderLinks. It is also helpful in understanding the goals of organizations like BorderLinks. However, anthropologists have yet to consider much of this literature, as far as I can tell, in any context. I will attempt to fill this gap here.

Anthropology and cultural contact

Thus far to my knowledge, no one has explicitly researched an organization like BorderLinks using an anthropological framework, nor have any anthropologists treated the subject of transformative education programs in general. However, as Chambers (2000) notes, shifts in how many anthropologists view culture over the past few decades have made fertile ground for investigations into the interactions of disparate groups. Geertz explains this shift, arguing that the idea of culture as a bounded entity has been

exhausted and that it is better viewed as a more nebulous concept—as “webs of significance” (1973:5).

This change in anthropologists’ understanding of culture has yielded increased interest in and investigation into contact between the West and the Third World. Wolf (1982), for example, took a Marxian approach to culture contact, arguing that political and economic forces have impelled and shaped such contact on a global level for centuries. Thus, groups that anthropologists have long considered to be distinct—specifically those historically described as “indigenous,” “primitive,” or “isolated”—are largely the product of specific economic and political relationships. Wolf thus contradicts Boasian arguments for “salvage anthropology,” and shows that culture contact has long contributed to the formation of shared meanings.

This recognition of cultural contact as a normal part of human interaction raised anthropologists’ interest in travel, one of the primary mechanisms of cultural contact. In *Routes*, James Clifford (1997) argues that the processes of human displacement and interaction are both complicated and long established. If travel is seen as a fundamental part of human life, then it, like the broader concept of culture contact, may be integral in *forming* cultural meanings, rather than merely transmitting them (Clifford 1997). While he offers a tantalizing glimpse of how anthropologists might examine travel experiences and their cultural repercussions, Clifford is largely concerned with reflecting on his own past fieldwork and the settings of travel encounters (e.g. museums) rather than conducting further fieldwork in this spirit. For such research we must now turn to another, related purview within the social sciences: tourism.

Anthropology and tourism

Such investigations in anthropology into cultural contact have laid fertile ground for investigations of tourism (Nash and Smith 1991), which of all literature in anthropology seems to best address contact between groups with regard to short-term visits of one group to the location of another. Further, it addresses the interactions within travel groups and intimates that these may be important in understanding travelers' experiences. Thus, the literature on tourism arising in anthropology is a useful starting point in investigating processes that occur on and as a result of transformative education travel seminars. I will begin by examining the development of the anthropology of tourism. Although my primary focus is on the anthropological literature, disciplinary boundaries often blur in studies of tourism (Nash and Smith 1991), and I will also include literature from other fields, bearing in mind throughout how the literature on tourism has treated the experience of interpersonal contact and place. I will also examine the role of intermediaries, such as local people and guides, in tourism, and intra-group interaction among tourists, as this literature also contributes to understanding of processes that occur on transformative education trips.

Tourism as a focus in anthropology

Pearce (1982b:2) ponders why tourism has long been neglected by social sciences as a legitimate subject for research, and argues that "Protestant cultural prescriptions" in the Western world have contributed to the point of view that tourism is not a valuable activity and that therefore study of it is also not worthwhile. Perhaps partly for this

reason, anthropologists did not begin to consider tourism a subject for serious inquiry until the 1970s. As discussed above, this interest seems to have sprung from attention to culture contact and culture change (Nash and Smith 1991); in recent years anthropologists have begun to recognize the tourist as a potential agent of change, particularly in less developed parts of the world (Nash and Smith 1991). Chambers (2000) argues that interest in tourism among anthropologists also has its roots both in postmodern critique and the field experiences of anthropologists and other social scientists. I would add that this rising interest in tourism has probably been fueled more recently by the increased public awareness and discussion of “globalization” during the 1990s. Although early studies of tourism were overwhelmingly negative (Nash and Smith 1991), during the 1980s and 1990s the view became more somewhat more balanced, and there was an increasing appreciation of the complexity of the tourist encounter (Nash and Smith 1991; Chambers 2000), although many critiques persisted (e.g. Bruner 1991). Interest in tourism among anthropologists has, from its inception, however, included attention to interpersonal contact between hosts and guests.

Travel, interpersonal contact, and place

Travel affords direct, in-person contact between groups that are otherwise physically separated, and thus it is not surprising that much of the literature on tourism in anthropology and social psychology is suffused with discussion of the effects of interpersonal contact on both hosts and guests, and on the resulting possibility for individual and cultural change. As Stronza writes,

When tourists and locals come together, both have the opportunity not only to glimpse how others live, but also to reflect on their own lives through the eyes of others. As a result, these cross-cultural interactions often cue 'live performances' of some of the broadest theoretical issues in anthropology. [Stronza 2001:264]

These issues include, as Clifford (1997) intimated, how cultural change unfolds, and one of the primary mechanisms for these changes in meaning on the individual level in situations of travel appears to be interpersonal contact between the host and guest groups. For guest groups, the temporary relocation to a place away from home where normal relationships and expectations are suspended also seems to contribute to such changes. As we will see, these ideas can be linked to that of "transformation," a term used liberally in the transformation education literature.

In examining interpersonal contact afforded by travel and its effects on those involved, anthropologists have historically shown greater interest in host communities, while, as mentioned earlier, less often considering the perspectives of tourists (especially Western tourists) after they return home (Nash and Smith 1991; Pearce 1982b; Pi-Sunyer 1989; Stronza 2001).⁷ Further, when anthropologists have written about travelers, they generally have not done so based on fieldwork or interviews with travelers themselves. In consideration of tourism's impacts on host groups, however, anthropologists do appear to be largely in agreement that host groups are affected by contact with tourists. For example, Wagner (1977), writing on Scandinavian tourism in Gambia, describes interactions that takes both the tourists, and in some cases locals, out of their normal status roles and social expectations. She describes the formation of a feeling of

⁷ While, conversely, in cases of migration showing more interest in migrants than in the communities that receive them.

spontaneous community among the tourists in a place away from home, but does not speculate as to the long-term effects of these experiences on the tourists. However, she does discuss the long-term effects of these encounters on the Gambian youth, which appear to involve unrealistic hopes and disappointment. Pi-Sunyer (1989) also acknowledges that interpersonal contact between host and guest groups in Catalonia has affected the hosts' ideas and stereotypes about the tourists. However, he is cautious about generalizing from one particular form and context of travel to another and argues that tourism and reactions to it are highly contextual and dynamic. He also points out that social psychologists have paid more attention to the issue of interaction between host and guest groups than anthropologists have.

Pearce (1982b), a social psychologist, argues based on survey research that travel tends to reinforce travelers' pre-existing points of view—be they positive or negative—with regard to the host population. However, he ignores the variety of travel experiences that people participate in, and the diversity of effects these experiences can have on the group and individual level. In a similar vein, Bruner (1991) argues that, while travel brochures often promise transformation for the traveler, on organized tours in African and New Guinea tour members are only confronted with experiences that serve to reinforce their inaccurate stereotypes of local people. Bruner's work, however, appears to have been based on interpretation of travel brochures and fieldwork with local populations, with no apparent contact with the travelers themselves. Bruner is hardly alone in this—much fascinating work that discusses tourism has been written without any consultation of tourists themselves (e.g. Boozer et al 2002).

Standing somewhat in contrast to Pearce and Bruner, Nash and Smith (1991) offer an interesting discussion of traveler transformation in examining Van Gennep's and Turner's rites of passage with respect to tourism. These rites of passage are described as follows. The pilgrims (or travelers) separate from their normal surroundings, enter a different physical space, and form temporary bonds of community with other pilgrims with whom they travel (echoing Wagner's [1977] discussion of Scandinavian tourists in The Gambia). Upon returning home, the travelers then reintegrate back into their normal spheres. This discussion may be helpful in understanding why transformative educators stress the experience of place in travel seminars: taking people outside of their normal surroundings is conducive to some form of personal transformation. This argument, however, makes it clear only that some kind of transformation of travelers happens. The form, scale, motivation, and diversity of group and individual experiences are not considered.

Wagner (1977) and Nash and Smith (1991) both touch upon the idea of *communitas*, or spontaneous, temporary community that often arises among travel groups, be they pilgrims, tourists, or otherwise. Wagner explores this idea further with reference to Victor Turner, who popularized the concept of *communitas* in anthropology. She applies the concept of *communitas* to the Swedish tourists she observed, and argues that their time in The Gambia, in contrast to their everyday lives, was characterized by a freedom from structured time, a temporary suspension of status differences within the group, and their separateness—both physical and otherwise—from local people. All of these characteristics, Wagner explains, conform to Turner's conception of *communitas*.

As I discuss further in Chapter 4, while in many respects the BorderLinks groups I observed did not conform to these features of *communitas*, they nonetheless did evidence a form of spontaneous community that seemed to be important to many of the individual participants.

With the above points in mind, I will now turn to research outside of anthropology that discusses the formation of community among travelers and touches upon the roles of intermediaries in situations of travel.

Intra-group interaction and intermediaries

Intra-group interaction, as Wagner (1977) and Nash and Smith (1991) suggest in their discussions of *communitas*, appears to be important to travelers, at least to those who chose to travel in groups. Quiroga (1990) approaches this subject with relation to the charter tour experience, based on psychological research with Latin American tourists in Spain. In particular, she emphasizes the importance charter tour participants place on intra-group dynamic. Specifically, she argues that participants named positive intra-group interaction as an important aspect of the experience for the participants.

Researchers on tourism have also recognized the role of intermediaries between local and guest groups in situations of travel. Quiroga (1990) argues that participants in charter tours place significant importance on the interaction between the tour group and the tour guides. She identifies tour guides as “brokers,” while Pearce (1982a) describing tour leaders uses the term “mediators.” Brown (1992), in discussing tourist and local interaction on the beaches of The Gambia, describes the local beach boys as “culture

brokers” who serve as a bridge between the two communities, providing services to tourists that allow them greater access to local Gambian culture in exchange for money and greater proximity to European society. This concept may have application for BorderLinks trips, particularly when considering the role of the trip leaders.

Duvall (N.d.), in writing on local people’s experience of Mazatlán, Mexico, a beach resort town that draws both domestic and international tourism, focuses on other subjects of interest: individuals’ happiness and satisfaction. Arguing that individuals’ happiness with their experience of discos depends not only on the physical surroundings but also on the individuals’ goals, expectations, and personal sense of morality, Duvall draws attention to the variety of responses that can be elicited from similar surroundings and situations. That individuals do not always respond to stimuli in the same way may seem an obvious point, but it bears stating because, as we have seen, so much of the literature on tourism has treated both travelers and host populations as homogenous units.

The literature on tourism thus establishes that some kind of change in shared meanings for both host and guest groups is a possibility, although such transformation of the latter is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. It also seems that travel groups offer space for complex interactions both within guest groups and between them and host groups. It is also apparent that thus far little anthropological fieldwork has been done with travel groups or with Western travelers in general; such research could help to further explore assertions made by Pearce (1982a), Bruner (1991), and Nash and Smith (1991) with regards to how travelers react to the experience of travel. The literature on transformative education, in fact, directly challenges Pearce’s and Bruner’s assertions

that travel only reinforces travelers' stereotypes, and I will soon turn to a closer examination of this literature. First, however, I will consider social psychology research that generally addresses interactions between people, and helps to establish that individuals' reactions to encounters with the 'Other' can be highly individualized.

Empathy considered

I will now turn briefly to the concept of empathy, which will be useful in understanding how individuals from different groups perceive each other when coming together, and therefore how individual participants in BorderLinks trips react differently to specific interactions. Empathy is defined by Woodruff Smith (1989:112) as "understanding another's experience from the other's point of view, projecting oneself into the other's place as subject of her experience." Sympathy and pity, although cited as synonyms for empathy, differ substantially in that they focus on the subject's feeling *for* the object, rather than the subject's *identification* with the object. The term empathy is a particularly contested one (e.g. Boler 1997), but I have chosen to use it because I feel it best captures the idea of how people can identify with certain individuals whom they perceive to be like them and theirs more than with others.

Social psychologists Maner et al. (2002) examine the concept of empathy using an experiment of students' willingness to help a stranger. Based on the results of this study, they argue that individuals are only inclined to help a stranger when they identify with that person (i.e. perceive that person to be like themselves) in some way. As we will see, this point does not seem to have been explored in the literature on transformative

education, yet this concept clearly has importance in examining individuals' encounters with the 'Other.'⁸

Transformative education in North America and beyond

Programs designed to bring groups of people together, like transformative education programs, provide an interesting place to study the question of how groups can interact to form new meanings. While a specific body of literature on transformative education exists, it does not appear to have been considered by anthropologists thus far. However, this literature focuses specifically on strategies for changing societies (primarily, North American or Western society) in particular ways and addresses the effects of intra-group interactions on individuals, and therefore is highly relevant to the idea of cultural interaction and cultural change. It is to this literature that I now turn.

The term "transformative education" refers to educational programs, usually focusing on adults, that aim to affect the attitudes or worldviews and actions of the learners and whose ultimate if sometimes vaguely-stated goal is to bring about progressive, egalitarian social change. The transformative education movement, which arose in the 1970s within adult education, appears to have informed BorderLinks' trips and philosophy to some extent. Its literature is the only one that directly discusses organizations like BorderLinks, and likely has also served as inspiration for such institutions. It is left largely unstated in this literature as to what the "transformation"

⁸ As Jessica has pointed out to me (personal communication), this information could be of some use to BorderLinks' staff in planning trips, particularly for teenaged groups, who might appreciate more interaction with people their own age.

will be, but there appears to be a shared egalitarian/left-leaning vision of society in which racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice are eliminated, and none of the society's members are materially poorer than others. This movement also assumes that there exists a civil society in which individuals are largely free to act and have the potential to change the shape of society itself. Transformative education programs generally seem to rely on providing those who participate in them with information about ways of life that they might not be familiar with and with opportunities for discussion and reflection; urging participants to action is often implicit rather than explicit. Overlapping bodies of literature exist in both education and theology on transformative education.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide an exhaustive review of the literature related to transformative education, I will briefly discuss the movement's philosophy and history in the United States in order to help contextualize the research findings. I will also discuss some studies of organizations that conduct travel seminars using a transformative education model, including the one previous study of the BorderLinks organization itself.

Transformative education and the "non-poor" defined

One of the earliest scholarly articles on transformative education was written by Jack Mezirow (1978) and published in the journal *Adult Education*. In this article, Mezirow uses the phrase "education for transformation" to describe events in adult lives that cause learners to make a critical assessment of the "assumptions underlying [their] roles, priorities and beliefs" (1978:104). The term "transformative education" appears to

have since been widely accepted. Evans, Evans, and Kennedy (1987) identify some common features of transformative education organizations, including: the groups have a commitment to educating the “non-poor” in First World countries, primarily Canada and the U.S. These groups aim both to raise consciousness about oppressive structures and to help develop actions to change those structures. Although the use of the term “non-poor” in this literature is often imprecise, it is essentially used synonymously with middle-class (as that term would be recognized in First World countries, although not necessarily elsewhere), encompassing characteristics such as low infant mortality, ready access to education and other opportunities, and sufficient resources to support a family above the “poverty line” (Evans, Evans, and Kennedy 1987). Conversely, the term “poverty” does not appear to be explored in this literature, although, as I discuss briefly in the following chapter, in some cases, the BorderLinks participant groups that we observed as part of this research discussed and problematized the concept themselves.

In the literature I have surveyed, I have found that most if not all groups that use the label “transformative education” have an explicit Christian influence. I will also add that transformative education programs often share common inspiration, traced to liberation theology and the writings of Paulo Freire, which I discuss further below. Evans, Evans, and Kennedy (1987) in their edited volume *Pedagogies for the Non-poor* provide the following examples of transformative education programs: volunteer ecumenical groups that focus on discussing world hunger, programs built into seminary curriculums involving discussion and action on social issues such as racism and sexism,

and groups that discuss and perform civil disobedience activities related to geopolitical issues.

Historical overview of transformative education and travel seminars for transformation

Not all transformative education programs involve a travel component—in fact, many do not—but as little specific literature exists on these kinds of travel seminars, I will begin with a brief background of the transformative education movement as a whole. Alice Evans (1987) traces the roots of transformative education in the United States to the 1960s and the upsurge of political activity and concomitant social change that resulted from both domestic and international events during that time period. Ahlstrom (1972) argues that this time period was characterized by a rise in secularism, growing doubt about American ideals versus lived realities, and loss of faith in American institutions, which led people in the United States to feel an urgent need to reexamine their basic conceptions of religion, ethics, and nationhood. Also during this time period, many religious communities and institutions exhibited increased concern with social problems in North American life, such as racism, poverty, and environmental degradation, among others (Handy 1976).

One reaction on the part of some American churches was to institute educational efforts related to concerns about social issues, with the goal of educating Americans about these matters. The hope was that such efforts would reduce or eliminate people's prejudices and raise their awareness of and concern about what the churches perceived to be social problems, with the implicit and ultimate goal of impelling people to change the structure of society. Such programs were usually separate from more action-oriented

movements that focused on specific issues, such as civil rights. There existed some amount of division between the educator and activist groups, with the former seeing the latter as lacking an understanding of long-range goals, while activists saw the educators as well-intentioned but not delivering tangible social change (A. Evans 1987).

Also around this time, struggles in Latin America became better known to both of these groups, particularly through the writings of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Like Habermas (1970), also writing at that time, Freire (1970) argued that communication is key to a just society. However, unlike Habermas, Freire saw the critical form of communication as discussion among the poor themselves, rather than between all social groups. Also, he focused specifically on criticizing educational institutions and, by extension, the structures of power in society in general.

Freire condemned what he called “banking” educational methods that aimed to transfer knowledge from an educator to learners, and argued that dialogue among oppressed peoples would serve as a means of their liberation (Freire 1970). The central instruments of Freire’s alternative pedagogy are dialogue and reflection leading to action, the fusion of these being praxis. He argues that accepted western pedagogies frame the teacher as active and knowledgeable and the students as passive and ignorant, and that the agents of oppression developed these pedagogies to maintain their interests. He also argues that the student-teacher roles should blur and that dialogue among oppressed people, based on their own experiences and knowledge, will lead to action, and thus to transformation and freedom.

Freire challenged the passivity of education programs in general, and of social-change oriented education programs in particular, by including praxis as an explicit component of his pedagogy. His focus, however, was always on the “oppressed” or poor, and he never outlined a specific model to educate the non-oppressed or middle class/rich in either a Latin American or North American context. Although Freire did become involved in some discussions on transformative education programs in the 1980s (Evans, Evans, and Kennedy 1987), he maintained that his primary interest was in direct educational efforts with the poor. Nonetheless, Freire served as a major inspiration for education movements within churches, as he communicated a strong belief in the power of adult education to change the world, and by extension, a belief in dialogue as a powerful pedagogical tool. Although some transformative educators have questioned whether Freirian pedagogy has really been adapted in practice to transformative education programs (Graybill 1989), it is clear that Freire has served as an enormous inspiration for the movement.

Although all of the developments described above shaped the growth of transformative education in North America, the earliest documented travel seminar program with these kinds of goals actually predates (and even anticipates) much of the activity described above. The Center for Intercultural Formation, later the Centro Intercultural de Documentación (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, was founded in 1961 by Ivan Illich, an Austrian-born priest who later left the church and rose to prominence in the 1970s as an educational and environmental writer and radical. CIDOC was founded as a training center for aspiring missionaries. It taught Spanish and used cross-cultural

immersion as a way to educate aspiring missionaries from the U.S. and Europe about conditions in Latin America and aimed to bring them to question their presumptions about why they were evangelizing, and to approach their missions with humility (Graybill 1989; Smith and Smith 1994). Illich described the center as “a free club for the search of surprise, a place where people go who want to have help in redefining their questions rather than completing the answers they have gotten” (quoted in Smith and Smith 1994:435). It has since branched out to cater to interested individuals and groups beyond prospective missionaries, and apparently has also helped to fuel the large Spanish language-school industry in Cuernavaca. It is likely that this center has served as an inspiration for others like it that now exist in the United States and Latin America, including the Cuernavaca Intercultural Dialogue on Development Center, discussed below, which is a colleague organization of BorderLinks.

The broad influences discussed above have shaped the BorderLinks organization’s philosophy and the methods used in their travel seminars. In order to better understand what other researchers have concluded about similar programs, I will now turn to other studies of transformative-education travel seminar programs. We will see that the focus of these studies has been largely empirical, with researchers asking questions such as: “What are the effects of the trip on the trip participants?” Although this research is rarely framed in the wider context of cultural contact, it offers significant insight into the individual interactions and processes that occur on such trips. It is thus of significant interest to anthropologists, who, as we have seen, have conducted little investigation among Western travelers.

Other studies of transformative education travel seminar programs and previous research on BorderLinks

While I have not uncovered any published academic research on transformative-education travel seminar programs, a few thus-far unpublished academic studies were conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, although none of these were conducted by anthropologists. There is also some non-academic work on this kind of travel seminar, which I discuss below.

The academic works on travel seminars using a transformative education model include two dissertations in the field of education, one by Graybill (1989) and one by Rankin (1991), and an MA thesis in Intercultural Relations on the BorderLinks organization itself (Ufford-Chase 2001). I will first discuss Graybill and Rankin and what their work can contribute to a study of BorderLinks, and then move on to a discussion of Ufford-Chase and how her work contributes to this thesis. Overall, the works I consider here indicate that transformative education programs using travel as a primary component are largely successful in meeting their goals. That is, they appear to cause participants to become more aware of the issues addressed in the trips and to become more sympathetic to the views espoused by the organizations that lead them. There is also some indication that trip participants respond to these experiences in tangible ways, specifically through activism, although the commitment to such activities varies. The impacts in terms of wider cultural change, however, are rarely discussed. One other short-coming of these works so far is that all have been conducted by individuals who were linked to the organization they study either through employment or

other means; in this respect, Jessica's and my research is a departure from previous studies. Further, while these works in some cases do take into account heterogeneity of participants, they do not attempt to address many of the reasons why participants might respond differently to the experiences on the trips. This is a subject I aim to tackle in the following chapter.

Both Graybill (1989) and Rankin (1991) wrote their dissertations as empirical studies of organizations that conducted international travel seminars aimed at the American and Canadian non-poor. Like BorderLinks, the programs that Graybill and Rankin studied are both based on travel to Latin America. The philosophies of the organizations that they studied are also similar to BorderLinks' in their aim to raise participants' awareness of conditions in the Third World, to cause participants to question assumptions about poverty and the relationship of First and Third World countries, and ultimately to motivate them to bring about certain kinds of changes in North American society and the world. Further, all involve similar activities, such as meetings with "experts" (e.g. activists, poor individuals themselves) on the social problems discussed, and all emphasize the importance of spending time in the location of poverty.

Both Rankin (1991) and Graybill (1989) focus on trip participants' attitudes and behavior, and they report significant changes in these dimensions on the part of their research participants, with Graybill basing his findings mostly on interviews, and Rankin basing them largely on questionnaires. Both included follow-up mail questionnaires with participants after the trips, with Rankin following up six months later and Graybill, 13

months later. Their findings thus complement the research discussed in this thesis, which includes follow-up after a much shorter time period.

Graybill also contributes to discussion of the variety of participant responses to trips, arguing that participants' responses varied with their own personalities, views held before the trip, and previously-established ways of reacting to the world. For example, he claims that after attending the trips, those participants with a previous history of activism reported intensifying these efforts on issues related to Latin America. Those who were previously receptive to the organization's ideas but had no history of activism in some cases responded by becoming activist. Graybill considers a range of activities as "activist," including signing petitions, writing to a government representative, and engaging in civil disobedience. He further argues (based on a sample size of two, however) that those participants with conservative political outlooks reexamined many of their beliefs and reported changes in their worldviews, although they did not respond to the trips by engaging in activism. Graybill acknowledges that his participants responded to particular activities in different ways, but does not speculate on what about the activities might help to account for these differences.

Rankin (1991) offers insight into the content of the travel seminar, claiming that his participants favored a mixture of "fact"-based pedagogy and personal stories told by Latin American individuals and groups and interpersonal interactions with them. Unlike Graybill he does not address how different participants might respond to particular activities in different ways. He does find that attitude change is sometimes, but not

always, linked to later behavioral change, and that the nature of these changes varied. He also argues that post-trip group activity helps to reinforce behavioral change.

Some earlier scholarly research on the BorderLinks program also exists. The organization once attempted to send out post-tour questionnaires by mail, but staff indicated that they had a very low response rate (Sara Mezzah, personal communication). More interestingly and substantially, Catherine Ufford-Chase (2001) has written an MA thesis in Intercultural Relations, also an empirical study, based on survey research with participants in BorderLinks trips lasting from five to ten days. Her primary methods were to administer a quantitative pretest and posttest questionnaire using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) survey, developed by Bennet, to measure tolerance of cultural difference. Her work reveals that BorderLinks participants with relatively little exposure to life outside of the United States responded measurably and significantly to the trips with increased cultural tolerance. However, for one particular dimension of cultural tolerance, *minimization*, or the tendency to minimize difference between one's own cultural group and the "Other," she found that trip participants tended to evidence *decreased* cultural tolerance—that is, they tended to see Others as more like themselves, rather than to acknowledge cultural difference. This finding may indicate participants' increased empathy for the people that have come into contact with on the trip, and as I discuss in Chapter 5, I also noted this tendency, although I do not necessarily see it as problematic. This point does, however, raise some interesting questions with regard to the trips themselves and also the survey instrument that Ufford-Chase used, as a concept

such as cultural tolerance is bound to be both somewhat subjective and difficult to quantify.

Ufford-Chase's research, however, did not problematize the survey instrument she used, nor was she able to discuss the nuances of how individuals' attitudes had changed or the implications for action. Further, she was not able to address specific stimuli in the tours to which the participants were responding. A discussion of Bennet's IDI survey is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I do hope to build on Ufford-Chase's work by examining the individualized experiences of BorderLinks trip participants, as Ufford-Chase herself indicated to Jessica and me that this would be the ideal follow-up to her own research (personal communication).

One noticeable difference between Rankin's and Graybill's studies and that done by Jessica and me, however, is that both Rankin and Graybill worked as staff members for the organizations they were researching while they conducted their research. Rankin even developed, implemented, and led the travel seminars he assesses. This status of organizational staff member must have allowed these researchers a wide breadth of access both to the organizations they studied and to the trip participants, and it undoubtedly also gave them much more logistical latitude than my research partner and I were afforded. However, this direct affiliation with the organizations conducting the seminars raises the issue of bias, particularly in Rankin's case, as he was essentially evaluating his own work. Also, it is possible that participants in these studies would have identified the researcher with the organization and thus might have felt pressure to report positive changes. Graybill (1989) acknowledges this weakness in his own research and

recommends further studies by outside observers. Similarly, while Ufford-Chase was not employed by the BorderLinks organization while conducting her research, she was the spouse of the organization's international director. Similarly to Graybill and Rankin, while this does not invalidate her research, it does point to the need for a study by outside researchers.

Nonetheless, all of these studies call into question arguments by Pearce (1982a) and Bruner (1991), discussed above, who argued that travel only reinforces previously held views.

Interpersonal contact and the importance of place as addressed in the transformative-education literature

I will now turn to the issue of interpersonal contact and place as pedagogical tools and how they are addressed in the transformative-education literature. As I discussed above, some anthropologists and social psychologists writing on tourism have argued that these two components of travel experiences have the potential to transform individual travelers, while others have argued that they merely reinforce previously held beliefs. As I shall demonstrate, most authors writing in the domain of the transformative-education literature are in agreement that both interpersonal contact with the 'Other' and removing individuals from their normal situations to the site of poverty are powerful tools in changing perspectives and causing individuals to examine their worldviews, although the specifics of the methods are often left somewhat unclear. Particularly, the nature and extent of interpersonal contact, and with whom this contact should take place,

is often vague. Further, transformative education programs do not seem to explicitly consider the intra-group dynamic.

The stated goal of all transformative education programs by definition is the “transformation” of the learner and by extension of the world around him or her, as these programs aim to affect participants in such a way that they will act to transform society. Mezirow argues that “taking the perspective of others . . . is the mechanism by which [individual] transformation occurs” (1978:104-105). This raises the question, how are learners brought to take the perspective of others? Most writing about transformative education argue that interpersonal contact is key, and some argue that it should be of a particular quality. Thistelthwaite (1994) posits that the learner must approach the interpersonal encounter with respect for the other person and awareness of the purpose of “transformation,” and warns that recognition of difference does not always lead to empathetic awareness of it. Robert Evans (1987) argues that personal “encounter with the poor” is a key factor in transformation—he is in fact quite skeptical about the usefulness of films and other modes of transmitting stories versus interpersonal contact. He argues:

The controlling ideology [in the United States] is so powerful and pervasive that it is virtually impossible for the non-poor to educate themselves on issues of peace and justice, to pierce the ideological cocoon, apart from a direct encounter with the poor . . . the ‘turning point’ or ‘conversion’ in the transformative dynamic comes with a direct and personal encounter with poor or oppressed persons or groups. [R. Evans 1987: 275].

However, with respect to specific activities that facilitate these kinds of interactions, the literature is generally vague as to what does or does not constitute a sufficient encounter. Further, that participants might react differently to specific encounters is rarely discussed.

Place, it is argued in the transformative-education literature, is also important both in drawing learners away from their usual surroundings, thus priming them for “transformation,” and in impressing upon them the physical reality of other people’s lives. This echoes arguments by Nash and Smith (1991), discussed above, that travelers’ go through rites of passage that are in part set into motion by relocation away from familiar surroundings. Strain (2000), a teacher of liberation theology, admits that he has not found films or novels to be particularly useful in successfully connecting his students to contexts that are so foreign to them, while Edgerton (1994) argues that travel and physical separation from one’s normal surrounds dislocate both the mind and body in a way that is conducive to perspective transformation. Gittins (1994:120), a professor of theological anthropology, argues that an “immersion” in the site of poverty gives the learner the opportunity for “participant-observation” (a term he appears to use somewhat more loosely than in most anthropological literature). Gittins bases these arguments on his experience as a participant in a transformative education program that brought together program participants and women staying in a homeless shelter, claiming that the experience of the location of poverty allows the learner a view of an alternate world that can change his or her perspectives. He also argues that a shock that challenges previously held assumptions lessens resistance to change, and requires the exploration of

alternative patterns of living, and thus that some kind of immersion experience is crucial to transformative education (Gittins 1994).

In sum, the transformative-education literature is generally in agreement that both a personal encounter with the poor and an experience of the location of poverty and injustice itself, or at least taking participants outside of their normal spheres, are critical tools in perspective transformation for learners. Edgerton's (1994) and Gittins' (1994) assertions regarding place in particular affirm Nash's and Smith's (1991) arguments regarding travel as a transformative rite of passage, and generally confirm Wolf's (1982) and Clifford's (1997) arguments that cultural contact and travel can be in and of themselves mechanisms for changes in shared meanings. However, while some (notably Graybill 1989) have considered that individuals will respond differently to such experiences, none have attempted to address many of the reasons why individuals might respond differently.

Summary

Considered together, these texts—from anthropology, social psychology, and transformative education—all offer insight into the question of traveler transformation. However, it appears that little qualitative study has been done on the effects of travel on travelers, and such analyses as have been done by anthropologists tend to view tourists as homogenous rather than as diverse groups and have not considered the nuances and repercussions, for the travelers themselves, of travel experiences. Literature on empathy indicates that other things being equal, people respond more positively to interactions with 'Others' with whom they can identify. Further, we have seen that while

transformative education offers insight that is specific to BorderLinks and groups like it, it is often vague as to how and why individuals react differently to specific pedagogical tools, nor does it address interaction within the trip groups. In the following section, then, I will discuss the research findings in light of the literature review, focusing specifically on how BorderLinks trip participants experienced interpersonal contact and the location of the borderlands.

CHAPTER 4: BORDERLINKS TRIPS AND PARTICIPANT TRANSFORMATION

The formation of new meanings: considering participant “transformation”

Thus far I have outlined the research context and methodology and have reviewed literature that sheds light on the experience of travelers, specifically travelers in transformative education programs, and have linked these ideas with broad anthropological literature on cultural contact. This and literature investigating tourism have shown that interactions between otherwise separate groups can instigate changes in meaning for those involved. However, as we have seen, anthropologists have done little field research with Western travelers. Other research indicates that interactions both between travelers and outsiders and within travel groups are important facets of these experiences, and that intermediaries can also play an important role. Literature on tourism and on transformative education programs suggests that interpersonal contact with the ‘Other’ and removal from one’s normal surroundings, particularly to the location of poverty, are key components in causing travelers to feel affected by the experience, and possibly to their formation of new meanings. Further, we have seen that the transformative education literature has used the term “transformation” to describe certain changes in meaning on the part of participants in these programs. With these points in mind, I will now examine participant-observation and interview data on BorderLinks trips, and examine the question: what processes occur on these trips?

While I will consider the wider implications of these trips in the concluding chapter, I will first consider the implications largely on an individual level. The data will

show that participants often reexamine beliefs, ascribe new meanings, and in some cases report behavioral changes as a result of their experiences on BorderLinks trips. I argue that the following factors are key in understanding how participants react to the trips. First, the participants' ability to emotionally connect with the 'Others' (i.e. Mexican people) that they come into contact with is key. Confirming research on empathy, it appears that participants are able to connect more easily with people whom they perceive to be like themselves or like others in their everyday social group. Second, participants' pre-existing knowledge of and experience in the borderlands region, Mexico, Third World countries in general, or simply outside of the United States/Canada, appears to strongly condition the extent to which trip participants feel affected by the trip. As Ufford-Chase (2001) discussed, those with little or no prior experience or knowledge of these realms, other things being equal, seem to have felt more profoundly affected. Third, building on Quiroga (1990), I will consider the nature of the travel group itself and how its cohesiveness can affect participants' experiences and their reactions to the trip. Like Rankin (1991), I note that group affiliation seems to provide a framework for how people can further reflect and act following the trip, and thus continue the formation of new meanings. Finally, I also briefly consider religious affiliation and how it appeared to shape participants' experiences on BorderLinks trips, as this has also been largely ignored in the literature I have reviewed. The small, non-random sample upon which this research is based, however, means that these latter observations in particular should be viewed with caution. I will attempt to illustrate the nuances of all of these dimensions—interpersonal contact and with whom, participants' prior experience and how it affects

their reactions to BorderLinks trips, group interaction, and religious affiliation—by considering certain interactions and events that took place on the trips, by examining how trip participants describe their experiences on BorderLinks trips and subsequent reactions to them, and finally by examining profiles of select participants.

Participant expectations and motivations to attend trip

Before discussing the participant responses, I would like to consider the motivations that lead people to join a BorderLinks trip and their expectations about it. Although this was not discussed in the literature I have reviewed, it shows that, with a few exceptions, few trip participants seemed to expect “transformation” or something like it as a result of the trip.

The questionnaire that Jessica and I administered at the beginning of the trips (Appendix A) includes the question: “Why did you decide to come on a BorderLinks trip?” Most participants responded by expressing an interest in “learning more” about life on the Mexico-U.S. border, while some mentioned “adventure,” or “having fun.” In discussion of pre-trip motivation and expectations in interviews, responses were similar. For example, one young trip-participant explained in her post-trip interview that “before the trip I definitely didn’t have any expectations. I had like no idea what we were going to do . . . I wasn’t really expecting anything out of it, as I was just expecting to have a good time.” Another explained, “I think my original expectations were that I would learn something about . . . the border. And . . . I think my other one was to have a lot of fun.”

Further, many participants expressed surprise in our post-trip interviews at how much the trip had affected them. For example, one woman explained,

I don’t think I was interested [in the trip, before I went], but that’s because I wasn’t well informed what it was about. I knew it was like border issues, but that’s so broad, I mean, like okay yeah, what are we going to do? . . . I was surprised when I was there that was the week I loved despite the heat and all the stuff, . . . I learned a lot [and] we did so many interesting things.

While most trip participants seemed to arrive in Tucson with fairly open expectations, a few, however, did have higher ones. One young person explained:

Well, before I went everyone was like, 'Oh yeah, it's gonna change the way you look at life and everything.' And then, so I was like, 'Oh yeah.' But, it's sort of hard to comprehend the way that something can change the way you look at life. So, I was, I think I was a little worried about how, [pause] how difficult it was going to be to look at what I was going to be seeing there. So I was, I had fairly high expectations, I think. Because everyone was like, 'Oh, it's going to be like this wonderful experience.' But, I wasn't disappointed or anything in those expectations.

Thus with a few exceptions, it does not appear that participants expected to be “transformed” by their experiences on the BorderLinks trip. It is difficult to argue, therefore, that expectations alone have produced the changes in participants' perspectives and actions that I will explore shortly.

Participants on the experience of place

As discussed in the previous chapter, Gittins (1994) argues that experiencing the shock of a new and sometimes physically and psychologically uncomfortable place forces participants in travel seminars to reexamine previously held assumptions. This idea is related to Festinger's (1957) concept of cognitive dissonance, widely cited in social psychology, in which an individual experiences an inconsistency between attitude and experience. In such a situation, Festinger argues, something—either the situation or the attitude—changes to eliminate the dissonance. I believe that in the context of BorderLinks trips, as participants have little immediate control over the situation, the meanings they ascribe to the conditions often are altered. In the previous chapter I also related participants' experience of place to the rites of passage described by Nash and Smith (1991), in which a new and unfamiliar place puts the individual in a state of liminality and helps to set traveler “transformation” into motion. I have found that both

in our participant-observation and in our interviews that there is evidence for participants reexamining and in some cases altering previously held beliefs or meanings, supporting Gittins' argument. Support for Nash and Smith is less obvious, possibly because their argument is more rarified. Certainly, though, participants are placed in a liminal state—though they may not describe it as such—by going to surroundings that for many were highly unfamiliar. These processes described by Gittins and by Nash and Smith appear to be distinct but coinciding.

Trash on the ground offers an interesting example of participants reacting to place, and in some cases altering the meanings they ascribe to the surroundings. Garbage was a noticeable feature of the landscape in populated areas in northern Sonora, particularly in Nogales, and it became a topic of much discussion among many participants on the trips that both Jessica and I joined. Participants who had never been outside of the United States seemed to be particularly shocked by this aspect of the location, which helps to confirm Ufford-Chase's (2001) assertion that people with relatively little experience outside the U.S. were, other things being equal, more affected by the trip. My field notes from group 2's trip (where few participants had previously traveled outside of the U.S.) explain: "We crossed the border at Sásabe and people instantly and verbally remarked at the sudden change in the landscape from one that was relatively garbage-free to one that was strewn with plastic bags." Among this group, I overheard many muted conversations about the garbage; people were shocked by the amount they saw on the ground, and could not understand why it was there. In group 1, one woman, who also had not traveled outside of the U.S. or Canada, upon arrival in a

colonia for a home stay, looked around and asked rhetorically, “Why don’t they pick up their trash?” I believe that she was echoing the sentiments that many members of both groups felt. The garbage on the ground also confused a woman from group 2 who had once spent a few weeks in Africa on a church trip, but otherwise had not traveled outside of the U.S. Upon first arriving in Nogales and driving into a colonia, she turned to me and said, “Explain this to me.” At first I thought that she meant the conditions in general, but when I asked her what she meant, she said that she didn’t understand all of the garbage on the ground. My attempts at explanation were, I think, not satisfactory to her,⁹ but by the end of the trip she told me that after thinking about it a lot and talking it over it with the group’s priest, she felt that she shouldn’t judge the local people for something they don’t have control over. She also seemed embarrassed by her earlier reaction.

While at one point the priest who led group 2 expressed frustration to me that his group members were so focused on garbage, I observed by the end of both trips that many participants who had initially been upset by the site of copious amounts of litter and had expressed confusion about it had altered their judgments. For example, on group 2’s trip, I wrote in my field notes about a conversation with one woman, which took place after a visit to a family’s home for lunch in a particularly marginal colonia:

She said that being there [in the colonia] was “very hard” for her. I asked why, and she said, “everything—the poverty, the garbage on the ground.” She said that her first reaction upon driving into the colonia was to wonder why people don’t pick up the trash, but that after eating lunch [there] she

⁹ My field notes read: “to attempt to answer her question, I said that I thought that poverty and lack of access to public services played a role in the garbage, but also that European cities used to be very dirty (by current US standards) but that we have come to value cleanliness more, so perhaps it was something that varies based on place/time/culture.”

realized that “they can’t afford to worry about that” because in life you can only worry about so much. She said that she recognized that the people living in colonias have much more basic worries—taking care of families, providing food and shelter.

Thus this woman’s interpretation of trash on the ground seems to have shifted from an indication of laziness (why don’t people just pick it up?) to a sign that local people have too many other concerns in their life to devote much effort to trash on the ground, indicating increased empathy with local people. That she did not expand this discussion to the question of local infrastructure and services is beyond the point; garbage, originally seen as a sign of one thing, has come to mean something else.

In our interviews, many participants also explicitly recognized the experience of place as “transformative.” Many specifically emphasized the power of being in the desert in the height of summer, where migrants often attempt to cross the border, and in being in the location of poverty, especially in intimate space such as people’s homes, as a way to better understand local people’s lives. One woman, reflecting on the trip and how it had impacted her, explained in our interview:

I guess another thing was the stark reality of the whole situation. We live in our little capsule here back home, you know and we have all of our comforts, you know, our water is right there, and to think what some people have to go through everyday—it’s not a given for them, that they’re going to have water. And the basics of life!

One man explained that the discomfort he experienced while staying at a family’s home made him more sensitive to the experience:

I think I’d have to say our sort of the home-stays in the colonias were definitely one of the best [activities]. Even though it wasn’t entirely comfortable for me. Um, it was the discomfort and up close and very intimate perspective of how folks get by. That, uh, was probably one of the most memorable things I have.

These points all seem to support Gittins' (1994) assertion that immersion in the location of poverty is critical for this kind of trip, as it allows people to better understand what local conditions are like. Further, the general pattern that Nash and Smith (1991) describe—travelers separating from their normal surroundings, entering a different physical space, forming temporary bonds of community with other travelers (*communitas*), and upon returning home, reintegrating back into their normal spheres—also seems on the whole to be followed here.

However, the BorderLinks scenario presents the opportunity, not necessarily unique, that the travel community may persist beyond the travel experience. Partly for these reasons, and to further consider the concept of *communitas*, it is worth examining the interaction within the travel group more closely.

Intra-group interactions and travel intermediaries

Our research has largely confirmed Quiroga's (1990) assertion that group integration is an important dimension of satisfaction with the travel experience. As I will discuss shortly, it also appears to have the potential to shape the meanings people form in the context of these trips and to affect group action directed towards issues identified on them. Further, the role of BorderLinks staff as intermediaries presents an interesting case study, as their function is in some ways similar to—but also in some ways markedly different from—that of the tour guides Quiroga describes.

I noted that interaction within the groups of travelers had the potential to be extremely positive and to shape the trip experience for many participants. This idea of

group cohesiveness is clearly linked to Nash's and Smith's (1991) discussion of the travel experience as a rite of passage, as one of the key components of this process is the formation of *communitas* among travel group members. While *communitas* as Turner outlines did not seem to be evident *per se*, the process of quickly forming a strong sense of community seemed to be at work on both trips that I joined, but was particularly evident for group 2, a church group where fewer of the members had previously traveled outside of the U. S. A sense of familiarity and friendships developed during the trip among the adults in this group, who until that time had known each other as acquaintances rather than friends. Adult group members joked and laughed with each other, shared stories in the long van rides, and seemed to delight in each other's company. Following the trip, one woman explained to me, "I think probably another thing [that impacted me] was the closeness that some people in the group developed, you know, where they're so accepting of each other." I also sensed that group members who were not well integrated into their groups did not seem to enjoy the trip as much. It is possible that this may color the whole experience for them.

It also appears that group cohesiveness, at least when combined with strong leadership, has the potential to affect participants' action following the trips, which ultimately, is one of BorderLinks' goals.¹⁰ For example, members of group 2, which seemed to have formed particularly strong sense of community amongst themselves, planned to form "partnerships" with other religious organizations in Mexico. This

¹⁰ The BorderLinks organization appears to recognize this, and international director Rick Ufford-Chase described this phenomenon as "the learning community" (personal communication).

group's priest was the spearhead of this effort, but I also sensed that the group's trip experience and the bonds they had formed among themselves helped in galvanizing their support. Several participants mentioned these efforts (although not explicitly linked to the group dynamic) in follow-up interviews.

As Brown (1992) and Quiroga (1990) discuss, intermediaries between the travelers and the local people—primarily BorderLinks trip leaders, in this case—also appear to have been key in shaping the experiences of trip participants. In a way similar to the tour guides that Quiroga discusses, BorderLinks trip leaders made most arrangements for activities on the trips, drove the travel vehicle, were generally available to trouble-shoot, and were framed as “experts” on the local area. However, unlike the tour guides in the trips that Quiroga examines, by virtue of the nature of BorderLinks trip, trip leaders were in a position to frame and interpret the political and social issues that are central themes in BorderLinks' trips. Trip leaders organized activities according to these goals, and “free time” for participants was fairly limited. The view of the border presented to trip participants was therefore largely that shaped by the organization as a whole, but particularly through the lens of the individual trip leaders. Further, for those participants who were not fluent Spanish speakers, trip leaders were often the primary means of communication with local people. Thus, trip leaders were in a position of authority and could have easily included their own interpretations of the trips' activities as part of group discussions. I was interested to note, however, that despite this position of authority vis-à-vis the participants, trip leaders generally refrained from offering much political or social commentary on the activities, and from joining in group discussions;

explicit interpretation of trip activities and experiences was left largely to the groups themselves. One participant commented on this to a trip leader at the end of his trip, noting that he appreciated being allowed to draw his own conclusions rather than being guided in his interpretation of these experiences.

This may help to explain why, based on our observations and on interviews, the interaction with BorderLinks staff members was overwhelmingly positive, but participants did not identify it in and of itself as “transformative.” Rather, it seems that these interactions were more “behind the scenes,” and that trip participants may have appreciated feeling like they were allowed to draw their own conclusions. Trip leaders did shape the experience in a more subtle ways, however, as the selection of activities is clearly key to conclusions that participants draw from trips.

The question of action

Another obvious question regarding organizations like BorderLinks is, what tangible effects are there from these trips? While it is difficult if not impossible to answer this question fully, I would like to consider some of the potential actions that participants discussed in our post-trip interviews. As the period of time between the trips and our interviews was relatively short, it is not surprising that many of the participants we spoke with talked about changes they planned to make in their lives, or behaviors they planned to enact, rather than things they had already done. Given that these behaviors had not yet been enacted, these reports should be viewed with particular caution. Graybill (1989), however, notes that in the program he studied there was a very high

correlation between those who reported planning to act in response to the trip, and those who 13 months later reported having acted (between 80 – 100%).

One woman explained that, while prior to the BorderLinks trip she had had little interest in writing to her legislators, the trip had made her reexamine this reluctance. She explained:

So I think by writing to our representatives and that—and I don't think it can be canned letters, either, it has to be straight from your heart.

Jodi: Is that something you've done or something that you think you'll do?

Yes, definitely. I'm getting—my husband has kind of been into this all along. I've kind of felt like, oh you take care of it, that's your part. But no, it's each and every one of us.

She also discussed her interest in cutting down on material consumption in her family as a reaction to the trip, particularly of shifting the meaning of gifts on holidays:

I think even when it comes time to giving gifts, you know, like at Christmas time and that, I think we can tell other people something with the gift we choose for them. You know, even if it is education wise, or telling your own family, 'hey we're going to cut way down this year, there's a lot of people out there that need this worse than we do, and go do something at Christmas for a group that needs something.'

While I suspect that this woman may already have been predisposed to such sentiments, it seems that the trip provided more concrete reasons for such actions.

Group 1, as mentioned above, came on their trip with the explicit intention of exploring the possibility of a “partnership” with a group or groups in Mexico. While the definition of this was vague and it continued to evolve through and after the trip, there was nonetheless interest in this possibility among this group's members, particularly the

priest, who had instigated the trip. In our interview, I asked him to clarify how he saw such a relationship developing. He explained:

All along I've been looking at the possibility of setting up some kind of partnership. But I wanted to go at it slowly so we could do it well, thinking always that whatever we do we want to have a sense of mutuality. . . . I'm not sure what we would be able to do for them but I would not jump in with the idea that we're the people with and they're the ones without, so we start doing things for them, sending money or whatever. So sharing any kind resources would be fine, once we have the relationship. So the first step if we were to pursue it further, which I think we may, would be to develop some kind of ideological understanding about what this partnership means to them and to us, and that would take a little time, maybe even a special trip, people to go down there, and that would include having them come to visit us as well.

This priest then explained to me that the challenge would be to involve other church members of the parish who had not been on the trip in this effort. He compared the BorderLinks trip to a "conversion" experience, as those in his congregation who had not been on the trip had difficulty understanding what people said about it.

Several participants also spoke in interviews about planning to or having already reported formally to their community (be it church, school, or otherwise) about the trip; Rankin (1991) noted that this was the most commonly-reported reaction to the trips he studied. I will discuss the possible effects of such action below, in exploring individual participants' experiences through profiles. Also in terms of planned action following the trips, some participants explained that their interest in the border had become heightened, but that they were unsure of how to react. What actions this group of participants might choose to engage in as a reaction to the trip, if any, remains unclear.

Group and religious affiliation considered

Rankin (1991:249) argues, “When learners were able to find a support group that was action-oriented and tied to similar issues as those addressed on the seminar, then there was a higher probability of increased ‘staying power.’” This tentatively seems to be the case with group 2, who continued to meet regularly following their trip, ostensibly to feed back to their church community and to explore the possibility for a relationship with a Mexican church. This may indicate that unified groups that can continue their existence beyond trips, particularly when they are under strong leadership, have different experiences from individuals who are part of less-cohesive travel groups. This also raises the question—one that is difficult to answer based on such a small sample—of whether individuals and groups of different religious affiliations or of no explicit religious affiliation might react differently to such experiences. However, none of the literature that I have read on transformative education has examined individual religious belief as a variable in their studies. This may be partly because most authors writing on transformative education seem to take it for granted that such trips will be inspired by religious belief and/or will be organized as part of religious group activities. In the case of BorderLinks trips, however, this appears to be true only some of the time.

I remain unsure of the independent effect of religious beliefs on participants, but it does seem that groups who could continue to provide structured group reflection and/or action following the trip had the potential to prolong the trip’s effects, possibly both in the formation of shared meanings and in tangible action. It is not clear, however, that this

phenomenon is limited to religious groups; this is merely the example that I observed. I will note, however, that Christian teachings were clearly a force in shaping the experience of group 2, and this contrasted sharply with the secular group I joined (group 1). For group 2, there were constant references to Christian—specifically, Biblical—teachings, which often centered either on the idea of a spiritual journey or on the idea of poverty. However, the group’s apparent shared agreement on this authority did not necessarily preclude discussion or disagreement, but was rather a backdrop in shaping interpretations of activities. The following excerpt from my field notes provides an example of this (note that names used here are not real names):

We did have a reflection [that day] led by Joan and Anna. They had picked out a theme of “contentment” and had chosen a bible passage from Philippians 4 (I believe).¹¹ I don’t remember the verse numbers but it basically intimated that we can find contentment anywhere, that we don’t need material wealth. Jay picked up on this, quoting the women from one colonia as saying that they want to stay where they are—he said that they seemed content and that maybe what “we” think they should have or do isn’t what they really want, and that they seemed happy as they were (although he didn’t mention their complaint about the lack of running water or that they don’t have regular access to a church or church services). Anna added that we’ve only seen a small snapshot of the people’s lives and that is may be presumptuous to assume that they are or aren’t content.

Thus Christian teachings with regard to poverty set the stage for interpretation of one activity (eating lunch in a colonia), without preventing participants from forming divergent points of view.

¹¹ Perhaps it was Philippians 4:11-13 (Revised Standard version), “Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”

Selected trip participant profiles

In order to tie together the threads of analysis discussed above, I will now lay out profiles of four participants, all from BorderLinks trips that I joined, that I also interviewed. Although profiling particular individuals risks over-generalizing from their experiences to the entire, heterogeneous group, I have decided to do this because as the participants themselves described, individual stories are often helpful in exploring abstract concepts. These profiles will also help to provide a glimpse of the variety of backgrounds people bring and the different ways that they reacted to these trips. I have not used participants' real names.

Tina

Tina, a professional woman and U.S. citizen by birth in her 20s, was born of Mexican parents and grew up in a large Mexican city along the border. Tina's knowledge and experience of the border region and issues associated with it were thus very high. She joined the BorderLinks trip as part of group 1, and so came with a group of colleagues, mostly teachers, whose students included many first-generation immigrants from Mexico. Tina is bilingual (English/Spanish) and at the time of the trip lived in the U.S. In observing and talking with her I was struck by how much she identified with some of the Mexican people she encountered on the trip, and how strongly she reacted to some of the activities. I had wrongly assumed that, with her background, none of the issues or experiences would be new to her.

After her group visited the Border Patrol headquarters in Nogales, Arizona, Tina explained to her travel companions that she was upset at the way the community relations officer had spoken of her “people” (undocumented Mexico immigrants) like they were “dogs.” While other members of Tina’s group were also upset by this visit—particularly when they saw a young man in a holding cell—Tina seemed to identify with undocumented immigrants particularly strongly, perhaps because she, unlike the others in her group, had grown up in Mexico. This reaction and others like it lend support to social science research on empathy which states that other things being equal, people respond more strongly to interactions with ‘Others’ with whom they can identify.

Further, interpersonal contact appeared to affect Tina’s understanding of migrant men planning to cross the border. In our post-trip interview, in discussing which components of the trip had the biggest impact on her, Tina stressed an activity where her group had spoken with migrant men (mostly from southern Mexico), who were planning to cross into the U.S. to work. Tina explained to me that although she had grown up largely on the Mexican side of the Mexico-U.S. border, she had had no direct experience with and little understanding of the mechanics of illegal crossing. She described her feelings about this encounter in the following way:

I didn’t think it was going to be that close, you know, like talking to people who were actually going to cross those days or who had already tried, and I didn’t think we were going to do that. You know at first, I was hesitant to speak to all those guys who were there, you think they’re all mean people, or who knows who they are, but you start talking to them, and they have a family, they have dreams, they have—it was nice talking to them.

In reflection sessions, discussion among Tina's group members often shifted between talking about the trip activities and talking about their work with Hispanic students, and I noticed that Tina was on occasion a translator of culture in these situations, as well as a language translator in other trip contexts. For example, once during a group discussion early in the trip, a fellow group member asked, "Why do my students write all over their text books?" Tina explained that in her own Mexican-American family, some of her nieces and nephews were not read to by their parents as children nor taught the value of books, and thus had a different conception of how to treat books (this seemed to satisfy the woman who had posed the question). In our post-trip interview, in her assessment of how the problems along the border might be addressed, Tina's suggestions were pragmatic but did not involve her directly, as she argued that job training (e.g. hairdressing, baking, sewing) could be very helpful.

Julia

Julia is a middle-aged professional woman who, like Tina, came to the border with group 1. This BorderLinks trip was her first visit outside of the United States or Canada, and, like many other participants with such backgrounds, the experience appeared to be particularly eye opening for her. Early in the trip Julia confided to me that she felt more "culture shock" than the others in her group, as many of them had had significantly more international experience than she did. Like many of the participants on the trips Jessica and I joined, particularly those who had never been outside of the U.S., Julia was shocked by the poverty in Sonora, and particularly by the amount of

garbage she saw on the ground there. She spoke no Spanish, but reported that one activity that had had a large impact on her was sitting with the matriarch of her host family's household and looking at pictures of that woman's children and grandchildren. Based on my understanding of empathy, I suspect that as a mother and grandmother herself, Julia felt a particular connection with this woman, although they could not communicate verbally except through a translator.

In our interview, Julia explained to me that she was still unsure of how to react to the trip in a tangible way, although as a teacher of immigrant youth, she said that she felt like she could understand the perspective of her students better after having been on the trip. She also explained:

I'm sure that I don't realize how much that trip will impact me in the future, I mean it's in my mind, whenever I come across situations, like, I just think knowing something first-hand makes all the difference. And, you know, we heard that some people died crossing the desert almost immediately after our trip.

Jodi: Yeah, I thought about that, too. Did you see those—I remember when we went down and visited the barbed wire fence in Sásabe, when we were driving back I think we actually passed a small group of people that were walking down. Did you see them?

Yeah. They were carrying just water bottles that they bought at the store, across their shoulder, like two each, and you know, it almost makes you wonder if they made it, or if they—[pause].

Julia's discussion confirms Gittins (1994) argument that seeing and interacting with individuals in situations of poverty can have a profound impact. Perhaps Julia now connects such stories of immigrants and local people in Mexico with her students, many of whom, she explained to me, were undocumented immigrants themselves.

Mark

Mark, who came to the border with group 2, was one of the few teenagers on a predominantly adult trip. Like most of the other members of his group, he spoke no Spanish. After returning from the trip that Mark was on, I wrote in my notes that he was “probably the most reticent person on the trip, and my impression is that he only came . . . because his girlfriend did.” However, on the questionnaire that I gave out on the first day of the trip, he wrote that he was interested in learning about Mexican culture. I noted that Mark seemed to feel somewhat left out of the largely close-knit group at certain points, perhaps partly because of his age, which was significantly younger than most of the rest of the group; also, he was not part of the church congregation and had joined the group as the boyfriend of one of the other group members. On the trip he usually sat and interacted primarily with his girlfriend and the few other members of his group that were under 25. At times, though, Mark did make a special effort to connect with the adults on the trip. Once when he was late to the van to go to a church service, Mark walked around and individually apologized to each of the other members of the group, impressing both them and me. I sensed that this action was an indication of the community the group had formed, and that Mark wanted to be a part of. In our post-trip interview Mark had very little to say, except to comment on the garbage he saw in Sonora, and I am unsure what the impacts of this trip were on him.

Jay

Jay, a retired police officer and Vietnam veteran, was a strong personality and gregarious person who joined the BorderLinks trip along with his wife, as part of group 2, a church group. He spoke no Spanish but he seemed comfortable interacting with people in Sonora. He especially seemed to enjoy playing with the small children whom we sometimes came into contact with, perhaps partly because he himself has grandchildren. Jay took a lot of photos, and seemed to intentionally ignore the request of BorderLinks staff that participants ask local people first before taking pictures, to the annoyance of his fellow group members. He often compared the conditions on the trip that we saw with those he had seen on a recent short trip to Asia. In group discussions he questioned the designation of local people as “poor,” and argued that that the people we encountered in Sonora seemed content with their lives, and that we (the group) could learn a lot from them.

Like many of the people in Jay’s group, his Catholic faith seemed to be a central force in how he interpreted the experiences of the trip and reacted to them. After returning home, Jay and his wife gave a joint presentation (in lieu of the priest’s homily) during a service at their church about his group’s experiences with BorderLinks, and in this talk he emphasized how powerful the experience had been for everyone on the trip. Echoing Robert Evans’ (1987) and Strain’s (2000) doubt about non-experiential methods (e.g. films) in educating people about other life situations and Gittins’ (1994) argument that travel to the location of poverty is necessary for “transformation,” Jay stressed in this lecture that “you have to go” on a BorderLinks trip to really understand the situation along the border. Although the effects of efforts like Jay’s are unclear, it is a tangible

action that at least in the case of this church, I suspect, may encourage more people to attend BorderLinks trips in the future. Although Strain (2000) and Robert Evans' (1987) has expressed doubt that devices such as lectures are useful in connecting people to situations that are foreign to them, I suspect that such a device could be useful in galvanizing support for specific efforts, and that Jay's talk may help to build interest among church members in forming a "partnership" with a Mexican Church. In interviews, other participants from Jay's group who had been present for his talk explained to me that Jay was a powerful speaker and that he was also particularly effective because as a military veteran and former police officer, most of the congregation had assumed that he would not be sympathetic to the kinds of issues that BorderLinks trips address.

In our post-trip interview, Jay talked about some of the things that had impressed him on the trip. First, he mentioned a family living in a colonia that his group had joined for lunch one day. He said of this household:

The people are just pretty darn satisfied or happy with themselves, and they really don't have a lot, and, so it kind of shows me who the people are, and their willingness to work, and those kinds of things.

He also mentioned that another thing that struck him was "how sadly the Catholic Church missions and ministers to the people of Mexico." This comment may have been inspired by the group's first visit to a colonia, for lunch with a family, where the women who prepared the meal explained to the group that although there was a small chapel in the neighborhood, there were rarely services there. I believe that Jay felt, based on his experiences on the trip, that the Catholic Church did not fairly distribute its resources in

Mexico. Thus for Jay, although being committed to Catholic Church teachings seems to have played a part in his decision to go on this trip, it did not preclude him from questioning the actions or lack thereof of the Church itself. Jay also reported to me in his interview that he keeps in touch with the home-stay family he and his wife stayed with, through email.

Summary

On an individual level, the processes that occur on the trips appear to unfold in the following ways. Other things being equal, it appears that the participants on the BorderLinks trips that we joined were particularly impacted when they had the opportunity to interact with people whom they could identify with in some way. This observation may prove helpful in BorderLinks programming, and also confirms social psychology research regarding empathy. Confirming Ufford-Chase (2001), those with little previous experience outside of the U.S./Canada appear to be particularly affected by the trips; however, in some cases, even those with significant experience outside of this area reported being very affected (for example, Tina, discussed above). Temporary displacement to a location of poverty seems to provide an important dimension that caused many participants to examine the meanings they ascribed to situations (such as garbage dispersed on the ground), and supports Gittin's (1994) arguments. Supporting Quiroga (1990) and, to some extent, Nash and Smith (1991), the formation of a sense of community appeared to be another integral component of the trip for many participants.

In terms of intra-group interaction and its effects on post-trip action, I also noted that the group that most strongly evidenced the potential for organized action after the trip was a church group with strong leadership. I suspect that this is due largely to the cohesive nature of the group and its dynamic leader, rather than its religious nature, although that may be a factor as well. Additional research could explore this aspect further.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research discussed in this thesis, I have arrived at certain tentative conclusions. The most profound of these, however, is that the interactions that take place on these trips, and their effects, are incredibly complex. Research involving a larger number of groups and individuals, with a longer time horizon, would have been particularly useful in addressing such questions as how the age, gender, and religious affiliation, and other characteristics of participants can affect their reactions to the trips. Future possibilities also include research with the local population, who ultimately, one would hope, benefit from the interactions, or at least are not harmed. This question may be of particular interest to anthropology, as it is concerned with globalization's effects on marginalized communities. As a binational organization, individuals and partner organizations drive BorderLinks' mission on both sides of the border, and the interaction between these heterogeneous groups would also be of interest.

The perspectives of the relevant literature arising in different disciplines, namely, in anthropology and social psychology, also offers an interesting point of consideration, as each has contributed to an understanding of the processes occurring on and as a result of BorderLinks trips. With respect to cultural change and travel, writings in anthropology that I have considered have either focused on the "big picture" of cultural change (e.g. Wolf 1982), or have focused primarily on host groups in situations of travel (e.g. Pi-Sunyer 1989). Anthropologists like Wagner (1977) have largely framed Western travelers as agents of change that affects others, without considering long-term changes in meaning for these individuals and groups and their home societies. Social psychology

literature examining travel, on the other hand, has paid much attention to the experiences of Western travelers, but has largely focused on the individual and has primarily relied on survey research, which by its nature cannot explore many of the nuances of travelers' experiences. Further, neither discipline has considered travel in the context of transformative education programs. In this vein, BorderLinks trips offer a snapshot of how the process of forming new meanings occurs in a cross-cultural context.

I would also like to briefly touch upon Ufford-Chase's previous findings on BorderLinks, specifically her finding that trip participants minimized differences between themselves and the 'Other' after taking BorderLinks trips. In my interactions with trip participants I sensed this myself. According to the survey that Ufford-Chase used, however, this indicated decreased cultural "tolerance." I would argue, rather, that the term "understanding" might be preferable here, as I saw that although participants may have minimized differences between themselves and local people, they tended to view local people from an increasingly positive viewpoint, and may have recognized a single web of relations connecting them. I would also argue that increased perception of one's similarity to the 'Other' is not necessarily negative, and is likely to be expected with such a short exposure, particularly when paired with Christian discussion and teaching, which often emphasizes concepts such as "brotherhood."

In terms of wider connections, I will invoke the subject of globalization, a term that is often poorly defined and that is likely a catch-all for a variety of processes that are acting in tandem, but that continues to be widely used. While not always discussed explicitly during BorderLinks trips, the theme of globalization suffused the entire trip as

participants were presented with the processes and results of issues such as migration and the global economy. In this sense, BorderLinks seeks to problematize the rosy image of globalization sometimes painted in American media, and is thus a reaction to the phenomena collectively known as globalization. However, BorderLinks is binational and it aims to build relationships across the Mexico-U.S. border through its trips and other programs, and in this sense is an example of globalization. This apparent contradiction, like trying to pinpoint the location of “culture” in the interactions that occur on BorderLinks trips, is illustrative of why this organization and others like it, and their work, are so fascinating.

I would also like to consider societal transformation (i.e. culture change on a meta-level) with regard to BorderLinks’ trips, as this seems implicit in the organization’s goals. The transformative actions motivated by these trips, as far as I can tell, are at best small but positive ones, such as writing letters to legislators, giving talks at churches, and forming relationships with other groups in Mexico. Although a longer term horizon on this study might have revealed more substantial action, even Graybill (1989) and Rankin (1991), who had much longer time horizons in their work, make no claim for profound societal changes resulting from these trips. In any case, such expectations seem highly unrealistic given the small scale of the organizations involved. Thus it is difficult to argue that BorderLinks’ efforts are significantly transforming society as a whole, at least not in the short run and at their current scale.

On an individual and small-group level, however, these trips appear to have effects in line with the organization’s goals. As Graybill and Rankin found, there is some

evidence that activism (at least low-risk activism) increases as a result of these trips. Further, as we have seen, trip participants often communicate their experience to others. While this “multiplier effect,” to borrow a term from economics, may not be possible to measure, it is an aspect of the trips that may help to raise awareness of the issues beyond just those who attend them. Further, these trips do help to fund BorderLinks’ other community work in Nogales. In terms of the apparently low level of changes that come about as a result of these trips, it is also worth remembering that many well-intentioned but large-scale development projects often fail with disastrous results for the communities that are meant to be helped.

In sum, BorderLinks offers an interesting example of a small group attempting to enact a particular kind of cultural change. While it remains unclear whether these efforts have a wide impact, such attempts in and of themselves should be of particular interest to anthropologists, who have long been concerned with how the process of cultural change unfolds.

APPENDIX A: Copy of Questionnaire distributed to all trip participants on the first day of the trip

Name: _____

Date: _____

This questionnaire is being distributed to all participants on this trip for a study on experiential learning by the University of Arizona's Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology. Our goal is to understand the educational work of Borderlinks and the experiences of Borderlinks trip participants. Completion of this questionnaire is voluntary, and you can stop at any time. Your name will be kept completely confidential and will not be used in any publications (reports, articles, etc.) based on this research. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete this questionnaire, and you will receive no compensation for participating. Please write your answers on this sheet of paper. If you need more space you can write on the back of the page. If you would like to see a copy of your questionnaire after you complete the Borderlinks trip, please notify the study researchers, Jodi Perin or Jessica Piekielek. Jodi and Jessica will select approximately thirty people this summer for short phone interviews to discuss your answers and your experience with Borderlinks after the trip is over. By completing this questionnaire, you will be granting permission for the information in the questionnaire to be used. Thank you for your participation!

1. *Why did you decide to come on a Borderlinks trip?*

2. *What do you hope to gain from this trip?*

3. *What do you think are the primary concerns facing borderlands' residents in Mexico?*

4. *What do you think are the causes of these concerns?*

5. *What do you think should be done to respond to these concerns?*

APPENDIX B: Groups that took trips

	Trip #1	Trip #2	Trip #3	Trip #4
Total number of individuals in the group (not counting researcher or BorderLinks staff)	10 (3 men, 7 women)	12 (3 men, 9 women)	11 (7 men, 4 women)	13 (7 men, 6 women)
Geographic origin of group	Western city	Small town in mid-West	City on West Coast	Various (attended trip as part of UA summer class)
Age composition of group	Younger professionals – 20s – 40s	Late teens – Middle Age	Mostly teenagers	Young to older professionals and students
Researcher who attended the trip with this group and interviewed participants	Jodi Perin	Jodi Perin	Jessica Piekielek	Jessica Piekielek
Number of individuals who agreed to be interviewed from this group	9	12	10	13
Number of individuals who did interviews from this group	9 (all phone)	12 (all phone)	10 (all phone)	5 (2 in-person, 3 phone)

APPENDIX C: Trip Activities (based on schedule provided by BorderLinks and on researchers' field notes):

Group 1:

Day 1

Orientation and team-building at the BorderLinks office.
 Presentation by Jodi (UA graduate student), questionnaires administered
 Border History talk with Miriam Davidson, author of *Lives on the Line: Dispatches from the U.S.-Mexican Border*
 Lunch and BorderLinks office/house
 Depart for the Border
 Border Patrol visit in Nogales, Arizona
 Arrive at BorderLinks facility/dormitory in Nogales, for brief tour and settling in
 Dinner with the Madres of the Eucharist, BorderLinks staff, to talk about their community work
 Evening reflection
 Night spent at BorderLinks facility/dormitory

Day 2

Breakfast at BorderLinks facility
 Tour of new industrial park and Colonia Kennedy (wealthy neighborhood in Nogales)
 Maquila visit at Agroindustrias Internacionales, producer of jojoba oil
 Lunch with organizers of maquila workers
 Market Basket Survey (cost of living exercise)
 Reflection at BorderLinks facility: debrief market basket survey
 Visit Community food cooperative
 Depart to colonia for dinner with host families
 Overnight with host families

Day 3

Breakfast with host families
 Return to BorderLinks facility for morning reflection, free time, showers, etc.
 Talk with Alberto Morackis, local muralist (canceled)
 Lunch with women from Oaxaca
 Free time in downtown Nogales
 Visit elementary school
 Return to host families for dinner
 Overnight with host families

Day 4

Breakfast with host families
 Return to the BorderLinks facility to pack up
 Depart for Altar, with stop at 21km checkpoint

Lunch in Magdalena, a town about an hour south of Nogales
 Arrive in Altar, go to CCAMYN (Centro Comunitario de Atencion al Migrante y Necesitado) – Migrant shelter
 Talk with migrants in central plaza
 Spend time with staff of migrant shelter
 Evening reflection
 Overnight in Altar at migrant shelter

Day 5

Breakfast in Altar
 Drive to Sásabe, following a major migration route
 Talk to police commandante and visit illegal border crossing points
 Lunch in Sásabe
 Depart for Tucson
 Arrive in Tucson – free time for laundry, etc.
 Celebration dinner at restaurant
 Final reflection and evaluations
 Overnight in BorderLinks facility

Day 6

Drop off at shuttle to Douglas. (This group then spent a week on own visiting schools in Chihuahua).

Group 2:

Day 1

Arrive airport, Phoenix
 Get shuttle to Tucson
 Lunch BorderLinks house
 Introductions and Orientation
 Presentation by Jodi (UA graduate student), questionnaires administered
 Free time
 Dinner at BorderLinks house
 Visit/prayer/song at Gate's Pass
 Overnight at BorderLinks house

Day 2

Breakfast at BorderLinks house
 Clean up house, leave Tucson
 Cross international border and meet with sheriff in Sásabe, Sonora, Mexico and also with Grupo Beta
 Lunch in Sásabe
 Continue south to Altar, Sonora

Arrive in Altar at the CCAMYN, a migrant support center of the Catholic Church
 Observation exercise
 Spend time in the main plaza, chatting w/migrants
 Dinner at the CCAMYN
 Talk with Father Rene about the center & the town & migration, etc.
 Evening reflection/prayer
 Sleep on floor at the CCAMYN

Day 3

Breakfast at CCAMYN
 Leave Altar for Nogales
 Stop in Magdalena and visit the remains of Padre Kino
 Lunch in colonia in Nogales
 Head to the grocery store for Market Basket Survey
 Dinner at BorderLinks facility in Nogales
 Reflection
 Overnight at BorderLinks facility

Day 4

Bible reflection
 Tour of maquila parks and some colonias
 Visit church in Nogales, talk with Sister about the Virgin of Guadalupe
 Visit a Nogales parish office, talk with priest there
 Talk with Francisco Trujillo, Director of BorderLinks Mexican side, about the economy of Nogales, Mexico, etc.
 Go to host family for dinner in colonia
 Overnight with host families

Day 5

Breakfast with host families
 Visit with U.S. Border Patrol in Nogales, Arizona
 Lunch with Madre Lola and her community, talk about their projects
 Time in downtown Nogales
 Free time (shower, etc.) at BorderLinks facility
 Mass a Sagrada Familia
 Return to host families

Day 6

Breakfast with host families
 Hike and reflection/prayer in the hills
 Pack up/clean up BorderLinks facility
 Lunch with Lupita
 Observation exercise
 Leave for Tucson

Stop at Mission San Xavier
 Arrive BorderLinks facility in Tucson, international debt skit
 Dinner at restaurant in Tucson
 Final reflection and evaluations
 Overnight at BorderLinks house in Tucson

Day 7
 Breakfast and pack up
 Catch shuttle to Phoenix
 Group returns home from Phoenix airport

Group 3:

Day 1
 11:20am Arrival at Airport
 12:30 pm Lunch at BorderLinks housing in Tucson
 2:00 pm Orientation
 3:00 pm Leave for Nogales, Sonora
 4:30 pm Meet with BorderLinks interns about work projects at BorderLinks facility in Nogales, Sonora
 5:30 pm Dinner with Madres of the Eucharist
 7:00 pm Reflection
 Overnight at BorderLinks facilities in Nogales, Sonora

Day 2
 7:30 am Breakfast
 9:00 am Workshop with BorderLinks staff on free trade
 12:30 pm Lunch at BorderLinks facility
 Afternoon work projects
 6:00 pm Dinner with director of children's lunch program at BorderLinks facility
 8:00 pm Reflection at BorderLinks facility
 Overnight at BorderLinks facility in Nogales, Sonora

Day 3
 7:00 am Breakfast
 8:30 am Work projects with Matt and Evan
 12:30 pm Lunch at the BorderLinks facility in Nogales
 Time downtown for Market Basket Survey and free time
 (group member returning to Tucson on shuttle)
 5:30 pm Dinner in Colonia Las Torres
 Reflection
 Overnight in Colonia Las Torres

Day 4

7:00 am Breakfast in Colonia
 9:00 am Work projects with BorderLinks interns
 12:30 pm Lunch in Colonia
 4:00 pm Visit with Border Patrol
 (group member returning to Tucson on shuttle)
 5:30 pm Return to Colonia Las Torres and Dinner
 Reflection
 Overnight in Colonia Las Torres

Day 5

7:00 am Breakfast and goodbyes to host families
 9:00 am Work Projects with BorderLinks interns
 12:30 pm Lunch with Friends of BorderLinks
 Return to Tucson
 5:00 pm Dinner
 Final reflection in the desert

Day 6

8:00 am Breakfast
 9:00 am Services at Southside Church
 12:30 pm Lunch
 Evaluation
 2:00 pm Leave for Airport

Group 4:

Day 1

12:30 pm Lunch at BorderLinks in Tucson
 1:00 Leave for Nogales, Sonora
 2:30 Maquila Visit
 4:00 Meet with Joel Chuc at Seguro Social Hospital
 6:00 Dinner with migrants in Presbyterian Church
 Home-stay in Colonia Flores-Magon

Day 2

8:00 am Breakfast with families
 10:00 am Talk with Cecilia and tour of tunnels and washes
 (environmental overview)
 12:00 pm Lunch in Colosio – Ema Rosa, Margarita
 2:00 pm Market Basket Survey
 3:00 pm Debrief Market Survey
 4:00 pm Free Time Downtown
 6:00 Dinner with Doña Gloria

Home-stay in Colonia Flores-Magon

Day 3

8:00 am Breakfast and reflection at BorderLinks facility in Nogales, Sonora

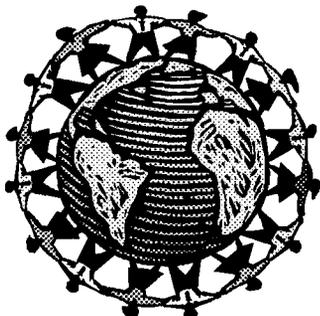
8:30 am Meet with BorderLinks intern about composting latrines

10:00 Leave for Tucson

11:30 Visit San Xavier

12:30 Return to BorderLinks office in Tucson

APPENDIX D: Project description (given to each trip participant on the first day of each trip)



Borderlinks Educating on the Mexico-U.S. Border: an anthropological study of an educational non-profit

This research project by two graduate students at the Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona will address questions about experiential education and the reality of the Mexico-U.S. border. Our goal is to understand the educational work of Borderlinks and the experiences of Borderlinks trip participants. In addition, Borderlinks' work provides an excellent space to ask many questions of interest to anthropologists, especially related to cross-cultural exchange and communication. We hope our research will help Borderlinks to better assess their programs through feedback provided from the research project.

In order to explore our research questions and help Borderlinks evaluate their program work, we will attend several Borderlinks trips during the summer of 2002. We will participate in Borderlinks activities, take photographs and notes, and talk with trip participants and Borderlinks staff. In addition, we will follow-up with 30 participants for short phone interviews. **Participation in this study is voluntary and none of the participants will be compensated.** We appreciate the opportunity to share this experience with Borderlinks and visiting groups.

Please feel free to talk with us at any time if you have questions about this project. You can also contact us at a later time at the email addresses or phone number listed below. If you have additional questions about the study that we aren't able to answer, you may contact our professor, Diane Austin at #520-621-6282 or at daustin@u.arizona.edu. This study has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee at the Office of the Vice President for Research. You may also contact the Human Subjects office at phone #520-626-2979 if you have any additional questions about your rights as a participant.

Thank you!

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Jessica Piekielek jpiekiele@u.arizona.edu #520-326-1631

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