

Making Transnational Adults From Youth:
Mexican Immigrant Youth in Pursuit of the Mexican Dream

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the lives of recently-arrived Mexican immigrant youth who arrive to New York City from both rural and urban Mexico, and either enter into formal school settings, or remain out of these settings, foregoing formal schooling altogether or entering into non-formal educational institutions. Based on a qualitative case study of fifty-three Mexican youth, both pre and post immigration, this dissertation employs transnational theory, cultural and social reproduction theory, and life course theory to explain how even prior to immigration, youth are already forming ideas about work and school-going in the United States. Subject both to the social and economic conditions of their home communities, as well as to the messages they receive from their kin and friends already in New York City related to age, work and schooling, Mexican immigrant youth's worldviews are oriented towards particular pathways prior to immigration. Post-immigration, Mexican immigrant youth continue, for the most part, on these pathways, as they interact with social institutions and fields in New York, including the labor market and the educational system. Contributing to current immigration and education literature which emphasizes the formal school-going practices of immigrant youth, this dissertation broadens this discussion to explore not only their practices in pre and post immigration settings, but also how they impact school-going or non school-going.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Purpose and Significance of Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the phenomenon of recently arrived, undocumented immigrant *youth* who, upon leaving school in their native Mexico, set off not to continue their schooling, but rather to act like their adult counterparts, either supporting themselves and earning money to remit back home to their families, or in other cases, living with older siblings, older aunts and uncles, or sometimes parents, in New York City as independent adults contributing to their household economies, both in New York City and in Mexico. Living in the shadows, as in many cases, they are in violation of school truancy laws, child labor laws, and immigration laws, these Mexican *youth* immigrants are fulfilling the Western conceptualization of adulthood in several ways. All have left school and home, are engaging in full-time employment and are supporting households in Mexico or New York.¹

In this dissertation, I challenge several popular depictions of immigrant *youth*. I first challenge their characterizations as school-going, financial and emotional dependents, who, if absent from school, are so because of social and community forces found solely in U.S. society (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Ogbu and Simons, 1998; Ogbu, 1978). Additionally, most studies of immigrant *youth* ignore the heterogeneity which exist among these *youth* per their time of arrival and legal statuses, neglecting their effects on immigrant *youth* development (For exceptions, see studies centralizing refugee children, such as Zhou and Bankston, 1998). Insufficiently, research and policies have been constructed based on these previously unchallenged assumptions with neglect of an increasing population who oftentimes do not

¹ In Mexico, schooling is mandatory only until the completion of the United States equivalent of junior high school, or grade 9, and in many rural areas, school coverage is only available to this grade level. Thus, many youth who possess a *secundaria* school diploma believe that they have completed school and have no need for further education. This belief is further compounded by posted job requirements.

perceive themselves as family-dependent *youth*, but more as independent *adults*. Defying traditional research on and with immigrant youth, my dissertation expands knowledge and understanding of immigrants by examining *a formerly overlooked class of immigrant youth* in the United States, their educational experiences, past and present, and their life prospects. This broadened knowledge may in turn act to inform more inclusive policies and additional research on immigrant youth.

To broaden existing knowledge on immigrant *youth* and to challenge the effectiveness of existing public policies, I explore the following research questions in my dissertation: 1) Why do some undocumented immigrant Mexican *youth* remain outside of the K-12 school system and others do not 2) what forces (individual and structural, pre and post-immigration) influence decision-making surrounding non-school entry and school entry in the United States school system for these *youth*? and 3) how do these forces influence decision-making regarding different types of school entry for these *youth*?

Challenging the applicability of contemporary theories, methods and policies to these particular immigrant youth, I employ a transnational qualitative case study framework to explore the life processes of a particular group of immigrant youth, recently-arrived Mexican immigrant youth, pre and post-immigration, to understand why they are not dropping into New York City schools. A transnational framework allows me to not only consider their actions in their separate physical contexts, but also to examine their actions as they exist in both their local contexts and as cross-national border practices (Smith; 2006; Vertovec, 2004; Portes, 2003; Thorne, et al., 2003; Levitt, 2001; Itzigsohn, et al., 1999; Guarnizo, 1997) Additionally, I explore individual and structural forces which transcend nation-state borders and influence the decision-making of first generation Mexican *youth* experiencing immigration, education, employment and social

mobility in their home communities and then as undocumented immigrants in New York City. Although some researchers may argue that these *youth* are not school-going due to their households' economic necessity (Gonzalez, personal communication, 2003), I instead argue that *youth* are subjective actors who consider more than just economics, but rather who (a) arrive with preconditioned ideas, understandings and relationships about education, work and social mobility which are rooted in their home communities and in their communities' and families' historical experiences of immigration (Brittain, 2002) and (b) continuously make and evaluate their decisions based on those ideas and understandings, as well as a multiplicity of multi-level transnational forces which they confront on daily basis, both pre-immigration and in post-industrial New York City. These decisions impact their school entry and subsequently, the processes and geographies of their social mobility (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Trueba, 1998).

Using transnational theory, life course theory, and cultural and social reproduction theory, I will explore if and how age, class, citizenship, race and gender influence and are influenced by Mexican immigrant *youth*'s ideas and subsequent decisions about education, labor and social mobility in their: (a) pre-immigration contexts, (b) imagined receiving contexts, and (c) receiving contexts. Drawing from life course theory (Elder, 1998; Elder and Conger, 1994), I challenge Western conceptualizations of age categories, which are, in most cases, universally applied regardless of citizenship, race, class, and gender. Instead, by exploring the lives of recently-arrived undocumented Mexican immigrant *youth*, I demonstrate how time and place matter in the development of the life course, and in the cases of these *youth*, how they may continue to understand their lives in relation to their pre-immigration contexts and consider themselves *adults*, or may instead begin to adopt Western ideas about age, and begin to

understand their lives as hybrids of their native contexts and their new, post-industrial contexts, resulting in a disruption of their formerly held ideas about age and appropriate practices.

I also draw from transnational theory, life course theory and cultural and social reproduction theory to demonstrate, more specifically, how their decisions of not dropping into United States schools cannot *solely* be attributed to United States social institutions, but rather are rooted in two separate national contexts, as well as the interactions between the two countries' national and local contexts. Conditioned in their sending contexts, these *youth* already possess certain age-related ideas about what is appropriate behavior, which settings they should enter, which settings they should remain out of, or, more generally, what pathways to social mobility are open or closed to them. In addition, they leave Mexico with resources assigned exchange rates in their local contexts, which, upon arrival in New York City, may lose or gain value. In their new contexts, they are constantly acquiring new resources, such as money or even language, which, upon use in their home contexts, may gain or lose value as well. Upon immigration, not only are immigrant youth presented with new opportunities for using and acquiring resources, but when using these resources across nation-state boundaries, both in their home communities and New York City, they may engage in and be faced with different results than if they had obtained and used them in only one context or the other, but not in both. Their preconditioned ideas about interacting with the resources they possess, may not only influence ideas about which social spaces they perceive themselves appropriate to enter and remain a part of, but also, what the outcomes of using and exchanging their resources in these social spaces may be.

While studies have discussed the phenomenon of adult immigrants remitting economic resources home to alter local class structures (Malkin, 2004; Goldring, 1998; Guarnizo, 1997),

no studies have undertaken the phenomenon of *youth* who arrive, and through their participation in the labor market, increase possibilities for obtaining social mobility in their home communities. Additionally, due to their age at immigration and the subsequent encounters with a different conditioning context, these youths' *habitus*' may be easily altered by the abrupt and drastic change of contexts and fields encountered, which may also result in changes in their thoughts and actions about how and where to pursue social mobility. In light of possible changes, this dissertation broadens the parameters in which we observe social and cultural reproduction to include the experiences of transnational *youth* actors and to acknowledge how cultural and social reproduction may be enacted and understood differently due to time and place.

Combining semi-structured interviews and observations, my research focuses primarily on the extent that immigrant youth's social constructions of age, education and labor in rural Mexico and in New York City may influence their decisions, and as a result, life chances. Undoubtedly, their experiences with an array of social institutions in the United States may be more limited and precarious than their earlier-arriving dependent counterparts who are enrolled, or have been enrolled in schools located in the United States. In addition, I focus on the immediate implications of their particular ideas about themselves, education and labor as consequential to school-going and non-school-going in New York City, as well as future implications, in their pursuits of social mobility, both in the United States and in Mexico.

Statement of Problem and Significance

In recent years, increasing numbers of undocumented and unaccompanied Mexican and Central American youth immigrants are arriving to the United States. While many are joining adult siblings and parents, others are arriving by themselves, to enter directly into the labor market (Esquivel, 2007; Hill and Hayes, 2007; Fry, 2005, 2003; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-

Orozco, 2001; Hirschman, 2001).² This group of immigrant youth has been identified as inflating the national dropout rates for Latinos, as the calculations include school-age Latin American immigrant youth who, instead of entering into the United States school system, bypass it, and enter into the United States labor market.

According to the report “Hispanic Youth Dropping Out of U.S. Schools, Measuring the Challenge” (Fry, 2003), Latin American school-age youth who did not complete secondary school education in their country of origin and had not interacted with the United States school system inflated the dropout rate of Latino 16-19 year olds by 52%, from 347, 000 to 529, 000 in the year 2000.³ Approximately 200,000 Latin American youth, then, are residing in the United States with low levels of education and with little chance of completing it. Although the economic recession of the late 2000s has decreased Mexican immigration significantly, neglect of this issue may prove consequential, as the majority of these youth, if they remain without further education, may be relegated to the same types of low-income, dead-end employment they first entered.⁴

Ethnically, these youth are predominantly Mexican (Fry, 2005; Fry and Lowell, 2002; Vernez and Abrahamse, 1996) and have completed less years of formal schooling and have experienced more education difficulties pre-migration than prior migrant waves (Fry, 2005; Cortina, 2003, Trueba, 1998). In addition, recently-arrived Mexican youth immigrants who are

² Fry (2005) reports that the majority of youth who are recent arrivals and had experienced academic problems prior to immigration were most likely to reside in households in which no parent resided.

³ According to Fry’s (2003) calculations, counting only Latino youth who dropped out after engaging the American school system yields a dropout rate of 15% between youth ages 16-19. This rate is inflated to 30% when including foreign-born dropouts who have never or minimally engaged with the US school system. Of the total number of Latino dropouts in 2000, one in three, or 175,000 were immigrants with little to no contact in US Schools.

⁴ The Pew Hispanic Center (May 2007) suggests that overall Mexican immigration has begun to decline since mid-2006. Between 2001 and 2004, rates of Mexican immigration dropped, with an increase occurring between 2004 and 2006. Since mid 2006, whereas immigration is still occurring, the rate of growth of both legal and undocumented Mexican immigrants appears to have slowed.

high school age are less likely to attend school in the United States than their 1.5 generation Mexican-descent and their native counterparts (Fry and Lowell, 2002; Vernez and Abrahamse, 1996). In-school participation rates of first-generation Mexican immigrant youth ages 16-19 are among the lowest across generations of all Latino groups, with only 14.1% reporting some sort of traditional school enrollment, either part-time or full-time (Fry and Lowell, 2002).⁵ This suggests that approximately 86% of first generation Mexican immigrant youth, ages 16-19, may at best, have received six years of schooling in the United States (nineteen year old dropouts), or in the cases of over 200,000 first generation Latino immigrant youth, no schooling at all. Based on these data, it is safe to suggest that it is first generation Mexican youth who comprise the majority of those not only not participating in the United States school system, but also not *ever* dropping into the United States school systems.

These same youth, however, appear in the labor market. Compared to all other Latino youth, age 16-19, first generation Mexican immigrant youth show the highest rates of labor market participation, full-time employment and average weekly hours worked. According to the 2000 Census, first generation Mexican immigrant youth, ages 16-19 participated in the labor market at a rate of 64.1%, with 51.9% employed full-time, and working an average of 39 hours a week (Fry and Lowell, 2002).⁶ They also are the most highly total paid members of their age group in the labor market, earning approximately \$260 a week.⁷ While slightly above the *federal*

⁵ Fry and Lowell (2002) report that only 9.7% of the first generation Mexican immigrant population attend school full-time without working at all, while .9% go to school part-time without working. A total of 1.0% and 0.2% work full-time and attend school either full-time or part-time respectively. Only 2.4% reported going to school full-time and working part-time.

⁶ Due to the undocumented status of many of these first generation Mexican youth, these figures may be gross underestimates. Interviews with the youth revealed much higher average hours of employment, up to 72-80 hours.

⁷ This group may be, however, the lowest hourly paid group, when considering the total weekly pay and the total weekly hours worked. Their wage averages, then, \$6.66 hour if they work 39 hours a week. Because of their

poverty index, once adjusted for the high cost of living in certain receiving sites, such as New York City, their incomes may place them squarely into poverty.

New York City happens to be one of the most recent receiving sites for these younger groups of Mexican immigrants who are not dropping into schools but who are entering directly into the labor market (Smith, 2006).⁸ Mexicans in New York City led immigrant groups with the highest percentage of dropouts, with 47% of 16-19 year olds not in high school and not graduated (Smith, 2003). Additionally, 23% of 16-19 year old Mexican immigrants in New York City are full-time labor market participants but are absent from age-appropriate grades (Cortina, 2003; Smith, 2003). Smith (2003) characterizes this influx of *youth* entering the labor market in New York City as those who arrive directly after leaving school in Mexico, a trend especially visible among immigrants from the Mixteca region.⁹

Theoretical Gaps

Unfortunately, sociological literature and public policies have narrowly addressed the experiences of immigrant *youth* by addressing those who arrive at younger ages and enroll in traditional United States schools do not work full-time or who have extensive labor experiences, and who reside with adult immigrant parents. Additionally, pre-immigration milieus are largely ignored, especially youth's prior educational, labor, and community experiences in these milieus. Contemporary theories describing the different social mobility patterns of immigrant youth and their second-generation counterparts incorporate these assumptions and oversights into their

undocumented status, however, and based on interviews, I would argue that they may receive less per hour, and may work more hours per week.

⁸ While actual numbers of the total population are disputed, most agree that the total numbers of Mexican immigrants in New York City reach approximately 200,000 (Rivera-Batiz, 2003; New York City Department of City Planning, 2002), while others place the total population higher, at roughly 275, 000 (Smith, 2001).

⁹ Most writings about Mexican immigration to New York City have emphasized the Mixteca region, comprised of the three southern Mexican states: Oaxaca, Puebla and Guerrero (Smith, 2006).

explanations and rely mostly on post-immigration school and community factors and parental characteristics to help explain incorporation and social mobility (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Portes and Zhou, 1993). These studies do not account for the first-generation youth's own understandings of social mobility rooted in pre-immigration contexts, which may include different pathways (Malkin, 2004; Goldring, 1998). Thus, I argue that academic literature has homogeneously portrayed immigrant youth as (a) financial and emotional dependents, or children of immigrants, (b) school-going, (c) early arrivals, or part of the 1.5 and/or second-generation known as immigrant youth who arrived prior to age 12, or have lived in the U.S. five years or more (Hirschman, 2001; Portes and MacLeod, 1996), (d) possessing no note-worthy educational experiences prior to arrival, or insignificant pre-immigration experiences, in the home, school community and/or in the labor market, (e) legally indistinct and (f) as involuntary, minority minors.¹⁰

In most studies of immigrant youth, 1.5 and second generation youth are referred to as *children of immigrants*, suggesting presence of and dependency upon immigrant parents (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Thorne, et al., 2003; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Fernandez-Kelly and Schauffler, 1996). Several studies of immigrant youth centralize parents and their characteristics, as interacting with their receiving context to produce outcomes that predict the upward or downward mobility of their children (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Hirschman, 2001). In addition, I argue that the *labeling* of these youth as *children of immigrants* subordinates the children's own identities as immigrants and centralizes those of their immigrant parents. Thus their identities are inextricably linked to those of their parents, ignoring the potential independent

¹⁰ In their LISA study, or Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation study, Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001; 1995) define recently-arrived immigrant youth as having spent at least 2/3 of their lives in their country of origin prior to immigration.

effects of their own individual identities, as well as the possibility that these youth are in the host context without their parents.

Due to the sheer volume of immigrant youth enrolled in the U.S. school system, those who enroll in traditional K-12 educational institutions receive most scholarly and political attention. In 2000, roughly 5% of the school-age population, or approximately 3,000,000 United States school-age youth were foreign-born (Ruiz de Velasco, et al., 2000). Of this total foreign-born, school-age population, approximately 355,000, or 38% of the Pre-K through 5th grade population hailed from Mexico, while roughly 879,000 or 37% of the foreign-born school-age population in the United States, grades 6-12, was born in Mexico (Capps, et al., 2005). Among middle and high school-goers, emphasis is placed upon high-achieving 1.5 generation Mexican immigrant youth, and compared with subsequent generations of Mexican-descent youth. Explanation of disproportionate showings of success have included (a) the immigrant optimism theory (Kao and Tienda, 1995), in which immigrant parents lend much support to their children so that they experience socioeconomic success, (b) a “dual frame of reference, or the constant comparison of the opportunities immigrant youth and their parents may experience in the United States to those in their native countries as well as low achievers’ oppositional cultures, or (c) resistance to school’s efforts of assimilation due to their increasing awareness of inadequate schooling and blocked opportunities (Smith, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 2000; Kao and Tienda, 1995; Portes and MacLeod, 1996). While *how* a dual frame of reference may manifest in the everyday practices of immigrant youth to lead to higher levels of success has received little attention (Brittain, 2002; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001, 1995), explanations of second generational decline have received significant consideration. Varying by race and ethnic group, second generation youth decline in academic gains, relative to their

immigrant counterparts and continue to show smaller academic gains in subsequent generations (Valenzuela, 2000; Kao and Tienda, 1995; Ogbu and Simons, 1998; Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Gans, 1992). While some scholars pointed to the oppositional culture that immigrant youth adopt upon interaction with other United States minorities, and as a result of assimilative forces in the United States, Valenzuela (2000) attributes this slide to the subtractive nature of United States schools, which reduces the resources and resiliency with which minority students arrive. Schools, rather, end up being uncaring and demoralizing, bringing about lower levels of academic achievement. What we know about foreign-born youth, especially Mexican youth, and academic achievement and failure, then, has largely been drawn from analysis of these particular cohorts who have had lengthier experiences in United States schooling.

In spite of differences of nativity, some studies of immigrant youth often attribute similar characteristics to the 1.5 generation as those of their native-born counterparts (Kasinitz, et al., 2004; Louie, 2004; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Hirschman, 2001; Portes and MacLeod, 1996; Romo and Falbo, 1996). Although both populations have experienced the majority of their lived experiences in the United States, 1.5 generation youth may have different experiences based on their citizenship, circumstances under which their parents arrived, memories and experiences tied to their homeland, as well as their placement in United States schools. For example, even at earlier ages, immigrant youth are more likely to be placed in Limited English Proficient classrooms than their native-born counterparts, with implications for later track placement (Callahan, 2005; Valenzuela, 2000). In neglecting this distinction, the influence of home countries on immigrant youth's educational outcomes in the United States is largely underestimated and overlooked. Differences of birthplace, nationality, and length of time at home and in the United States, as well as how these differences may influence the youth's

academic achievement and educational attainment, are subsumed under an assumption of principal (and superior) exposure to United States society and its structures (Smith, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Zhou and Bankston, 1998; Romo and Falbo, 1996; Fernandez and Schaufli, 1996).¹¹ Placing primary importance on experiences in the United States ignores the impact of home countries, both directly and indirectly, on these youth and neglects any impact immigrant youth's home contexts may have on their understandings and actions in the United States. Without understandings of prior schooling, immigrant children's learning and success in the United States is vastly compromised and holistic understandings of their development is incomplete (Macias, 1990).

With many studies blurring the educational experiences and outcomes of 1.5 and 2nd generation youth, the experiences of first generation youth, or those who arrive as teenagers, are either blurred with 1.5 youth or largely ignored.¹² Only recently have few scholars distinguished between early and recent arrival immigrant youth to highlight differences in enrollment, academic achievement and educational attainment in the United States (Hirschman, 2001; Fry, 2003). Various scholars have found higher incidences of dropping out and educational difficulties among youth characterized as recent arrivals, or first generation youth who have arrived at later ages, sometimes alone, and many times, having past educational difficulties in their home countries (Hill and Hayes, 2007; Fry, 2005, 2003; Hirschman, 2001). Whether experiencing these educational difficulties in their home countries, and/or completing or not completing compulsory schooling requirements in their home country, many of these youth

¹¹ While most studies mention generational differences, attention to generation tends to lapse in final analyses. For exceptions, see Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995, Valenzuela, 2000.

¹² Valenzuela (2000) makes mention of first generation, recently arrived youth, and notes their segregation into English as a Second Language classes. Within recently arrived youth, Valenzuela makes a distinction between those recently arrived immigrant youth who arrive more as transfer students, having completed 5th grade in Mexico and merely transferring to US Schools and who tend to make high grades, and preliterate youth, who lacked formal academic training and literacy skills. These youth, Valenzuela (2000) states, are most at risk for dropping out.

immigrate with no intention of attending school in the United States, but rather with the intention to work.

Similarly, in studies of K-12 youth, the impact of legal status is rarely, if at all discussed. Whereas Portes and Rumbaut (2001) include government reception as one of several factors influencing immigrant incorporation, consideration of governmental reception places more attention on the institutional treatment of immigrant parents and the facilitation of their incorporation through policies which either *actively encourage* immigration, especially in the cases of early Cuban, Vietnamese and Central American refugees, reflect *passive acceptance*, such as in the case of Dominican immigrants, or those which promote *exclusion*, such as those targeting Mexican immigrants. Racialized governmental policies relying on intimidation tactics including arrest, family separation, and deportation can hardly be portrayed as merely *excluding* certain immigrants from incorporation. Rather, these policies have increasingly criminalized undocumented immigrants in an attempt to limit undocumented immigration from particular countries, specifically Mexico. The impact of these policies on the daily lives of undocumented youth has only recently been linked to dropping out of high school, although research has been limited (Abrego, 2006; Rambuyan, 2004). In neglecting more in-depth discussions of citizenship, sociological literature has downplayed the significance of this social category in the educational outcomes of immigrant youth.

Lastly, some discussions of today's Mexican immigrant youth still draw from Ogbu's cultural difference theories of voluntary and involuntary minority youth. Placing the school as a key site for the production of minority status, Ogbu (1978) casts academically unsuccessful youth such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans and Native Americans as involuntary minorities, or youth who, as a group, do not exhibit academic success due to prior and continuing

colonization practices of the United States (Gonzalez, 1999). In response, youth's low academic performance is viewed as resistance to schools' continued reinforcement of the United State's history and practices of colonization and conquest. Recent revisions of Ogbu's writings about how we think about the academic achievement of Mexicans include added categories for undocumented immigrants as neither voluntary (immigrant) minorities nor involuntary minorities. Ogbu and Simons (1998) write, however, that because they are not identifiable, there is no way of knowing about their sociocultural adaptations or school experiences or whether or not they plan to stay in the United States, but that eventually, the descendants of these immigrants may adopt behaviors characteristic of involuntary minorities.

Pursuing a Transnational Life Course Perspective in Immigrant Youth Studies

Most youth immigration studies limit their analyses of their success or failure to youth experiences post-immigration, effectively ignoring a life course perspective. Analyses of immigrant behaviors and actions begin as they are performed in the host country, and are evaluated according to host country standards, deeming pre-immigration lives irrelevant. Instead, I argue that to truly understand immigrant youth, we must consider immigrant youths' lives in a life-course perspective, that is, considering their entire lives, pre and post immigration, as they may occur in relation to historical time, change and context (Elder, 1992). Only with a life course perspective will the meanings behind their actions in the host countries be more completely understood. Understanding of the social, economic, and political contexts of sending countries and communities and their influence on the behaviors and actions of immigrant youth in the United States provides more holistic, accurate representation of their lives that acknowledges their life-long histories, occurring across nation-state boundaries (Elder, 1992).

In adopting a life course perspective to explore the lives of immigrant youth, one must explore how institutional and individual transnational connections existing between the social, political and economic contexts of Mexico and the United States interact with the experiences and behaviors Mexican youth exhibit upon immigration. One institutional example could be the partnership between the United States Department of Education and Mexico's national and regional offices of the Secretariat of Education. For example, the Mexican Secretary of Education and the U.S. Department of Education share a Memo of Understanding (MOU), as well as conduct various binational programs to facilitate school enrollment and improve the teaching of Mexican immigrant youth in the United States (PROBEM, 2006, BMEP, 1990). School administrators in Mexico are responsible for informing students about how to *transfer* into U.S. schools, but some teachers and directors in high-immigration communities are unaware of such policies, as are youth and parents. In terms of wages, Mexico has institutionalized policies encouraging the transfer of earnings from the United States to Mexico. As part of the 3 for 1 program, the Mexican government, upon approval, provides three dollars for every one dollar Mexican immigrants send to their hometown associations for infrastructure improvements.

With increased facility, families may not only receive money more frequently, but may come to *expect* money more frequently to build homes, set up businesses, contribute to church needs, or help pay for siblings' school expenses. Youth may learn of these expectations and the practices surrounding remittance receipt both as youth in their households, observing the practices of their parents and siblings living in the United States, and later as wage-earning immigrants themselves.

Home and host household and community factors may also bear transnational meanings and influence practices both in the United States and back home. Family socioeconomic status in

the home country, as well as family immigration histories, including parents' occupational statuses in both contexts, may influence Mexican immigrant youth's initial and/or enduring orientations towards schooling and work in the United States. Undocumented youth who have necessarily contributed to the household economy from very young ages may make decisions in the United States to continue this participation (Levitt, 2001; McDonnell and Hill, 1993). In other cases, observing family members and local adults who leave home possessing low levels of school completion, returning only to display expensive material possessions may lead youth to believe that formal education has little instrumental value, both in Mexico and in the United States, and are better off not pursuing educational credentials. Alternatively, upon immigration and working in the United States, if one needs English Language skills to be promoted in their full-time job, an immigrant *youth* may return to the classroom to learn English, which may translate into higher wages and more money to send back home. Thus, due to their participation in the U.S. labor market, their ideas about the instrumental value of education may change, as well as their status in their home communities.

In addition, the *youth's* transnational orientations may be influenced by their age at immigration. The effects of pre-immigration contexts and experiences may vary per the youth's age at immigration, as well as the developmental stage in which s/he and the home community considers him/her (self) to be in. For example, an immigrant teenager who arrived as a toddler may perceive the United States educational system as the only way schooling should be and is, whereas an older youth immigrant may believe that the Mexican educational system is how schooling should be and is and make decisions based on this understanding in deciding whether or not to enter or remain outside of schooling. The durability of home community forces in the host country may also differentially affect immigrant youth, especially upon considering the

strength of their social ties to home community social networks as well as to objects and practices which represent the home community.

Adopting a transnational life course perspective, I extend beyond the idea of a dual frame of reference, or comparing the here with the there. Using a life course perspective enables a broader understanding of how immigrant youth actors *use* the “here and there,” continuously using iterative reasoning (based on understandings and acts simultaneously rooted back home and in the United States) in their decision-making.

Cultural and Social Reproduction in a Transnational Context

Lastly, this dissertation argues for broadening the geographic parameters in which cultural and social reproduction are examined. Rather, for immigrant youth, the conditions in which cultural and social reproduction occur are transnational, bringing both Mexican and U.S. based social structures under consideration for contributing to the reproduction of both the global and local class structures in which these Mexican *youth* find themselves. By immigrating and not participating in schooling, these immigrant *youth* may be reproducing global relationships of power while disrupting social and cultural reproduction back home, as they become exploited low-wage laborers abroad, while sending remittances home to alter their households’ class standing in Mexico (Wilson, 2004; Guarnizo, 1997). If families back home use their monies to construct homes, invest in small businesses, or even pay for the schooling of their siblings left behind, their local family class standing is being altered (Malkin, 2004; Levitt, 2001).¹³ Thus, this dissertation moves away from only considering cultural and social reproduction in the United States to considering these processes in a transnational context, and as occurring in and

¹³ The idea of improved class standing among Mexican immigrants must be also entertained. The Mexican government believed that through the Bracero program, Mexican farm workers could learn more advanced techniques in farming, and return with more skills to engage in more productive farming (Cohen, 2006). In becoming wage-laborers and leaving sustenance farming, individuals diminish the autonomy over their work.

across multiple nation-state contexts and communities.

In the United States, different elements of the schoolhouse and school-going have been emphasized in describing how immigrant youth experience social and cultural reproduction, including the social organization of schools, as observed through language tracking (Callahan, 2005; Halcon and Reyes, 2001; Schmid, 2001), the social relationships youth develop with other individuals, including other immigrant and native-born peers, teachers and administrators (Valenzuela, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2001), and school policies, including dropout policies (Romo and Falbo, 1996). While the effectiveness of schools in ensuring upward mobility has long been challenged (MacLeod, 1996; Bowles and Gintis, 1977; Willis, 1977), immigration scholars themselves have continued to reinforce this notion by emphasizing U.S.-based academic achievement and educational attainment of immigrant youth as the only indicators of upward assimilation in the United States (Louie, 2004; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Kao and Tienda, 1995). Used in explaining immigrant youth academic achievement, several scholars depend on their participation in schooling to make arguments for United States based success or failure.

Remaining oriented towards achieving upward mobility in the United States, other studies have examined factors extending beyond the schoolhouse to explain educational achievement, and by default, social mobility, including family and community forces, such as family and community possession of economic, cultural and human capital, as well as particular family *values* (Louie, 2004; Valdes, 1992). Scholars also highlight the characteristics of the receiving environments, including the presence of other co-ethnics, state policies facilitating or hindering incorporation, and spatial segregation as influencing immigrant youth achievement (Zhou and Bankston, 1998; Gans, 1992; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Kao and Tienda, 1995; Valdes, 1992). Overall, however, discussions of immigrant youth and the forces influencing

their successes or failures have only considered family, community and educational structures within United States boundaries.

Studies of *adult* immigrants have increasingly adopted transnational frameworks to examine their social mobility both in the home and host communities (Wilson, 2001; Guarnizo, 1997). Treated as an adult phenomenon, studies of immigrant participation in the labor market and remittance sending have illuminated efforts to alter local class structures and become upwardly mobile in home communities. While most discussions of social mobility have emphasized males, recent discussions of female pursuit of social mobility have emerged, without mention of youth as potential and actual social mobility seekers (For examples of female immigrant social mobility, see Wilson, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991).

In the case of youth, those who identify as *adults* and engage in *adult* behaviors may be opting instead to mimic their *adult* counterparts by accumulating and sending economic capital home early on, with dreams of repositioning their families in their home communities and then returning later to join them. Continued formal education in the United States, then, may be seen as hindering rather than facilitating this objective, as full-time school-going, meant for *youth* participation, interferes with full-time wage-earning.

Policy Gaps

Lamentably, current policies designed to address the incorporation of immigrant youth also neglect this particular group of youth. Instead, the same assumptions that the literature rests upon underlie public policies, including following Western criteria of youth and social mobility. These policies are inadequate in addressing the needs of unaccompanied, undocumented immigrant minors, to ensure both their immediate physical protection, as well as their long-term

livelihood. Access to (a) government resources to aid the settlement and incorporation process (b) continued education, and (c) protection from labor exploitation is irregular, and as a result, governmental policies are failing from preventing the creation of new, independent, underage underclass in the United States.¹⁴

Existing immigrant youth resettlement policies leave those undocumented immigrant youth who may most act like adults and who are not considered refugees most vulnerable. As is applicable to adult immigrants, unaccompanied immigrant youth refugees are singled out for resettlement assistance while other unaccompanied immigrant youth are left without protection.¹⁵ Rather, the Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Program assists refugee youth in the development of skills needed to “enter into adulthood and to achieve economic and self-sufficiency” through indirect financial assistance for food, health and rent, independent living skills training, ESL tutoring and instruction, job skills training and career counseling, and mental health counseling (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006). Alternatively, if apprehended, non-refugee undocumented immigrant youth who are unaccompanied are deported after detention and court hearings. If not apprehended, they are left to disappear into the larger United States landscape, arriving to their destination to reunite with family members, friends, or in some cases, possessing only a name and phone number of someone who had previously immigrated from their town who may help them settle. At this point, they may either enroll in or stay out of the public school system, either to work and/or in some cases, take only English classes. While they can access certain basic services, including emergency health services without reporting their legal status,

¹⁴ Most public policies aimed at eradicating youth poverty target remedies at the parents, not the children themselves. EITC, AFDC, etc., all are aimed at children, but with the presence of a parent or guardian.

¹⁵ Rather, if picked up by immigration officials, youth are sent to the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, where upon court proceedings, are either deported, reunited with legal guardians or parents, or granted legal status.

many services are prohibited until age 18 without presence of a parent or a guardian. Additionally, a real fear of their own apprehension and detention, as well as of their family members exists that prevents even attempting to access services. Thus, while unaccompanied refugees are guaranteed access to basic services, as well as protection from deportation, unaccompanied, undocumented youth are left without access to services their youth refugee and undocumented adult counterparts may be able to access.

In addition, current immigrant educational policies assume that school-age immigrant youth reside with their parents, are interested in traditional school enrollment, possess appropriate prior schooling documentation, and are informed about district school policies. Reflecting many of these assumptions, the 1982 Supreme Court Decision, *Plyler v. Doe*, granted undocumented immigrant youth educational services until grade 12. However, many unaccompanied immigrant youth arrive not to go to school, but to work, and thus stand in violation of education laws. For example, New York State education law requires that all New York State residents complete the school year in which they turn seventeen years of age, and, in New York City, if not in school and under the age of 17, the student is subject to apprehension by specially trained New York City police officers. Upon identification and apprehension, if unable to produce the proper documentation explaining their absence from schools, youth are then transferred to a borough truancy center where social workers interview youth and identify any challenges to their school attendance. Their parents are contacted and expected to pick up the youth, ensure their return to school, and return for support services if needed. Students receive notice of these procedures from their school principal, which is premised upon their initial school enrollment.

To enroll more recently arrived immigrant youth, public school districts have established Newcomer schools. Enrollment policies vary among Newcomer schools, with some schools requiring proof of schooling in their home country, successful completion of the U.S. equivalent of the eighth grade in their home communities, proof of residence of four years or less in the United States, and/or presence of a parent or guardian.¹⁶ The organization of these schools most often resemble traditional high schools, with full day programming, and Saturday tutoring and activities. For the most part, Newcomer schools appear to be designed to work with those youth whose primary goal is to attend schooling in the United States, and who are willing to devote full work days to schooling.

In New York City, Department of Education educational programs may be more accommodating to unaccompanied immigrant youth who may work, but program requirements make enrollment difficult for this population, as prior enrollment in a United States school system is necessary. These programs include Alternative GED and GED blend programs, Young Adult Borough Centers, and Transfer Schools. Each program lists different age eligibilities and course credit requirements, although all request possession of *some* high school credits in the United States. Regardless of intention, however, all of the aforementioned school models assume interest in attending U.S. schools and some knowledge about these schools and their policies.

Under Title II of the Federal Workforce and Investment Act, over \$569 million is distributed across the nation to serve *adults* without high school credentials and/or lacking basic English proficiency. Distributing over \$205 million federal dollars across public school districts,

¹⁶ Liberty HS' website states that students who seek to enroll must present documentation proving their eighth grade completion as well as complete an interview with their parent/guardian present, with the school principal. Exceptions are made on a one-on-one basis. (www.schools.nyc.gov). Newcomer High School for New Americans, also emphasizes the presence of parents, as the school provides a supportive environment for immigrant students and their parents.

libraries, community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, public housing authorities, and other consortia of such agencies, the State of New York Department of Education is also obligated to provide funds for Adult Basic Education (ABE) and literacy services to all New Yorkers meeting the aforementioned requirements.¹⁷ Reflecting the limitations of non-traditional individuals, including unaccompanied immigrant youth who remain outside of the traditional school system and who may work more than forty hours a week, adult basic education and literacy classes are offered in smaller increments of time, during the day, evenings and on Saturdays.

Several barriers to enrollment in these programs also exist. Adult Basic Education classes, including English for Speakers of Other Languages have minimum age requirements set at age 18, although on individual bases, waiver of the age requirement may exist, at least to age 16 (www.brooklynlibrary.com, 2007). Secondly, the need for ESOL classes exceeds availability of classes. According to the 2000 Census, over 1.5 million residents of NYC have significant problems speaking English, with class space available for less than 5% of those immigrant New Yorkers wanting to learn English. Other private language centers certified by the New York State Department of Education set age minimum requirements at 18 years of age and charge high prices.¹⁸

Most of these young immigrants, however, arrive with the idea of only working and most often, in spite of immigration, education and child labor laws, are successful in finding employment. While federal and state child labor laws exist, these laws are irregularly enforced,

¹⁷ Instruction supported by the State of New York Adult Education and Literacy Program provides Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education and English as a Second Language Classes for out of school adults sixteen years and older who lack basic literacy and English Language skills (NYSED, 2007). Note that there is no ambiguity in defining those who are sixteen years of age or older as adults.

¹⁸ Ubiquitous on New York City subways, the New York Language Center is certified by the New York State Department of Education. Their least expensive classes, intensive English classes lasting five weeks, total approximately \$825.

and do little to prevent underage immigrant youth from obtaining employment, exceeding work day and week hourly requirements, gaining below minimum wages, and working in hazardous conditions.

Federal and local child labor laws, as reflected in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and in New York state specific child labor laws, are written to differentiate youth laborers from adult laborers. Taking both federal and state requirements in to account, for New Yorkers, the minimum age of employment is established at age 11 for newspaper delivery, age 12 for youth engaged in hand harvesting, and after age 14, for all other types of employment. Youth ages 14 to 16 may be employed, but are subject to certain restrictions, including restrictions on hours worked and types of labor. These youth are not allowed to work more than 3 hours on school days, and eight hours on non-school days, totaling no more than 18 hours a week. They are allowed to do delivery work or clerical work in enclosed areas, but they are not allowed to do factory work or work in places where processing may occur, including dry cleaners and launderers.

After age 16, however, in spite of New York state education laws mandating school attendance until age 17, youth may work full-time, if not in school, or up to 48 hours a week, but are still prohibited from working in certain hazardous conditions. School-going youth are held to more rigid guidelines, with workers not allowed to work more than four hours a day on the day before school days, and no more than 28 hours a week during the school year.¹⁹

While both federal and state child labor laws are written to limit youth employment so as not to interfere with school-going, as well as not to expose youth to hazardous employment, on

¹⁹ School-going sixteen year olds may work up to eight hours a day on Fridays and Saturdays, days before school holidays, and during vacation. When school is not in session, they may work up to 48 hours a week. In addition, all youth under the age of 18 are prohibited from working in certain conditions, including construction work, in slaughter houses, operating circular and other saws, as a helper on a motor vehicle, etc. (<http://www.labor.state.ny.us/workerprotection/laborstandards/workprot/stprhboc.shtml>)

any given day in New York City, one can observe child labor in action, defying not only the daily hour limits assigned to youth laborers, but also the types of employment these youth are legally allowed to perform. In fact, employment agencies exist that connect underage employees with employers (Personal Interview, 2006). In plain sight, there is little to no encouragement or incentive to attend school, nor to avoid working in hazardous conditions for excessive hours and sub-minimum wages. Possessing ideas about labor and labor rights from Mexico, and unaware of and fearful to exercise their legal rights in the United States, these youth may seek, obtain and retain unlawful and dangerous employment to improve their lives *back home*.

In light of current discussions about undocumented immigration, as well as limited discussion in sociological literature about undocumented youth immigrants, this dissertation broadens how we think about immigrant youth by specifically focusing on the pre and post-immigration lives of the most vulnerable sub-population: out of school undocumented immigrant youth in New York City. By examining their lives as they themselves may perceive them, not as *youth*, but as *adults*, in both their pre and post immigration contexts, and comparing their experiences to those who are marginally in school, via English as a Second Language courses, and those who have made their way to Newcomer schools and/or traditional high schools, I develop new ways to think about immigrant youth, new ways to conduct research about and with immigrant youth and new ways to design public policies meant to guarantee these youth's universal right "to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control" (UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25).

Outline of the Dissertation

In Chapter 1, I have outlined the purpose of this dissertation and why it bears theoretical and political importance. In the following two chapters, I elaborate upon the theories and methods I use to understand how unaccompanied Mexican immigrant youth may make decisions about going to school, entering into the labor market, or both. Chapter 2 outlines three theories: transnational theory, life course theory, and cultural and social reproduction theory, and how they may interact to provide a theoretical framework to examine this phenomenon. In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology I will use to conduct this study. Using qualitative research methods including interviews, observations and document analysis, I conduct a case study of this particular subpopulation of undocumented, rural, Mexican immigrant youth, as well as processes these immigrant youth engage in, including pre-immigration youth practices, unaccompanied immigration, non-school going, and underage participation in the labor market. In Chapter 4, I outline the institutional conditions, including laws and practices, existing in Mexico and the United States that have shaped and bear direct impact on the youth's ideas and practices about age, schooling and labor.

In Chapter 5, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7, the youth speak for themselves. In Chapter 5, Mexican youth discuss their preimmigration conditions in both rural and urban settings, which provide the foundation for understanding their actions in the United States. Chapter 6 illuminates how and why these Mexican youth's thoughts turn to immigrating, as well as the future fields they may envision themselves, and want to enter in New York City. Chapter 7 examines the youth's lives as they live in New York City, and how their actions in New York are based upon understandings brought with them from Mexico, as well as how they may change upon interaction with social institutions in New York City. Lastly, Chapter 8 summarizes the

findings, and also considers educational possibilities that are tailored to meet the needs of this particular Mexican immigrant youth population.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This dissertation draws from transnational theory, life course theory and theories of cultural and social reproduction to examine adolescent Mexican immigrant youth understandings of age and opportunity in the United States.²⁰ While it is probable that the teenage immigrants in question will *join* their adult counterparts in the labor market, their actions challenge the United States' widely accepted notions of age and notions of age-appropriate behavior particular to teenagers residing in the United States, while reproducing the norms regarding age and age-appropriate behaviors in their local contexts. By following pathways which reflects these beliefs, such as full-time participation in the labor market, they may reproduce broad transnational class relations, but also challenge the home class relations to obtain economic and social mobility within their home contexts. Alternatively, if they opt to follow Western constructions of age-appropriate behaviors and enter schooling and not work, they may challenge both social and economic home and host society expectations that depend on undocumented immigrant labor to maintain transnational class order and economically and socially uplift individual immigrant households. The interactions of age, class, citizenship and gender across nation-state boundaries and its outcomes, thus, have implications for both the reproduction or restructuring of transnational class structures, as well as transforming class structures in localized social spaces.

To begin discussion, I will introduce transnational theory, life course theory and cultural and

²⁰ Several authors argue that the different experiences of immigrants are often studied by centralizing adaptation, integration and/or incorporation instead of economic and social mobility (Gans, 2007; Vermeulen, 2000). By centralizing social economic and social mobility, studies have the advantage of being more specific by focusing on just one aspect of the process of becoming part of the receiving society. By examining the impact of "culture as a sedimentation of experience" (Vermeulen, 2000), including premigration experiences, upon social economic and social mobility, I meld Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social reproduction with social economic and social mobility and immigration.

social reproduction theories separately, while emphasizing the manners in which the theoretical strands may be extended and enlaced for this particular study.

Transnational Theory

Transnational theory is a theoretical perspective explaining how institutions and individuals link their countries and communities of origin with their countries and communities of settlement through a network of cultural, social, economic and political relationships, practices and identities spanning national borders (Brittain, 2002; Guarnizo, 1997; Basch, et al. 1994). Most studies have documented transnational acts at various institutional levels, focusing most upon transnational policy changes at national levels, activities associated with modernization at the local level, and individual behaviors immigrants may perform within the contexts of their receiving community to initiate and/or sustain cross-border activities (Smith, 2006; Vertovec, 2004; Thorne, et al. 2003; Brittain, 2002; Goldring, 1998; Portes, 2001). While some scholars debate how broadly to extend transnationalism, limiting it only to observable actions practiced by adults, such as political participation, remittances and communication, others, including me, believe it is useful in explaining ways youth view the world, and their ideas, especially as they relate to their individual and collective identity formation and economic and social mobility (Smith, 2006; Sanchez, 2004; Brittain, 2002; Levitt, 1996). Rather, transnational theory may be used to explain the everyday activities and ways that youth transmigrants and stay-at-homes make decisions, have concerns and develop their (age) identities in relation to schooling and the labor market in transnational spaces (Smith, 2006; Mahler, 1998).

Classifying Transnationalism

To distinguish types of transnationalism, studies have emphasized different types and facets of transnational activity by the actors involved, density of activities and sectors in which transnational activities are observed. Guarnizo and Smith (1998) introduced the concepts transnationalism from *above* and *below* to emphasize economic, political and social adult elites who exert cultural, social and economic dominance through macro-level structures and processes across two or more states (above) and local-level practices, or the acts grounded in the daily lives, activities and social relationships of non-state, social adult actors (below). Grounding transnational practices in relations of power, Mahler (1998) also associates transnationalism from above with hegemonic forces, and transnationalism from below as acts of counter hegemony. For purposes of this dissertation, I will employ transnationalism from below.

While studies of individual acts of transnationalism from below most often privilege immigrants who may engage in regular back and forth travel and activity (the documented who may be physically mobile), theoretical room exists to include those who are unable to engage in such physical economic and social mobility, particularly undocumented immigrants. To account for differences in degrees of institutionalization, involvement and economic and social mobility, other scholars introduce two other types of transnational practices: narrow and broad (Brittain, 2002; Itzigsohn, et al. 2001; Mahler, 1998). While *narrow* transnational practices reflect consistent, regular movement between two communities, high levels of institutionalization, and constant personal involvement, *broad* transnational practices reflect those with low levels of institutionalization, irregular movement between the two communities, and low levels of personal involvement (Brittain, 2002; Itzigsohn, et al. 2001; Mahler, 1998). While physical movement may facilitate a heightened sense of bifocality, or how immigrants experience their worlds as both here and there, financial and legal restrictions may limit mobility for others.

Instead, among poorer and undocumented immigrants, bifocality may be dependent upon less costly contact with information and goods, such as pictures, letters, videos, and other cultural artifacts, as well as with constantly arriving immigrants to their communities and workplaces (Mahler, 1998; Rouse, 1992).

Itzigsohn et al. (2001) further label activities according to the sectors which best characterize the activities, or as economic, political, civil-societal and cultural transnational activities. Using the example of a Dominican student in an American university, Itzigsohn, et al. (1999) argue that this student engages in broad, cultural transnational activities: while her everyday life occurs within the boundaries of the United States, her field of symbolic references which help define her identity includes her home country, the Dominican Republic.

Lastly, studies have characterized types of transnational actors as stay-at-homes (Smith, 2006; Golbert, 2001) and transmigrants (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Banc, 1992). Stay-at-homes are characterized as home country residents who remain in their home communities and maintain close relationships with transmigrants as well as immigrants who do not enjoy the luxury of frequent home visits. Using the case of Ukrainian Jewish youth, Golbert (2001) illuminates how these “stay-at-homes” have daily encounters with transnational actors, goods, money and ideas flowing from abroad onto the local scene, from the focal point of the diaspora, which is in this case, Israel, to the margins, the Ukraine. These youth receive and interpret transnational messages about Israel from abroad, and thus interpret them to inform and shape their Jewish identities.

Alternatively, transmigrants are individuals who immigrate and settle in a country other than their home country, and take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities within networks of relationships connecting them simultaneously to two or more

nation-states (Mahler, 1998; Glick-Schiller, et al. 1992). These decisions, subjectivities and identities are developed and maintain relationships across different sectors, including familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political sectors. In the case of this study, both stay-at-homes who may be planning to immigrate, as well as transmigrants who may not be able to travel back and forth between home and host communities are of interest. In this study, I examine both the understandings about future immigration, schooling and the labor market that stay-at-homes glean from Mexican transmigrants abroad, as well as those of Mexican immigrants who are already in New York City and who may be in daily contact not only with news reports and television programming from Mexico, but who have daily encounters with newly arrived Mexican immigrants who possess goods, money and ideas from the home communities.²¹

Transnationalism and (Age) Identity Formation

Interrogations of how race, ethnicity and gender identities are contested through engagement in transnational practices have been documented in various transnational studies (Smith, 2006; Sanchez, 2004; da Marroni, 2003; Goldring, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Not so widely documented has been the contestation of age identities and how immigration either maintains or transforms age identities through transnationalism.

In their study of Mexican, Central American and Yemeni immigrant households in California, Thorne, et al. (2003) examine how age, nationality, race, gender and immigration intersect to differentially define how children of immigrants engage with school and household responsibilities, expectations, gender and immigration.²² Originating in pre-industrial, rural

²¹ Recent accounts report that approximately 10% of the native-born Mexican population lives in the United States.

²² Although not investigated in their study, Thorne, et al. (2003) points to the Elian Gonzalez case as an example of how nationality, age, racialized ethnicity and gender intersect to assume certain outcomes versus others. By asking

contexts, these children are not viewed as participating in the Western developed *set-apart and protected* stage of life practiced throughout the three separate spheres of family, school and play, but rather alternatively, as active, contributing members of the household economy, with little room for play. Rather, immigrant youth are still expected to contribute to the household in ways natural to their communities of origin but unnatural in other non-immigrant households. They are expected to be actively engaged in household labor at young ages, ranging from acting as caregivers and domestic laborers to contributing to formal and informal economies, such as selling goods in street markets, or acting as busboys or maids alongside their parents in their workplaces. In these cases, the pre-immigration contexts and practices of youth and parents from pre-industrial rural communities manifest in modern California and influence how the youth experience their *childhoods*, both in home and host communities. While the types of labor contributions that children provide to the household may change upon living in the United States, expectation of contribution remains, and rather than experiencing growing up through increasing autonomy and minor household responsibilities, these immigrant youth continue growing up through increased responsibility.

Smith (2006) also interrogates age through his analysis of adolescence and generation, as he investigates the influence of transnational life on second generation New York Mexican youth identities. Whereas the social meanings associated with life stages such as adolescence have particular meanings when in New York City, visits to their parents' hometowns provide levels of freedom and autonomy not allowed in New York City. Upon visiting their parents' hometown,

readers to imagine what may have occurred if Elian had been Haitian instead of Cuban, they alert us to the privileges paid to Cuban expatriates versus other immigrants due to the United States position on communism. Other *unaccompanied minors* who do not fall under a protected status are instead sent to juvenile detention centers to await deportation. In the case of Elian Gonzalez, negotiations were made between Cuba and the United States, or more specifically, Elian's father and United States Immigration and Naturalization Services officials to arrange for Elian's father's air arrival to Florida to retrieve and take Elian home.

they are allowed freedoms such as staying out later, drinking, etc., which are unavailable to them in New York City. Arguably, during visits, they conform to the age norms and practices of their parents' hometowns, which, in some cases, remain available to the youth upon return to New York. Rather, transnational activities helped adolescents obtain statuses closer to adulthood in their parents' hometowns which were not afforded to them in New York City, and then are able to continue them, somewhat, upon their return to New York City.

Transnationalism and Social Economic and Social Mobility

Transnationalism has also been characterized as a way to both maintain and reconfigure structures of power and class structures (Malkin, 2001; Mahler, 1998; Goldring, 1998). Operating within and across nation state boundaries, immigrants may simultaneously operate in at least two localized spaces, and one larger global space, all of which are defined by different mechanisms and practices associated with economic and social mobility. In this sense, immigrants undergo different experiences of economic and social mobility, each conditioned by the particular contexts they find themselves in and the intersections of these contexts.

Studies of economic and social mobility have traditionally been limited to one nation-state context, in which pathways are marked by educational attainment, credentialing, and then later labor market rewards, etc., limiting analysis of social economic and social mobility to one's relationship to productivity (Blau and Duncan, 1967). Putting the role of educational attainment aside, immigration across nation-state boundaries and differentially developed areas to find work can also be considered an act of occupational mobility, as rural immigrant peasants may enter into un- and semi-skilled positions of waged labor in their new settings (Cohen, 2006; Blau and Duncan, 1967).²³ In addition, increased earnings followed by remittance-sending translate into

²³ The potential for individual and community economic and social mobility was part of the justification of the Mexican government's participation in the Bracero program. The Mexican government believed that workers would

economic and social mobility in their home contexts, displayed by increased consumption (Spilerman, 2000; Park, 2005; Malkin, 2004; Goldring, 1998). This focus on increased consumption, raised living standards and improved economic well-being, as well as the status derived from them, best characterizes reconfigurations of economic and social mobility in preimmigration communities.²⁴

Enabled by the sending of remittances to individual households, stay-at-home household members may increase consumption, accumulate money for investment or savings, and/or actively participate in hometown associations, or groups of immigrants who collect money and organize improvement projects for their home communities. Not only increasing their economic capital in home communities, they also improve their status through increased social capital (power and status) in their home and host communities (Smith, 2006; Lowell and de la Garza, 2002). While the individual immigrants' sending of money to the family and subsequent consumption practices improves his/her economic well-being and living standards at the household and home community levels, financial participation in community projects guarantees favorable reputations in *both* the home and host communities. Goldring (1998) argues that these orientations towards hometown and family translate into improved social positions within the immigrants' home communities, and as a result, may transform local social stratification.²⁵ Ironically, however, improving their standards of living and economic well-being in these

leave as low-skilled agricultural workers, and return as high-skilled workers who could contribute to nation-state development through both their economic investments as well ability to transfer their newly acquired skills to Mexico and more efficiently and modernly engage in agricultural production.

²⁴ A shift in focus of status attainment from traditional means (via education) has the opportunity to also disrupt the basis of *capitalist* ideology, that merit and skill, as legitimized through schooling, are the central components to economic and social mobility.

²⁵ Goldring (1998) asserts that status varies by personal accomplishment, education, occupation, and/or wealth; family reputation, connections and resources; and the status groups to which one claims membership (based on ethnicity, religion, property rights or land tenure, occupation, sports, nationality, or place of origin).

immigrants' household communities may have a negative effect on their standards of living and economic well-being in their immediate host communities, effectively hindering host-context economic and social mobility, and overall global class relations.

These discussions of immigration, transnationalism and economic and social mobility have been limited to adults, or in the cases of youth immigration, most often limited to their achievement in host community schools, leading to a delayed pathway to labor market rewards (Louie, 2004; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Most recently, however, youth may be engaged in transnational practices to transform their families' and their own social standings in local communities. By foregoing schooling, and seeking immediate labor market rewards through undesirable and low-wage work, these youth are acting like their adult counterparts, albeit at younger ages. Due to their youthfulness, they may even remain without a partner and children for more years in the United States than their adult male counterparts, translating into more money they can contribute into their immediate household. Also due to their age, they may also be less solicited to contribute to larger community projects and able to earmark more money for individual and family investments. On the other hand, their youth may hinder how much they can send home, as employers may offer less pay due to their age and experience, and/or may be less responsible in their saving and spending.

To further explore how transnational practices may intersect with immigrant youths' experiences of age, I now turn to life course theory.

Life Course Theory

Life course theory seeks to explain how people live out their lives from birth to death, through specific emphasis on how time impacts and is impacted by age-graded relationships embedded in social, cultural and historical contexts (Pallas, 2007; Fussell, 2005; Fry, 2003;

Elder, et al. 2003; Pallas, 1993; Clausen, 1986).²⁶ Limited in scope, the institutionalized life course has been commonly theorized in ways that are culturally appropriate for heterosexual, White, middle class individuals in Western societies, while neglecting the experiences of the world's population majority, or racial, ethnic and sexual minorities, and the economically disadvantaged (Fry, 2003; Dannefer, 2003; Burton, et al. 1995). A theoretical shortcoming, the effect of social stratification on life course theory is not accounted for sufficiently and needs further exploration (Arnett, 1998).

To account for theoretical shortcomings of contemporary life course theory, I suggest several considerations. First, the life course must be examined as a social construction, or as shaped by the changing historical, material, social conditions in which individuals and groups find themselves. In the case of immigrants, the structures and understandings of the life course they encounter will be vastly different in the multiple settings they have experienced, with their life courses reflecting these dissimilarities. If the contexts shape life courses differently, individuals may even experience tensions and feel compelled to adjust their practices accordingly.

Secondly, structures shaping the life course differ within and across dissimilarly developed landscapes, with life courses following different patterns in rural and urban contexts, or in preindustrial and industrial contexts. While the majority of scholarship on the life course normalizes modern communities and its members, this neglects and misrepresents the majority of the world whose life courses are experienced and shaped in less modern areas (Dannefer, 2003). Widely accepted conclusions about the life course are thus not generalizable to most

²⁶ Fry (2003) describes time, or the temporal dimension as the dimension through which space and things in it move. Time is particularly pertinent to our discussion of cultural and social reproduction as well, as immigrant youth are moving through space and time, crossing borders as well as aging, and may possess different amounts of and types of capital, and may encounter different fields, whose dynamics are also changing as time proceeds, and at different points in time.

settings, especially rural settings, as different opportunity structures, expectations, and norms structure the life course differently per the type of development found in the settings in question.²⁷

Across these dissimilarly developed nations, distinct political, economic and social organizations of different nation states define life patterns in dissimilar ways. So as social actors immigrate across dissimilarly developed physical locales, these social actors may experience *transnational* life courses, in which their life courses, instead of being rigidly created in one nation state and transplanted into another, become a hybrid of differently patterned life courses, spanning across national and local contexts.

Lastly, because the life course is socially constructed across and within nation-state boundaries and community locales, not only life courses, but specific life course *concepts and their meanings*, are also socially constructed and differ across these contexts. My study problematizes particular life course concepts, including the prevalence of traditionally demarcated life stages in Western societies, particularly those of adolescence and adulthood, recognized timings and sequencings of life events and transitions, conventional understandings and meanings of adulthood, and mechanisms leading to conventional understandings and meanings of adulthood.

To begin discussion of the aforementioned themes I centralize the concept of time, as it is applied differently to people's lives, as well as has different implications for the life courses of differently aged, classed, gendered, naturalized and placed individuals.

Temporal Dimensions of the Life Course

²⁷A recent study by Arias and Moreno Hernandez (2007) of Mexican and Spanish young adults and emerging adulthood focused on individuals whose educational levels were from high school to graduate work. While Mexico is characterized by uneven development, these individuals, according to the study authors, especially those entering college and-or obtaining more education, tend to share traits and life patterns of individuals in Westernized countries.

Particular forms of time are drawn upon to organize and make sense of the life course, including biological, social, and historical time (Pallas, 2006; 1993). Fry (2003) also draws our attention to legislative time, a form of social time, illuminating the role of the State in interpreting historical and social dimensions of age, defining and assigning rights and responsibilities to individuals based on their age and the time period in which they are found (Fry, 2003; Meyer, 1986). All forms are all similarly used to make sense of how people live their lives.

Biological or chronological time refers to the matching of physiological, cognitive and/or socioemotional development of individuals with age-graded social roles (Pallas, 1993). One such example given by Pallas (1993) includes that of a 3 yr. old lifting heavy boxes or performing surgery, two acts not expected of toddlers, due to their expected level of physical and mental development at age 3.

In other cases, social roles are oftentimes determined by *social* time, or the social timetables particular societies use to characterize *normative* as well as *non-normative* aging, as well as what sorts of activities and social statuses are age-appropriate (Pallas, 1993; Elder, 1975). Such an example, albeit gendered, may be dating between older women and younger men, whereas for much time, older women dating younger men has been seen as taboo by wider society. *Legislative time* is a more institutionalized form of social time, in which statuses and rights afforded according to chronological age are assigned and normalized (Fry, 2003). Fry (2003) suggests that legislative time is particularly salient during the transition from adolescence to adulthood, as a number of rights, including the legal exit of schooling, entrance into the military, full-time entry into labor force, the purchase of alcohol and tobacco, access to sexual and reproductive health services without parental consent, marriage and voting are not granted

until an individual becomes an age-determined adult (Fry, 2003, Dehne and Riedner, 2001; Pallas, 1993).²⁸

Lastly, Pallas (1993) characterizes *historical time* as how historical events and conditions influence life course structure. Macmillan (2005) differentiates these conditions to reflect both specific conditions, such as the Great Depression, as well as broader historical changes, such as the global economic boom after World War II (Pallas, 1993). Also essential are historical trends which have impacted structures of the life course. Decreased fertility rates, increased longevity, extended schooling due to the expansion of higher education are also historical trends which have had significant outcomes on the life course (Pallas, 1993).

Applied to Mexican immigrant youth, particular conceptualizations of time formed in their home communities bear particular consequences on the youth's understandings of what they believe they should and should not do in their new context. With rural Mexican youth engaging in labor activities at home at young ages, social time in Mexico allows for both informal and formal labor market activity at early ages, while in the United States, the same type of labor participation is usually prohibited and shunned. Likewise, legislative time has granted different rights to same-aged individuals in different contexts. While youth may legally leave schooling at age fourteen in Mexico, in the United States, legal exit may not occur until age sixteen, and in some cases, seventeen. Thus a Mexican immigrant youth who is age fourteen may operate in response to their understanding of legislative time in Mexico, not the United States

²⁸ Of most relevance to this study are the informal and formal rights afforded to youth in terms of schooling and labor. Mexico and the United States do not share similar conceptualizations of legislative times regarding compulsory schooling, access to free, public schooling, and labor entry. Fry (2003) argues that in the United States, legal age norms are central to conceptualization and understanding of the life course. Chronological age may have even less meaning when exploring its use/presence in local Mexican contexts. In local, rural environments, legislative time may have little meaning, as life spheres of education, work, marriage and children are less institutionalized. Thus, life spheres and their participation/enactment are less dependent/interdependent with chronological age. Few schools may exist in rural areas, and in those that do exist, while legally mandated by the state, attendance is not enforced (Fry, 2003; Levinson, 2001). Labor in these areas, reflects subsistence activities of farming, herding cattle, tending to livestock and poultry, and then the selling of these goods in a marketplace. Maintaining a division between civil society and family, the government has not and cannot interfere with youth participation in these sorts of activities.

upon arrival. Lastly, due to different economic and social policies occurring within and between the United States and Mexico over time, such as immigration, trade and modernization policies, historical time has conditioned the life courses differently in each of the two nation-states, as well as across the two nation-states, at different periods of time.

Life Course Models

While the most often cited life course model, or the staged or age-based model divides individual's lives into three phases: pre-adulthood, adulthood, and late adulthood (Kohli, 1987), other conceptualizations of the life course exist, including kin or generational, age-classed, and accelerated life courses (Dannefer, 2003; Fry, 2003; Burton, et al. 1996; Elder, 1992).

Most associated with industrialized, Western societies, staged life course models reflect the life course as a series of sequential events which have marked beginnings and ends. Generational life course models reflect how lives may be lived in small-scale, kinship-based societies. Instead, individuals understand their developments through their birth order and generation and call upon particular life concepts including generation, intergenerational transmission, and reproduction in the life cycle. One such example includes the Burton's (1996) study of three generations of African American women in Baltimore who live in the same domicile. Behaviors and responsibilities among the three women are not easily marked by age, but rather are more readily determined by generation and relation to each other and their needs.

The age classed life course, depicts age as a marker for the recruitment of individuals into different spheres of societal life, including political participation or corporate life. Concepts such as age cohorts and strata, age norms, and age-graded events and transitions are most prominent in age-classed life courses (Elder, 1992). One example may include the Jewish community, as those who become a Bar or Bat Mitzvah are obliged with and granted increasing

responsibilities and commitments within the Jewish community, including being eligible to read publicly from the Torah (Dubow, et al. 2000).

The accelerated life course model has been used to characterize how youth in poor, Black communities may live their lives (Burton et al. 1996; Dannefer, 1995). Based on observations and the empirical reality of life expectancy and mortality in these communities, scholars argue that at-risk youth living in high-poverty spaces which exhibit early and high death rates, due to limited access to medical care, unhealthy diets and living conditions, violence, and high rates of incarceration. Believing that their lives will be abbreviated, youth adjust their beliefs about their life expectancy to reflect these conditions and rush their developmental transitions (Dannefer, 2003; Burton, et al. 1996).

Mollenkopf, et al. (2005) suggest that children of immigrants in the United States may simultaneously experience a hybrid of *accelerated* and *delayed* life courses, especially during the transition to adulthood. Due to their parents' limitations (long hours of employment, limited English language proficiency), children of immigrants may take on *adult* roles that native parents are unable to perform with ease, such as accompanying parents to doctors' offices, acting as translators, etc. Alternatively, due to more conservative mores of the sending communities/country, immigrant parents may simultaneously restrict their children's freedom by not allowing their engagement in unsupervised activities and other activities associated with adolescence and approaching adulthood, such as hanging out with friends, dating, etc.

Life Course Models for Transnational Youth in Mexico

Transnational youth in high outmigration areas may possess an idea of an incomplete life course or a bifurcated life course, one in which only two age groups are distinct: youth and the elderly, or those who are under age fifteen and those over fifty years of age (Gonzalez, 2007).

With this perception of age in mind, Mexican youth, prior to immigration, may possess limited examples of life course concepts commonly associated with the period between fifteen and fifty, such as the transition to adulthood. While these youth may be subjected to ideas about non-bifurcated modern life courses through sporadic images and objects sent home from immigrants abroad, such as pictures and videos, or from the return immigrants and their U.S.-born children, without its everyday presence, gaps around thinking about young adulthood may exist (Dannefer, 2003).

Characterizing the life courses of former Los Angeles gang members, bicultural life courses describe individuals who, while maintaining close relationships with current gang members, have since obtained *middle class* lifestyles (Dannefer, 2003). These individuals may have experienced accelerated life courses and their associated concepts before, but currently experience life course models associated with the middle class, and now must accommodate the two. In the case of immigrant youth, it is possible that while they experience their life course in relation to their pre-immigration, preindustrial lives, and in respect to their continued relationships back home, they are now living in a new, post-industrial context which makes different demands on and restructures their lives accordingly. Non-school-going, undocumented transnational youth may experience several models of the life course, some simultaneously and some not, including a bifurcated life course prior to immigration, and then a bicultural life course in which their ties to their pre-immigration communities may intersect with their post-immigration lives.

If this does indeed occur, a more accurate conceptualization of their life course may be a *transnational life course*, drawing from and spanning across their home and host communities. To answer how this may occur, more attention must be paid to the motives driving the

transnational life course and its roots in hegemony and social inequality. Just as Dannefer (2003) and Burton, et al. (1995) characterize the experience of the accelerated life course as an response to the youth's marginalization by global and local hegemonic institutions, I would characterize the experience of a *transnational life course* also as an adaptation to the global and local economic and social processes as they occur in and across two contexts, high out-migration communities embedded in Mexico and modern metropolises in the United States. With Mexican economic policies increasingly displacing sustenance farming and low-wage employment opportunities, and social networks facilitating undocumented employment in the United States (da Marroni, 2006), Mexican youth who experience transnational life courses, prior to and after immigration. This study broadens the array of life course models and their concepts available for consideration in life course literature.

Sociocultural Contexts and Conceptualization of the Transnational Life Course

The cumulative effects of the social and cultural contexts in which individuals and/or groups find themselves in largely determine the types of and qualities of life courses experienced (Pallas and Jennings, 2009; Wheaton and Clarke, 2003). To explain their cumulative influences on individual transnational life courses, studies must examine life courses as they occur within stratified contexts, including the macro level, or the global and national contexts, the meso level, such as their neighborhoods or communities, and finally, micro levels, such as their households and families, all within and across nation-state borders. Because of their participation in multiple contexts, both in single nation-state contexts and across nation-state contexts, immigrant youths' transnational life courses may reflect the effects of contexts with vastly dissimilar characteristics and demands, across geopolitical spaces.

For purposes of conceptualizing the transnational life course model as it occurs across different nation-state boundaries and locales, we should think of it as a hybrid of different life course models. In the case of undocumented Mexican immigrant youth, this hybrid may reflect bifurcated, bicultural, accelerated, and generational life course models, all infused with social, economic, political and cultural effects from contexts past and present.²⁹ Prior to immigration, these youth experience their life courses in areas in which the life course may reflect a generational or age-classed model, but upon immigration, they create a transnational space in which ideas about the life course, age, contexts and time intersect, from the past and present, and may result in a hybrid understanding and experience of the life course. Their new settings, usually poor, urban areas, intersect with their past impoverished settings and may combine characteristics and understandings past and present to create the new hybrid life course.

Social institutions such as the family, the economy, the church, schools and the labor market are dissimilarly structured in different societies and produce outcomes particular to each respective context. For example, in preindustrial communities, youth may receive narrow socialization, in which youth's behaviors and activities are tightly coupled to their families' and communities' expectations and needs. Alternatively, youth in industrialized communities are broadly socialized and encouraged to value independence, individuality, and self-expression. Later, youth receiving narrow socialization are encouraged to follow only a few paths to adulthood, whereas those receiving broad socialization demonstrate wider options in their paths to adulthood (Shanahan, et al. 2005; Pallas, 1993).

²⁹ Mexican writer Ilan Stavans (2006) writes that Mexico is at once premodern, modern, postmodern and antimodern, suggesting the presence of multiple stages of development in the country. Within areas of high out migration, multiple stages of development may occur within the same town, as remittances have modernized some households, eliminating their dependence on sustenance farming and developing a dependence on remittances. For purposes of conceptualizing the life course then, especially considering the temporal and physical spaces in which Mexican teen immigrants construct their notions of age and identity and unfold their life courses, we may think of their life courses, even prior to immigration, as a hybrid of various conceptualizations of the life courses as they traverse across multiple stages of State development, both in their own country and in the United States.

The differences in social institutions may be attributed to several issues. Drawing from the case of child laborers in third world countries, Dannefer (2003) writes that how economic structures operate in and between wealthy and poor countries impact the contexts' different life spheres, including school, work and family and become structured by these hegemonic relationships. Individuals' interactions in and with these spheres then, with these structures, contour their life courses. In the case of this dissertation, long intertwined with the economy of the United States, Mexico and its social institutions reflect this dependency, as limited schooling opportunities for the poor have often led to their legal and illegal resettlement in its northern neighbor.

Massey (1998) also suggests that certain stages of the life cycle are more vulnerable to contextual effects than others. For example, in the case of mental health, context bears greater effect on individuals during the early years of the life cycle, namely early childhood through late adolescence, while adults showed little changes in mental health due to changed context (Wheaton and Clarke, 2003). Across national and local contexts and time, one's context may have different consequences for immigrant youth than immigrant adults. For example, prior to immigration, some youth experience narrow socialization in preindustrial environments, which, followed by immigration, is disrupted. Upon arrival to their new context, most then experience a socialization characteristic of poor, industrialized communities. Experiencing both, immigrant youth may carry mores from their preindustrial settings into their new advanced industrial settings. More so in youth than adults, these old understandings may undergo transformation and/or exhibit resilience, as the continuous arrival of new immigrants brings and maintains old ways of socialization and understanding from the home communities. Thus, because of their age

and immigration, these youth may merge these two types of socialization, resulting in life courses neither native to their communities of origin nor to those of their new communities.

Life Course Concepts and Categories

Since the life course is socially and culturally constructed, so are its concepts and categories (Dannefer, 2003). This dissertation is particularly interested in illuminating how the concepts of adolescence and the transition to adulthood are socially constructed, and how their traditional characterizations have not considered all individuals and youth. To problematize these concepts, I examine adolescence and transition to adulthood as conceptualized in mainstream scholarly literature, as well as their secondary concepts, and suggest reconfigurations of these concepts to reflect the transnational lives of immigrant youth.

Adolescence

This dissertation challenges the Western life course concept of *adolescence* and its ubiquitous use as a *universal* life stage (Burton, et al. 1996). A twentieth century construction, adolescence was created in response to social events, such as the expansion of industrialization and schooling, migration from rural to urban areas, and simultaneous changes occurring in the American family (Lesko, 2001; Schlegel, 1995; Demos and Demos, 1969). While Western economies transformed from predominantly agrarian-based to city-based industrialized at the turn of the century, families also experienced changes. Internal unity once characterizing the preindustrial family disintegrated with children no longer contributing to the household or shadowing their parents in labor, but instead either attending school or obtaining employment away from the household. Effectively creating a distinct life stage separate from adults, schools emerged as the central socializing institution, responsible for preparing youth to assume their adult statuses alongside like-aged peers rather than adults (Demos and Demos, 1969).

In modern societies, youth experience adolescence between the ages of ten and twenty, enjoying a period of time in which they can be irresponsible and carefree, safely preparing for future adult roles and responsibilities (Arnett, 2004; Levinson, 2001; WHO, 1998; Burton, et al. 1996; Pallas, 1993; Clausen, 1986; Elder, 1974). Economically and emotionally dependent on their parents, adolescents are discussed as experiencing the waiting period prior to full adult status, characterized by full-time education and/or training for waged-employment (Settersten, 2003).³⁰ Ironically, however, only 15% of the world's youth population attends school full-time, with the remaining 85% attending school part-time, if at all.

Additionally, many of these global youth are already employed. In Mexico, approximately 50% of 15-to-18 year olds and 24% of youth aged 13-14 are employed in their first jobs (Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud, 2005). Thus, in spite of Western portrayals of youth, the majority of global youth spend most of their time working alongside adults, not learning with same-aged peers in schools (Dehne and Riedner, 2001; Schlegel, 1995).

In economically marginalized contexts, however, the concept of adolescence is either recent or non-existent (Dehne and Riedner, 2001). In some instances, ethnographic accounts of poor, inner-city African American youth omit adolescence, with these youth bearing disproportionate responsibilities in the household, such as being primary caregivers to younger siblings, older grandparents and parents, as well as becoming primary financial contributors to the household. Globally, widespread accounts of early sexual encounters describe females entering into the sexual obligations of marriage at the start of puberty and reporting first pregnancies soon after (Baru, 1995). In both cases, youth report not experiencing adolescence as

³⁰ Elder (1974, 1999) attributes part of today's conception of adolescence to the contemporary presence of *adult* surplus labor within a consumption-oriented society. Because there are too many adults and too few jobs, adolescence as a period prevents the entry of non-adults into the labor market. In the case of Mexican immigrant youth, however, the challenge arises however, as they may be viewed as age-less, and they are seen by many as merely part of the overall adult immigrant labor pool.

a distinct intermediate phase, but rather moving from childhood directly into adulthood (Burton, et al. 1996; Baru, 1995; Burton, et al. 1995; Bush and Simmons, 1987).

In the case of Mexico, economic and social changes brought by globalization have simultaneously limited and expanded youth's experience of adolescence. The expansion of secondary schooling in the early 1990s, occurring alongside Mexico's deluge of economic crises in the past thirty years has created contradictory expectations for youth (Fussell, 1995; Schlegel, 1995). While the expansion of compulsory schooling and the introduction of the PROGRESA program have enabled more youth to spend more of their lives in school, economic crises and subsequent conditions set forth by neoliberal economic policies have forced many families to adopt survival skills in which youth have increasingly entered into the waged labor market to become household earners (Fussell, 2006).³¹ With secondary schooling participation rates hovering around 50%, it is completely plausible that roughly 50% of the Mexican youth population attend at most primary school and enter into the formal and/or informal labor market full-time soon after.

In discussions of immigrant youth, several studies suggest inconsistencies between U.S.-based expectations associated with adolescence and expectations rooted back home. In discussing the contradictions surrounding age roles of Mexican undocumented immigrant teens in the United States, Allison and Takei (1994) portray a Mexican undocumented immigrant youth who works in a full time job, like an adult, to support his extended family while being treated like an *older child* in school (Burton, et al. 1996). Levitt (2001) finds that family expectations caused teenage immigrants in Boston to work full-time and use their earnings to

³¹ The PROGRESA program provides financial incentives for poor rural and urban families to send their children to school rather than to the labor market. These financial incentives are meant to replace earnings which may be lost by sending their children to school instead of keeping them to contribute full-time to the household economy. School attendance, grades, etc. are used to determine the monthly stipend.

support *their siblings'* extended schooling participation *back home*, effectively limiting their own adolescence. In experiencing these contradictory roles and expectations, scholars suggest that youth feel compelled to choose between roles, and ultimately, life stages, more often opting to prematurely transition to adulthood.

Transition to Adulthood

With adolescence challenged, the validity of the transition to adulthood as a life course concept is thrown into question as well, including when and how it occurs, and the relevance of previously determined markers of transition. Characterized by the casting off of dependency on others, the transition to adulthood reflects movement towards full independence in various domains including the labor market, the economy and the family.

Western characterizations of the transition to adulthood as a linear progression through five markers have largely gone unchallenged. These five markers, school completion, leaving home, productive, full-time employment, marriage, and child-bearing, are the most oft-used indicators of transitioning from adolescence to adulthood (Shanahan, et al. 2005; Jackson and Berkowitz, 2005; Fussell and Furstenberg, 2005; Osgood, et al. 2005; Pallas, 1993; Marini, et al. 1987; Marini, 1984; Hogan, 1978). Other potential markers, such as legal entry into military service, voting, smoking, driving and drinking have been mentioned, but not widely elaborated upon for use in life course studies (Fry, 2003; Pallas, 1993; Rindfuss, et al. 1987; Marini, et al. 1987).

For purposes of this study, schooling and work are most important, but have been narrowly characterized. Current studies emphasize *formal schooling* ranging from pre-kindergarten to graduate studies, and thus school-leaving implying exit from high school, or increasingly, college. Challenging this conceptualization of schooling, Pallas (1993) suggests

expanding our notions of schooling to include life-long learning for professional development or personal enhancement, or schooling meant for middle and older adults (Pallas, 1993; Kerckhoff, 1990). Additionally, I argue that other forms of non-formal schooling, such as English as a Second Language classes, trade classes, and/or computing classes, many of which are accessed by immigrants, should also be included to explore how school enrollment informs or is informed by their age perceptions, especially if school-going is more tightly coupled to perceptions about life course stages in their communities of origin than in the United States.

Another marker of interest succeeding school-leaving is participation in full-time employment outside of the home. It is a broad departure from work largely conducted at the turn of the century in Western societies, in which youth labored without pay in the household, thus delaying economic independence, but nonetheless engaged in extensive work and family responsibilities from early ages (Burton, et al. 1996; Elder, 1992; Whiting, 1963). Currently, this model continues to exist in preindustrial rural communities which, even with schools, lack sufficient labor opportunities other than sustenance farming. In these communities, families continue to produce their own resources for household consumption, and sometimes, for income generation. Waged-work, then, may not exist as a marker for the transition to adulthood in preindustrial contexts, including in those from which many Mexican immigrant youth hail from.

Scholars also note that the transition to adulthood is gendered. Male transitions to adulthood are characterized by their ability to protect and procreate, within the state of a marriage, while women's transition to adulthood is observed through their preparation to become primary caretakers and household managers. Arguably, both males and females, then, are affected by how providing and caretaking is taught and evaluated in the particular societies, as well as which social institutions act as socializing agents for these roles. In most societies, these

abilities are perceived as leading up to the final marker of the transition to adulthood, marriage, although in modern society, achievement of marriage has been seen to decline with significance (Arnett, 1998). A more apropos marker, may be instead, non-marital unions, but again, much of the responsibility long associated with marriage may or may not be present.

Lastly, one marker not commonly mentioned, albeit highly significant, is international migration. Not interrogated sufficiently for its relevance in life course studies, international migration has emerged as a potential marker in the transition to adulthood (Fussell and Furstenberg, 2005; Thorne, et al. 2003). While it may not be perceived so much as a transition to adulthood for immigrant youth traveling or joining their parents, especially legally and safely, it may be perceived as such for those youth who plan their travels and immigrate unaccompanied, not with or to join their parents, but more so to strike out on their own, as well as for older young adults.

Using Individual Characteristics to Mark the Transition to Adulthood

Other scholars, however, are increasingly challenging the sole use of age-graded markers to distinguish adolescence from adulthood. Arnett (1998) argues that in Western society, young people are increasingly evaluating their entry into adulthood by using individualistic markers such as character qualities. Self-sufficiency, emotional and financial independence from parents, and acceptance of responsibility, are all criteria increasingly cited by youth which mark their transition to adulthood (Arnett, 1998).

Some scholars argue that rural to urban migration prompted the change to using individual character qualities in defining adulthood in Western societies. Rotundo (1993) provides a historical account of this phenomenon when discussing young adults' 19th century migration from rural settings to urban centers, and he notes that characteristics of individualism

grew, causing the transition to adulthood to become increasingly varied in its constitution and limits. While roles marking the transition to adulthood remained for consideration, character qualities became increasingly considered in conceptualizing the transition to adulthood (Arnett, 1998; Scheer and Palkovitz, 1994; Greene, et al. 1992).

Sensitive to time and place, Arnett and Taber (1994) argue that differences of how people mark their transition to adulthood is a response to how they are socialized and experience cognitive, emotional and behavioral trajectories, and subsequently understand their own transitions to adulthood. For example, in a study of Moroccan rural youth, Davis and Davis (1989) found that the youth and adults defined *being grown up* not only in terms of physical development and chronological age, but also as it related to moral, behavioral and mental changes emphasizing the attainment of rationality and impulse control. More generally, broadly socialized individuals are those encouraged to follow multiple routes through the life course which emphasize independence, individualism and self-expression, effectively delaying certain traditionally accepted markers of adulthood, while narrowly socialized individuals are encouraged to follow fewer, standardized pathways, accelerating the achievement of adulthood.

There are also stark *cognitive* differences between youth receiving different types of socialization. For youth experiencing broad socialization, the clear divisions between the stages of acquisition, accumulation, and application of skills and knowledge are enacted by going to school, engaging in varied cognitive stimulations focusing on independence and individualism, and lastly, training for application. Stages may mirror beginnings and endings of formal school practices [starting and leaving elementary, middle and/or high school]. Youth found in preindustrial contexts, however, may undergo simultaneous acquisition and application of skills and knowledge learned without clear, cognitive demarcation between life stages. In addition,

preindustrial youth may not be exposed to variety of cognitive activities, and instead undergo a more standardized life course emphasizing gender-specific labor, interdependence and caretaking of others from an early age, not individual pursuits and expression. Thus, the responsibility and interdependence which characterize adulthood in contemporary societies may long be practiced by youth in preindustrial societies, while broadly socialized youth are socialized to extend their experiences of independence, irresponsibility and rehearsals (Shanahan, et al. 2005; Arnett and Taber, 1994).

Emotionally, Arnett and Taber (1994) argue that differences in socialization also result in variations among how individuals experience interdependence and committed relationships. In relationships, narrow socialization results in less emphasis on intimacy and autonomy and more emphasis on tradition and practicability in which unions are based less on romantic rather than sensible reasons. Young adults oftentimes continue residence with their parents after marriage, with young brides moving from one context of dependence, their parental household, to another, their partner's household. Broadly socialized individuals instead characterize their adulthood as residing away from and having autonomy from parents, and possessing self-reliance, and intimacy in single, committed, love-based relationships. These different experiences in relationships during the transition to adulthood may also have significant impacts on the life course outcomes.

Lastly, particular *behaviors*, such as self-control and conformity are attributed to adulthood, while irresponsibility and lack of accountability characterize youthfulness. In narrow socialization, youth are socialized to value interdependence and shun irresponsibility, showing earlier traits of self-control and conformity. In broadly socializing contexts, adolescence is characterized as a life stage in which recklessness and irresponsibility is permissible and

excusable. While one's entry into adulthood is marked by a decline in reckless and irresponsible behaviors, in the case of youth immigrants, this arguably occurs during what is commonly understood as the life stage of *childhood*, with subsequent outcomes on how they live and understand the rest of their lives.

Lacking in life course literature is how individuals understand the *consequences* of variable timing and sequencing of role transitions and outcomes. Pallas (2007) argues for greater interrogation of the “perspectives, experiences and understandings” of individuals who have experienced the transition to adulthood so that we may challenge previous assumptions about what constitutes adulthood, which events lead to adulthood, and how dissimilar individuals interpret them. To explore these questions, the next section elaborates subjective understandings of the certain life course concepts and their outcomes.

Subjective Understandings of Life Course Outcomes

In life course studies, successes and failures have traditionally been measured according to developmental, social and economic outcomes standardized by the Western white, middle class norms. These outcomes include the linear progress of high school and college completion, upper-middle class occupational status, heterosexual marriage and child-bearing. Other scholars suggest accounting not for these white, middle class outcomes, but rather for those outcomes particular to different contexts, especially when extending the successes and failures to a broader population. Instead, individual evaluations of the consequences of order and disorder and on and off-timedness should be taken into account. For example, in their study of African American teenagers, success was defined as high school completion, presence or absence of a premarital teen pregnancy, and stable, legitimate employment (Entwisle, et al. 1994; Allison and Takei, 1994). Other developmental successes included close relationships to the family and personal

values, including taking care of one's grandparents or parents and having racial pride and self-respect. Providing another example of adulthood, Park (2005) describes how Asian American youth engaged in *consumptive citizenship* as a means to achieve a particular acceptance associated with adulthood, through consumerism.

In their study of second generation immigrant youth, Mollenkopf, et al. (2005) also found alternative frameworks of success. Influenced by their parents' country and class origins and different experiences in New York, second generation ethnic youth defined adult success in various ways. Second generation Chinese and Russian Jewish youth most defined success according to education, occupational status, earnings and wealth, while various black and Latino ethnic groups, including native African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Ecuadorians, Peruvians and Dominicans reported higher levels of ambivalence regarding the role of formal education in defining their adult success. Dominicans and African Americans were least convinced that education guaranteed steady employment, with many telling stories of highly educated people earning low wages and/or being unemployed, and of poorly educated people earning high wages. Perhaps a strategy to combat discrimination faced in the labor market Black and Latino ethnic groups all cited entrepreneurship as one indicator of adult success, seeking self-employment versus dependence on others for employment and earnings.

Labeled as *cultural and situational outcomes*, these and other alternatives may be considered by Mexican immigrant youth. Unaccompanied Mexican immigrant youth may learn to equate the act of immigration and visible symbols of earning and sending home US *dolares* with adulthood instead of the commonly discussed markers. This is particularly interesting in the case of some first generation Mexican adolescent youth as they too engage in forms of *consumptive citizenship* through the purchase and display of various American goods, including

clothes and electronics, while proudly displaying them in the United States and at home. As bell hooks (2000) observes, consumption is the dominant social relationship in our society, and for Mexican immigrant youth, this consumption could be spread over two nation-state contexts, functioning as an important expression of these youth's newfound adult identities due to their immigration and wage-earning.

Additionally, Mexican youth's absence from formal education mirrors the ambivalence about education's worth expressed by ethnic youth in the Mollenkopf, et al. (2005) study. Mexican youth also expressed ambivalence about the value of continued education. Instead, Mexican immigrant youth may forego schooling and work so that they may purchase and display urban wear and status symbols including jewelry and electronic devices to help them establish immediate citizenship in politically, racially and ethnically contested host urban environs, as well as their adulthood in their home contexts. Additionally, the spending and investment of remitted funds into home construction and remodeling, and participation in town celebrations may assert their adulthood back home. In both contexts, in both their increasingly distant home environment as well as their immediate host environment, these youth may be enacting a revision of the American Dream, a *new* Mexican immigrant dream, particular to youth, in which sacrificing education to earn wages and engage in consumerism, household and civic participation is displayed across two locales.

Lastly, displays of adulthood may vary by intersections of race and gender. For some, the ability to become comfortable with cultural and gender roles reflected achieving adult status for some ethnic groups. In social contexts in which black men are virtually extinct due to high rates of incarceration and/or death, African American males defined adulthood by becoming a man and as being proud of being a Black man, reflecting their transcendence of both

psychological and physical limitations associated with powerlessness and youth. In multiethnic New York City, asserting pride in one's ethnic identity and masculinity may also be one of the only ways in which undocumented Mexican immigrant male youth can assert self-assuredness in an environment that acts to diminish it through exploitation and criminalization.

Spread across two nation-state contexts and dissimilarly developed landscapes, the life courses of transnational Mexican immigrant youth will not follow those traditionally discussed. Without accounting for youth immigration and transnationalism, as well as marginalization (social and legal), the corpus of life course studies remains incomplete. Instead, my dissertation explores whether or not experiencing multiple landscapes at young ages, and as undocumented, marginalized, out of school and working *youth* produces new ways to conceptualize the life course. To conceptualize how young immigrants' transnational life courses intersects with forces of global and local economic and social mobility, I elaborate upon cultural and social reproduction and their concepts.

Introducing Cultural and Social Reproduction

Long associated with Marxist thought (Torres and Morrow, 1995), cultural and social reproduction theory attempts to explain how social relations of society and inequalities are reproduced from one generation to the next (Torres and Morrow, 1995; MacLeod, 1986; Bourdieu, 1977). While cultural reproduction is the unequal distribution of cultural capital resulting in the reproduction of the dominant cultural order, social reproduction describes the ways cultural capital is used and valued to give certain groups advantages and reproduces unequal power relations between those groups (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, 1977).

Youth studies employing cultural and social reproduction theories pay attention to both structure and agency by examining the creation of habitus, or “world-orienting beliefs” in the

home, how schools value different sorts of cultural capital, and lastly, how these interactions of habitus and capital maintain or exacerbate social inequalities, rather than narrow them (Valenzuela, 2000; Torres and Mitchell, 1998; Morrow and Torres, 1995; Lareau, 1989; MacLeod, 1986; Bourdieu, 1985; Bowles and Gintis, 1977). By applying Bourdieu's theories of cultural and social reproduction to immigrant youth studies, I attempt to capture the interplay of structures and individual agency to explain how immigrant youth simultaneously participate across and within their home and host communities. To explain how this may occur, I first explain concepts necessary for understanding cultural and social reproduction and then place them in a transnational context.

Habitus

Habitus is described as a system of internalized and embodied durable, long-lasting schemes, or structures of perception, conception and action, which people internalize and embody (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). These class-based systems, structured previously by other structures, organize people's actions and ways of doing things in ways that appear natural (Pallas and Jennings, 2009; Bourdieu, 2002; 1990; Swartz, 1997). In addition to being *fine-tuned* according to the place and time its is found in, habitus may slightly differ between similarly classed individuals due to different institutions and experiences individuals encounter, such as education or immigration (Friedmann, 2002; Guarnizo, 1998; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

Subsequent scholars have included other ascriptive characteristics and forms of domination in constructing habitus (Reay, 1995; Morrow and Torres, 1994; Cicourel, 1993; Lipuma, 1993; McClelland, 1990, MacLeod, 1986). McClelland (1990) outlines the relationship of domination and subordination as it is related to race, gender and ethnicity, while Lipuma (1993) posits that race, gender, ethnicity, and region organize the socially relative internalization

of habitus. Reay (1995) extends the analytical function of habitus to explain how differences in racial socialization by members of dominant groups, through prejudices and racial stereotypes, can bear significant influence on the life chances of any group that is different. Less mentioned, I also argue that other forces of domination may be included in such an analysis, including citizenship, and in the case of this study, how undocumented immigrants undergo a powerful second socialization in their host communities in which their legal and social citizenship are challenged.

Constructing Habitus

Habitus is not innate, but rather constructed in the early years of life through one's interaction with the particular *fields* in the immediate context. Possessing pedagogic authority (Pau), parents and families usually provide the earliest forms of upbringing and inculcate certain cultural ways of being through primary pedagogic actions (PA), or teachings and modelings (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). These actions are characterized through pedagogic work (PW), or acts ordained by dominant groups **which have no prior antecedents** and are considered, once enacted, to be irreversible and irreducible to produce *primary* habitus. Primary habitus emerges as the base habitus which cannot be destroyed, but rather, can only be slightly adjusted in extreme circumstances. Subsequent pedagogic agents may conduct pedagogic works to either affirm or disrupt previous pedagogic work and, as a result, one's habitus, but in most cases, these pedagogic agents act complicitly with dominant groups to merely reinforce the primary habitus.

Dominant groups grant subsequent agents, such as schools, churches, etc, pedagogic authority to conduct additional pedagogic work on habitus. Their cultural arbitraries, or those actions and messages believed worthy of reception, natural, and reinforcing the way things should be, are selectively reproduced and distributed among different groups of people

(Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).³² Those whose cultural arbitraries are most distant from the *dominant* cultural arbitrary, such as families living in poverty, receive messages from institutions whose practices are disguised under a cloak of agent legitimacy and authority to believe that this difference and subordination is acceptable. Socialized not to recognize the underlying hegemonic actions, most merely accept differences as *the way things are and have always been* and possess habitus mirroring this belief.

The durability of the primary habitus is critical to the success of cultural and social reproduction, including how long-lasting and effective it is in its transmission of the symbolic and material interests of the dominant cultural arbitraries (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). This durability is largely result of the effectiveness of pedagogic works in creating a habitus invincible to subsequent pedagogic works, which may or may not support the goals of the dominant cultural arbitraries.³³

Turning attention away from pedagogic agents to people (and their habitus) themselves, certain conditions must exist among both the dominant and dominated to ensure successful inculcation of ideas supporting the dominant cultural arbitrary, including positive orientations towards the pedagogic works. Groups must be predisposed to recognize pedagogic agents and their actions, or possess a pedagogic ethos, while recognizing its work as legitimate and the value of cultural capital and what is transmitted. This suggests that while the message may hold

³² While the primary charge of pedagogic work (PW) is to inculcate cultural arbitraries, other acts may include legitimizing the PAu of the pedagogic agent, so that the results, limitations and exclusionary practices of PW are viewed as authentic and natural (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

³³ Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) frame their discussion of primary and subsequent pedagogic agents and pedagogic works in terms of the nuclear family as the primary pedagogic agent engaging in primary pedagogic work, and the school acting as a secondary pedagogic agent engaging in secondary pedagogic work. Challenging the widespread notion that formal schooling impacts students who arrive at the school gate without educational histories, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) instead argue that these youth indeed possess educational histories taught to them by their families, which include dispositions towards language, relations, etc., and irreversible, these dispositions frame subsequent reception of and mastery of classroom messages. Rather, classroom messages will only be added upon or interpreted in relation to a child's primary habitus.

importance, the recipients' predispositions/receptivity of the message, or previous pedagogic works upon which subsequent pedagogic works are based upon may be just as important for reproduction.

Restructuring Habitus

Upon finding itself in different contexts and undergoing dialectical confrontations with new objective structures, habitus, and the structures with which it is interacting, may become restructured (Bourdieu, 2002). Bourdieu (2002) cautiously suggests that when dispositions encounter fields different from those in which they were constructed, a *degree* of fine-tuning emerges, or in exceptional cases, habitus may undergo a radical transformation, but never a complete break (Bourdieu, 2000).

Various scholars criticize Bourdieu's overly constant and permanent characterization of history by highlighting developmental and political changes, and exposure to unforeseen events. Using her fieldwork in Tana Toraja as example, Waterson (2002) demonstrates that one may experience several different habitus in the course of a single lifetime. In the case of imposed colonialism in Toraja, Waterson (2002) states that individuals experienced the disintegration and reconstruction of their habitus due to the conflict and political changes occurring in the country. Additionally, Friedmann (2002) broadens thinking about what may fundamentally alter habitus, including migration, either from the "countryside to the city" or "across national boundaries" (Friedmann, 2002). She argues that

migrants who move from a rural village into the metropolis, looking for work in building construction or in factories need to not only learn new skills but also a new work discipline, a new rhythm of life, a new sense of time. They may have to struggle with a new dialect or language. Their senses are bombarded with a range of new impressions which have to be absorbed or interpreted. (302)

Friedmann (2002) also draws attention to age as influencing the feasibility with which an altered habitus may emerge. Discussing how young *children* of immigrants may change, Friedmann (2002) states that they will more easily learn the “habitus appropriate to their new station in life,” adopting and using one set of practices in school, and another, perhaps more traditional set of practices in the home. In their new contexts, these youth will acquire new dispositions based on the differences attributed to being in new contexts. Friedmann’s statements, thus, illuminate several issues: (a) that the fields in which the adult and youth immigrants find themselves are different than those left behind (b) a temporal and contextual element to habitus, in that these youth, by immigrating, spend less time in their home contexts and more time in their new host contexts which may not reinforce, but rather contradict their parents’ pedagogic works, (c) less durability of youth’s habitus than adults, and (d) the abilities of the pedagogic agents found in the new context are stronger and could be more conducive to bring change to the youth’s dispositions than the ability of the primary pedagogic agents’ work to maintain continuity in the new context. In this new setting, the primary habitus of the youth are restructured by the new, different fields in which individuals find themselves in.

To be fair, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) *do* allow slight discussion for adjustment of habitus. In people’s daily lives, individuals encounter success or failure, and are met with approval or disapproval. To accommodate successes and failures, individuals must adjust their actions, and subsequently habitus (Bourdieu, 1977). The success or failure of the adjustments depends on the ability of agents to encounter conditions for secondary socialization that promote successful outcomes. After accounting for surrounding conditions, a social actor may experience this secondary socialization with the rate of gradual change dependent on one’s class location in the field and the volume/composition of capital the social actor possesses. For example, in

discussing educational expansion in France, Bourdieu states that the lower middle class adjusted to advantages of increased educational opportunities more rapidly and positively than those of the working classes. However, true to its durability, Bourdieu suggests that one's habitus may change only gradually upon experiencing situations that are different than the ones in which habitus was first formed and internalized, and regardless, one's primary socialization will always bear the greatest impact on one's internal dispositions, with or without change (Swartz, 1997; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

While Bourdieu (2002; 1977) does not address the specifics of what may bring changes to habitus, I suggest that changes may occur during crisis. Additionally, the extent of change may be determined by when the change occurs, such as the age at time of secondary socialization or disruption. Further discussion of how, when and if the habitus is changed because of changes in context must be further interrogated.

Transnational Habitus

Guarnizo (1997) introduces the concept of *transnational habitus*, to explain what may occur upon immigration and participation in different nation-states. Transnational habitus explains how an individual's dispositions are rooted both in the sending and receiving communities. Rather, people's lives are spread across national borders and incorporate not only primary socialization from their original set of pedagogic agents, but also secondary socializations influenced by experiences in the new context. In the case of Dominican immigrants, Guarnizo (1997) writes that increases in wages and savings and back and forth travel facilitated rapid changes in tastes and trends in consumption, and when applied to local Dominican communities, transformed them, as well as their immediate U.S. settings (Guarnizo, 1997). In another discussion of change, Bauder (2005) discusses how Filipino transmigrants in

Canada undergo primary habitus transformation. He demonstrates how the intersection of habitus and new fields in Canada, into which Filipino immigrants brought their own beliefs and expectations, changed not only their behaviors, but also the Canadian labor market. He concludes that Filipino transmigrants were forced to adjust their habitus accordingly because the transmigrants' habitus and understandings of the *rules of the game*, rooted in their home communities, differed from the rules of the game in Canada and resulted in the immigrants' marginalization.

Fields

Emphasizing conflict and struggle, fields activate the value and meaning of capital (Pallas and Jennings, 2009; Friedmann, 2002). Entering into this network of positions defined by the distribution of various types of capital, actors possess pre-determined amounts of capital defining their position in the field (Bourdieu, 2000). These positions may not necessarily be permanent, and can change when and if the individuals decide to activate or exchange their capital, but these decisions are largely based on individuals' habitus. Subsequent actions, words, feelings, deeds, etc. arise from the interaction between habitus and positions (in the field) which are usually adjusted, if they are contradictory, divergent, or discrepant (Bourdieu, 2002).

Using the metaphors of games and the market, Pallas and Jennings (2009) explain that these spaces are based on internal logic, and without knowledge of this internal logic, individuals may be excluded or at a disadvantage in the field (Pallas and Jennings, 2009; Young, 1999). This internal logic characterizing the different autonomous, yet intersecting spheres of play, or fields, is defined by the particular time period and space binding the game (Levinson, 2001; Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1980). These rules include previously determined yet unfixed values of capital,

as well as different positions of social actors who will be/are participating in the game (Levinson, 2001; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1980).

Continuously struggling, the dominant and the dominated fight to establish and/or maintain a monopoly over particular forms of capital, as well as to determine the ranking and exchange rates between all forms of authority in the particular field of power. Upon inclusion, participation in the field becomes a game of resistance as well as change, either in maintaining (dominant) or restructuring and reforming (dominated) the fields' boundaries (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Participation, and how participation unfolds, however, is rooted in the past, as social actors must possess a faith and "feel for the game" in which actors believe that investing in the field is both worthwhile and may benefit them if they choose to play, and possess the desire as well as qualifications to play in the field (Bourdieu, 1980). Those who do not possess this faith in the game may effectively ban themselves, by perceiving the game/field as absurd or be banned by virtue of lacking requirements demanded by the field for entry, such as rites of passage, credentials, etc. Incompletion of requirements, then, effectively bars those who have not appropriately subscribed to the *doxa* to remain outside of the game.

To the social actor who has gained entry into the field, this game is anything but absurd. For example, as Wacquant (1992) points out, investing in intellectual debates about social theory may appear to be illogical to a rural farmer with a primary education because s/he may not possess *doxa*, or have been socialized to believe that a prize of intellectual dominance, as articulated in discussions about Hegel and Marx, is worthwhile. Additionally, if having expressed the slightest interest in this particular field, lack of access to knowledge on this particular subject, via books or college courses, may also effectively prevent his/her participation in the field. On the other hand, the daughter of an Philosophy professor, born into and thus a

native in the culture of academia where subtleties of constant intellectual debate are learned early and taken for granted, may find intellectual debates about Hegel and Marx quite natural, ‘normal’, and native (Bourdieu, 1980). Her entry has been guaranteed by the mere possession of the appropriate sorts of capital valued within the field, including cultural and social capital.

Bourdieu (1980) describes these conditions of game participation as *doxa*, or a commitment to the presuppositions of the game and *illusio*, or investment in the game and its outcomes. In the case of the rural farmer, performing *doxa* or *illusio* will be significantly more difficult, whereas in the latter case of the daughter, *doxa* and *illusio* may occur without conscious decision-making. *Doxa*, as Bourdieu posits, is an ‘immediate adherence’ to the particular field that is generated through the interaction of habitus, as embodied, and field. *Doxa*, then, is a practical sense of belonging, so that bodily participation in particular fields is a natural activity. Activity reflecting *doxa*, or *illusio*, then reflects individuals’ active engagement in the field (Bourdieu, 1980). In the world of an adolescent immigrant, leaving school early and researching how to embark on travel to the United States may be *doxa*, followed by obtaining funds, making contacts and actually immigrating as *illusio*, in the field of immigration.

Lastly, although only characterized as occurring in single nation-state contexts, homologous social fields exist. Within single nation-state contexts, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) write of how characteristics of fields may correspond with other fields, especially those of dominant and subordinate relations, the struggles between them, and how they are reproduced and are reflected within different fields (Swartz, 1997). In this sense, Bourdieu accounts for a functional and structural correspondence that occurs between fields, such as education and the labor market (Swartz, 1997; Bourdieu, 1984).

Transnational Fields

Discussion of transnational homologous social fields, in which similarly structured social fields in multiple countries may correspond with one another, however, has been absent even though immigrants may be acting in homologous social fields spanning several nation-states. For example, an educational field in Mexico may impact these same youth's school entry and/or retention within an educational field in the United States. Effectively bringing the two nation-state specific educational social fields into a relationship with each other, Newcomer schools exist to accommodate youth who experienced schooling in their country of origin and wish to continue their schooling in the United States (Zuniga and Hamm, 2006; Feinberg, 2000).

However, fields in different nation-states may possess different rules of the game, and consequently, rules for *doxa* and *illusio*. Without realization that the rules are different, participation in particular fields may be severely limited. For example, rural Mexican immigrant youth may carry an understanding of schooling in rural Mexico in which education laws include (a relatively non-enforceable) compulsory education until the end of the ninth grade, and their ideas about schooling may suggest not needing schooling past this grade. Entering into a nation-state whose educational field does not mirror that of rural Mexico, possessing habitus that reflects beliefs rooted in rural Mexico and without information outlining the merits of continued education in the United States, young Mexican immigrants may find themselves unknowing of the rules of the game for this particular field and unwilling and/or unable to participate in particular fields in the United States.

Lastly, *doxa* and *illusio* in one field affects activities in other fields, even across nation-state borders. For example, if individuals leave school in Mexico to enter the United States labor market, this creates a scenario with fewer workers in Mexico and a foreign pool of individuals entering the labor market in the United States, effectively restructuring the labor market fields

both in the United States and in Mexico. Additionally, if workers remit monies back to their home communities to construct homes or other construction projects, they may also effectively be creating employment back home in the form of construction workers.³⁴ Rather, I suggest that immigrant youth, over time and space, participate in homologous fields in Mexico and in the United States which, may or may not act similarly to reproduce a transnational field of power and/or disrupt local fields of power (LiPuma, 1993).

Capital

To further his discussion of how individuals acquire mostly non-material stakes and different life outcomes, Bourdieu (1986, 1980) introduces *capital*, or forms of power which hold different values in different spaces. These resources are acquired, invested in and exchanged within different fields for different returns, primarily in hopes of improved standings (Lin, 2001). Three main forms of capital govern Bourdieu's discussions of power, including *economic capital*, or capital which can directly be converted into money and institutionalized into property rights, *cultural capital*, which in some forms, may also be converted into money and may be institutionalized in the form of educational credentials; and *social capital* is convertible into opportunities, largely occurs in the form of social relations or connections (Bourdieu, 1977).

Economic Capital

In discussions of immigration, earning money, or economic capital, is often discussed as the primary reason for moving from one nation-state to another. Economic capital may be obtained for immediate purposes, such as paying bills or buying food, but it can also be saved

³⁴ Additionally, the prevalence of youth immigration and school entry in the United States, as well as return immigration has transformed the education fields both in Mexico and the United States. Schools in the United States have created programs such as Newcomer Schools, to accommodate immigrant youth, while in Mexico, the educational system is increasingly dealing with challenges facing the return immigration of youth. A system to facilitate transfers from Mexican to the U.S. schools, and vice-versa also reflects changes in the educational fields in and across both contexts.

and sent home in the form of remittances, or money sent back home. The influx of *dolares* enables increased investment in production efforts, such as the purchase of machines for more efficient cultivation, improved housing, continued schooling, as well as for household goods such as food and clothes (Levitt, 2001; Massey and Kandel, 2001). Additionally, remittances have also been used for community projects, such as the construction of schools, religious festivals, water projects, and recreation fields (Lowell and Garza, 2002). Families which receive remittances are able to experience and display increased economic and social mobility, through actual consumption, and the displays of consumption, either private or public (Goldring, 1998).

Cultural Capital

Cultural capital, in its three forms, embodied, objectified and institutionalized, refers to “knowledge and manners” that enable individuals’ increased effectiveness in particular settings (Massey, 2007). *Embodied* cultural capital exists in the mind and body, as learned, long lasting dispositions or forms of knowledge, which are integrated into the habitus and rewarded upon display. Embodied cultural capital ultimately reproduces dominant culture and values, while penalizing those who do not possess the valued form of knowledge (Lin, 2001). Such embodied cultural capital, most often transmitted intergenerationally, oftentimes emerges in the schoolhouse and is rewarded by the institution in terms of good grades, advancement, encouragement, etc. (Lareau, 1989; Bourdieu, 1986). *Objectified* cultural capital exists as things, such as pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc, in which possession of such objects may enable greater success, especially in the classroom. Lastly, *institutionalized* cultural capital occurs in the form of credentials allowing entry into particular institutions. For example, educational credentials from high school, when exchanged in the appropriate market, can be transformed into entry into college, into the labor market, or even into particular social circles,

such as alumni organizations, etc. Ironically enough, in the case of immigrants, records which may prove possession of institutionalized forms of capital, such as school records, are often left behind and not retrieved until entry into a U.S. school.

Social Capital

Social capital is found in the social connections and relations people hold, referring to the total potential or actual resources existing due to access to or membership in a solid network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances. As Lareau (1989) suggests, however, social capital is not valuable as a stand-alone. Rather, social capital *comes into being*, becoming valuable only as the social tie/connection is activated, sometimes through its acknowledgement by members (Lin, 2001; Valenzuela, 2000; Lareau, 1989; Bourdieu, 1986, Coleman, 1988). Resources such as information, influence, valued social credentials, and reinforcement all account for the high worth associated with certain social ties within certain markets (Valenzuela, 2000; Stanton-Salazar, Lin, 2001, Lareau, 1989; Coleman, 1988).

Various factors influence the viability of the social capital. Whereas the number of people in one's social network broadens the possibility for the gains to be achieved, the strength of the social ties also influence the richness of one's social capital, with stronger ties more willing to assist an individual obtain additional resources. Lastly, the resources embedded within the social ties also determine the worth of the social capital. Social interactions with those who have information that is of little use in a particular market will yield little to no profit in the field (Lin, 2001). For example, if most of an immigrant adolescent's contacts are childless men in their mid 30s, they will not have access to information which may be valuable in the educational field, but may glean valuable information for use in the labor market.

Symbolic Capital

Drawing a distinction between sheer economic purchases and gift-exchanges in the Kabyle society (both of which conclude in some form of personal gain, explicit or implicit), Bourdieu (1990:115) explains that symbolic capital conceals the “narrow economic interests and calculation it really may directed towards.” Its ability to operate incognito is part function of its detachment from the forms of capital which produced it, as well as its legitimation within the field it appears (Pallas and Jennings, 2009). Appearing to be void of personal interest, symbolic capital acts to legitimate the position of the individual involved in the exchange (Swartz, 1997; Calhoun, 1993). In the case of adolescent immigrants, money sent home may be used to sponsor different facets of the annual town festivals, such as the entertainment or decorating the saints, but oftentimes individuals are not sending money not merely to participate in the festival, but rather to remain in or improve upon good standing within the community (Smith, 2006).

The Interaction of Habitus, Capital and Fields to Produce Actions

Habitus, or the whole of the dispositions, acts in conjunction with various forms of capital, including cultural and symbolic, that are constantly in action in various social fields in order to influence decisions and actions that may lead to actual outcomes. This trinity of concepts, when placed into action, influences the subsequent decisions individuals make (Pallas, 2006).

How this trinity of concepts interacts with each other may be best considered through the following mathematical equation: $[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$ (Bourdieu, 1985). The combination of one's habitus and the capital s/he possesses marks a person's entry and success into particular fields, as well as particular outcomes, including reproduction of the status quo, the acquisition of new capital, or in some cases, the restructuring of the field and/or habitus. Most importantly, though, neither the present nor past conditions which have shaped one's habitus and

their resulting practices are rendered visible in these interactions. Instead, one's immediate dispositions are made to appear to have relative autonomy from the existing present. For example, one person's matriculation into a selective institution may, at first glance, be attributed to her intelligence. What is not visible or readily known, is that the individual is a descendant of generations of elite-school college-goers, who emphasized higher learning and academic performance in their homes. Thus, practices generated by habitus are perceived and viewed as naturally occurring, unrelated to individual people's privileges. Attributed to groups of people, these practices are considered as more natural, or actions that 'all' of a certain group of people do.

How Age, Race, Citizenship and Gender may influence Habitus, Fields and Capital

While Bourdieu's theories of cultural and social reproduction emphasize class distinctions, age, race, citizenship and gender remain limited in discussions on the formation of habitus, acquisition of capital and structuring of fields (Cicourel, 1993). However, fields, as well as capital, are structured by age, race, citizenship status and gender. In the case of age, certain social institutions ban access to them due to age, and thus limit access to resources available from these institutions. For example, individuals may not enter elementary school prior to the age of five and thus may not acquire resources distributed in elementary school. Alternatively, because they are no longer viewed as children, adolescent immigrant may possess connections with adults in the United States. These connections may be the most important ties if they are interested in labor market entry, as these ties provide information that may encourage and facilitate immigration, as well as influence the conditions of settlement upon immigration (Massey and Espinosa, 1997). Information about how to immigrate, and subsequently, housing and work after immigration will be most important upon arrival. If the adult immigrant contact is

older, has spent more time in the United States, and is respected in his/her community, this relationship may be more fruitful due to a deeper knowledge base, respect and/or a longer history in the community and or workplace. Alternatively, in terms of education, having relationships with adult immigrants may facilitate school entry only if they have school-age children or have taken classes themselves (Lin, 2001).

Racial or ethnic identification may also influence access to fields as well as capital acquisition. Although now prohibited by law, access to particular forms of and sites of education were once determined by race. Today, we still see the vestiges of this discrimination as certain schools, neighborhoods and labor market niches remain disproportionately dominated by certain racial groups. In the case of capital, co-ethnic immigrants oftentimes share employment information with each other (Chin, 2001). If employers base their hiring decisions on ideas about particular immigrant groups, and immigrants within the employment are respected and can vouch for each other, sharing co-ethnicity with these respected adult immigrants may increase chances at employment (Chin, 2001).

Increasingly, citizenship also determines whether or not individuals may participate in certain economic, social and civic arenas with significant outcomes tied to inclusion or exclusion. For example, in the Dominican Republic, ethnic Haitians are denied citizenship and thus access to certain social services, including health care and legal employment. Affecting their health, wage-earning and labor protection, ethnic Haitians are not allowed to participate adequately in the health care industry or labor market. In the United States, particular labor niches are largely prohibited from unauthorized immigrants. For example, it is highly unlikely that one would find unauthorized immigrants working as academic faculty or corporate executives.

Lastly, gender also may influence acquisition of particular forms of capital and participation in particular fields. In the science field, males continue to be more encouraged to develop dispositions towards and acquire valued capital to pursue careers in the science industries. Young women are often socialized to pursue the soft sciences, encouraged to obtain capital enabling completion of Humanities or Social Sciences studies instead of pursuing a career in the natural sciences. In professional sports, certain fields continue to exclude women, and at young ages, females are discouraged from pursuing interests in these fields.

Complicating Cultural and Social Reproduction by Time and Place

In his discussion of the creation of habitus, field and capital, LiPuma (1993) points us to considering the historical and cultural specificity of these concepts. Pointing to time and space, he states that while concepts are universal, their content and/or the relationships between concepts may differ according to the culture and historical moment of the society examined. In regards to habitus, where one is raised, and the race, class, and gender norms of the context play a significant role in orienting the pedagogic agents and appropriate pedagogic works to create particular primary dispositions in youth. In their discussions of economic and social mobility, Blau and Duncan (1967) look to individuals' birthplace and place of upbringing as providing background and educational limitations or advantages for later economic and occupational success. As outlined earlier, leaving one's original context may change that, with age at change playing a significant role in determining just how much change may occur.

Additionally, time and space hold particular influence over cultural and social reproduction. For one, historical events may shape and change the rules of fields. For example, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1866 unequivocally changed the rules of particular fields for both white slave owners and former black slaves. Secondly, individuals confront different

fields at different moments in their lives, and fields are differently structured according to where and when they are encountered. Whereas a ten-year old in the United States may not be eligible to enter into a field related to the labor market now, s/he may have been eligible at the turn of the century (Lesko, 2001; Arias, 1966). Whereas industrialization and the expansion of public schooling led to changing a number of labor laws at the turn of the 20th century, including those protecting children, in current day Mexico, a ten year old may be eligible to visibly enter into an informal labor market with little repercussions and/or protections.

In addition, particular forms of capital hold different values at different life moments and sites, as they come into contact with different fields. Whereas knowing and trusting a human smuggler is important in Mexico when one is attempting to immigrate, this may never be important again, and not exchangeable if the same person remains in the United States and obtains legal residence. Upon crossing the U.S. border, the value of knowing a trustworthy human smuggler diminishes and may even disappear. Likewise, while an Ivy League degree bears no importance for a researcher in a rural Mexican village, it would to gain access to an Ivy League social network at another site and moment.

Cultural and Social Reproduction and Immigration

Shanin (1978) argues that to understand immigrant dispositions in their receiving context, researchers must consider their prior class positions. In his study of Western European immigrants at the turn of the century, he found that labor immigrants tended to act more like the peasants they were prior to arriving rather than the workers they are in industrialized Western Europe.

In the case of Mexican immigrants, the same idea may be applied. Many immigrants are moving from more traditional environs structured by relationships of kinship, to capitalist

environs in which relationships are structured by economic capital (Friedmann, 2002; LiPuma, 1993). Embodying habitus and possessing capital formed and obtained in their home contexts, as well as capital obtained in their new contexts, they may now be participating simultaneously in not only new, but also old, enduring fields in which their positions are defined relative to both their new and old sites. Likewise, habitus and capital constructed in their old environments may already hold significance for fields they will encounter in their new environs. For example, economic capital earned in the United States may be remitted across boundaries for exchange in the old context, whereas knowing hometown friends already working in the United States may lead to employment upon arrival to the United States. I suggest divergence from the more common representation of Bourdieu's works, as bound within one, industrialized nation-state, to include cultural and social reproduction across national borders.

Cultural and social reproduction may cross boundaries in particular ways. For one, dispositions formed in immigrant-sending rural, preindustrial environments may not be found in capitalist environs, that with newly acquired capital, and *played* in both old and new fields, may create different outcomes in the new and old environments. Secondly, immigration causes a confrontation with new fields which require different rules of eligibility or *rules of the game*, different exchange rates for the capital they possess, and/or other strategies for accumulation of capital, with which they are unfamiliar. Facing lack of success in the United States, immigrants may opt instead to continue participation in home context fields by remitting monies, etc. (Smith, 2006). LiPuma (1993) also suggests that one's primary habitus, bound by certain nation-state and cultural particularities, mediates these immigrants' practices in their newly encountered fields. Upon immigration, one's habitus becomes transnational by arriving and influencing practices and outcomes in a different nation-state, but by also through continued participation in

hometown fields. In addition, one's habitus may change through and in addition to the acquisition of new capital, enabling simultaneously play in both context fields. How they play in the old fields will also change, as a result of new capital and altered habitus, effectively restructuring the hometown fields, as well as their positions in these fields. Thus transnational theory and cultural and social reproduction theory capture these conditions, and alongside life course theory, can be extended to explain these immigrant youth's decision-making processes around school and/or labor market entry.

Transnational Cultural and Social Reproduction (and Disruption) and Youth Immigrants

Within their global and local spaces, many of the youth immigrants in question hold the most disadvantaged positions. Their family histories, dispositions, as well as the volume and structure of their capital have prepared them to either remain as sustenance farmers in their home contexts, or increasingly, to immigrate and become low-skilled immigrant workers in the United States. In the absence of economically viable opportunities for economic and social mobility in their local context, youth grow up seeing other adults leave the home context and advance their family's status, power and wealth (Goldring, 1998; Calhoun, 1993).

In his discussion of status and power acquisition Goldring (1998) illuminates how transnational migration can provide not only increased earnings, but also an opportunity to claim a higher social status in a home community. Immigrant communities' perceptions of internal class structures are altered by the act of immigration itself, and these alterations are most easily observed through introduction of certain cultural tastes and styles specific to their immigration to the United States, such as U.S. products and brands, increased educational attainment for family members left behind, or through increased economic capital, such as home construction and remodeling (Wright, 2005; Levitt, 2001; Guarnizo, 1997; Kandel, 1996; Taylor, 1987).

Alternatively, families and individuals who do not immigrate or do not enjoy remittances from family members abroad now find themselves at the bottom of the altered class structure, assuming positions which they may not have previously held. Instead, immigrants from these households, if any, may opt to save, not sending money home, and/or spend their money only in their host context, impacting their status there. These immigrants may even include those who would rather seek ways to attend school than work, or are spending their monies on their education. They may be more concerned with their individual status in the United States than in a transnational space.

Prior to immigration, youth may develop ideas about where and how they will pursue economic and social mobility, either in their home community, their host community, or both. Acting as adults, *youth* employ strategies and make choices that either privilege economic and social mobility in their sending communities while stunting this possibility in their receiving context, or delay their ability to engage in economic and social mobility in their sending context while improving their chances in their receiving community, or a blend of both. These options suggest simultaneous participation in different-context fields, and differential acts of cultural and social reproduction, at least in the local sense, concepts missing from Bourdieu's discussion of cultural and social reproduction.

Thus, *how and which pathways immigrant youth take to obtain a higher social status and in which context* upon arrival in the United States are rooted not only in the conditions that immigrants find themselves in upon their arrival in the United States, but also in the *youths'* dispositions, preimmigration experiences, perceptions of success, as well as their age at arrival (Fry, 2003; Hirschman, 2001; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Levels of schooling, positive or negative educational experiences, intense work experiences, and understandings of their age, as

teenagers, at arrival all influence whether or not youth choose school and/or work in the United States as their pathway to social status (Fry, 2003; Hirschman, 2001). Ironically, these also effectively impact *where* the *youth* can and will seek social status, in their home communities or their host community, and which outcomes (as a result of which fields) are possible (Fry, 2003; Hirschman, 2001; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

Additionally, decisions about where to participate depend on the social actor's *doxa*, or perception of how successful s/he may be in either or both contexts and fields. Using the example of a basketball player, Calhoun (1993) discusses a high school basketball player who, after experiencing more success on the court than in the study hall, may commit and invest more time practicing than studying. This player is opting to achieve success in one field which seems relatively open while minimizing investment in another, academic, which seems closed. Shaped back home and then activated in the United States, habitus (along with capital and fields) have the potential to define how, if and how much immigrant *youth* engage in transnational fields and practices to disrupt or leave undisturbed cultural and social reproduction, locally and/or globally.

Subjective understandings of the life course, age at arrival, and meanings associated with the ages also influence how and where immigrant *youth* engage in and across their new and old contexts, and subsequent outcomes. While previously mentioned, some scholars point out the malleability of habitus according to age, with immigrant *youth* more likely to develop dispositions reflecting their new surroundings than older immigrants. This also bears consequence on where individuals may seek out economic and social mobility. Additionally, cultural perceptions of age rooted in their home contexts, as well as possessing age-appropriate capital, translate into dispositions which may, at least initially, dictate which fields individuals think they have access to, as well as are appropriate for them, as a result of preconceived notions

and the ‘rules’ governing the fields. Carrying ideas about age and class from their home contexts, immigrant *youth* may believe that certain fields, such as schools, are no longer ‘for them’, and rather, they are more appropriately suited for engaging in the labor market. Of course, these understandings bear significant consequences for cultural and social reproduction in their home and host contexts.

Using transnational theory, life course theory and cultural and social reproduction theory gives a unique insight into understanding how and why a significant percentage of the immigrant youth population may remain outside of formal schooling in the United States. By taking account of their civic and household participation in two contexts, their ages and the meanings associated with their ages in both contexts, and the acceptable vehicles for economic and social mobility in and across their New York City and rural Mexican communities, this dissertation sheds light on an increasingly disadvantaged youth population.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This dissertation is a qualitative case study exploring why particular undocumented Mexican immigrant youth arrive and remain outside of traditional New York City schools. This dissertation examines the lives of rural, undocumented Mexican youth, who, I argue, are subject to and act upon multiple hegemonic forces found in and across the particular nation-state boundaries, as well as across differentially developed areas, rural southern Mexico and post-industrial New York City. Structured by the particular hegemonic social, political and economic structures which organize youth lives in ways that lead to their participation as low-wage labor immigrants in New York City, these transnational youth make decisions and display practices in the United States, which, while appearing unfavorable to many in the United States, may be favorable to them and improve their and/or their family's life chances *back home* (Levitt, 2001).

I conducted a qualitative inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) to explore the lives of undocumented youth as they occur in their natural settings: work, home, school, community-based organizations and in spaces of leisure. Conducting a qualitative study allowed me the opportunity to co-construct, with the participants, their worlds as naturally as possible, as they have occurred, are occurring, and even hypothesize about how they will occur, all in their everyday, natural settings. As the researcher, my role was to draw out and 'make sense' of the meanings participants shared with me, particularly about why Mexican immigrant youth immigrate to New York City, and then either participate in different types of schooling or not, so that I can obtain a deeper understanding of what motivates them to do so, or to find out "what makes (these youth) tick" (in regards to school-going or non-school-going) (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Most important to this study was exploring how Mexican

immigrant youth defined their worlds, the practices they exhibit, what is important to them, but most importantly, the reasoning behind these youth's practices and decisions.

Why “do” Qualitative?

A qualitative approach to this research allowed me to explore the meanings that the research participants gave to their experiences, as well as the social, political and historical forces which may have influenced their particular interpretations of experiences (Creswell, 2003). Through qualitative inquiry, I was able to observe the (natural) world of the research participants to observe and document these meanings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), all while acknowledging that my own positionality and cache of social, political and historical experiences may have influenced my observations and interpretations.

The nature of my research questions elaborated upon the common and problematic portrayals of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States. Narrow explanations of adult Mexican immigration are often provided in which undocumented Mexican immigrant (mostly) males are portrayed solely as disposable (deportable), commodified labor acting to meet the cheap labor demands of the United States. Reasons for their immigration are most often supposed by observing their most public behaviors: long, arduous hours of labor, little leisure time, participation in dangerous work activities, etc. In this case, ‘knowing’ the reasons behind adult immigration is most associated with what sorts of observations are available to the person observing, not explanations provided by the observed.

This explanation has also been recently extended to explain a particular case of youth immigration, undocumented, non-school going Mexican youth immigration. Here “to work,” these youth can also be observed in similar settings as their “adult” counterparts, working long hours of labor, with little leisure time, and participating in unprotected work activities. The

meaning behind their youth immigration then, is again limited to one reason, for financial gain, without further interrogation of their immigration, which differs in at least one sense-age-with a multitude of other consequences inapplicable to undocumented Mexican immigrant adults.

Conducting a qualitative study, however, allowed me to extend beyond these explanations to solicit, explore and understand more complex systems of reasoning from the undocumented Mexican youth themselves. Drawing from their own (narrated) interactions with different structural contexts-family, work, school, and leisure spaces, both pre and post-immigration-I attempted to understand if and how these interactions contributed to their understanding of whether or not they can, should, will and/or do continue schooling in New York City, and their actual enrollment behaviors. Characterized and influenced by a multitude of views and understanding of behaviors, situations, actions and events, including their understandings of their age, race, class, gender and legal status, both in Mexico and in the United States revealed subjective meanings as they are constantly negotiated within different contexts (Creswell, 2006). These subjective meanings helped explain why they attend or do not attend New York City schools. Lastly, due to the exploratory nature of a qualitative study, reasons explaining school-going and non-school going which had not already been theorized were introduced by the research participants themselves (Creswell, 2006).³⁵

Additionally, by soliciting reasons and understandings from the participants themselves, I challenged *taken as truth* meanings. Hartsock's (1987) use of *standpoint* uses Marxist explanations of relationships and experiences and states that these experiences are explained through the eyes of the ruling class are *partial and perverse*. Using Bourdieu, I also included

³⁵ In addition, Creswell (2006) discusses philosophical assumptions that drive qualitative studies. Ontological, Epistemological, Axiological, Rhetorical and Methodological assumptions all bear influence on whether or not a qualitative study is best suited for not only investigating the phenomenon at hand but how the phenomenon will be investigated.

other social categories of power including age, race, citizenship and gender to examine the youth's varied and multiple meanings of their actions and of the worlds they live in, as influenced by various social categories of power.

Why an Interpretive Framework?

While I adopt a critical approach seeking to see the relationship between hegemonic social structures and individual actors, I do so through the lenses of the actors themselves. Using an interpretive framework, I explore how youth adopt, embody, interpret and act upon their situated understandings of their realities and actions, as created across both contexts and through their past and present day to day interactions and reactions to institutions and individuals embedded in multi-sited, conflict-laden *fields*. In interacting with other individuals and institutions within these stratified fields (Bourdieu, 1984), these youth develop, possess and act upon shared understandings and meanings about not only what they do, but why they do, as they occur in particular settings (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Keeping an eye on the social, historical and political histories and contexts they are products of, the meanings are 'situated' in the particular global economic, political and social moment in which the movement of various types of is occurring across borders, mostly as a result of newer, advanced ways of travel, technology and communication (Smith, 2006; Sanchez, 2004).

What makes this a Case Study?

Case studies focus on a "population, process, problem, context or phenomenon whose parameters and outcomes are unclear, unknown or unexplored" (LeCompte and Schensul, 1998: 83). This dissertation is a study of a particular case, or subpopulation of immigrant youth, about which little is known, undocumented, rural, Mexican immigrant youth, as well as processes these immigrant youth engage in, including pre-immigration youth practices, unaccompanied

immigration, non-school going, and underage participation in the labor market. While empirical studies of immigrant youth in the United States have overwhelmingly emphasized their school-going practices, this study examines the case of a particular subgroup of immigrant youth, undocumented, rural, Mexican immigrant youth who mostly stay out of the New York City school system. All sources of data are meant to characterize the population as a whole, while intergroup variation is distinguished through the individual empirical cases.

My study moves back and forth between the theoretical case and the individual empirical cases which were constructed through data collection, or through interviews and observations. The theoretical case was the unit of analysis, or the particular phenomenon under study, for this study, school-going and non-school-going of undocumented Mexican immigrant youth going to and/or residing in New York City. The case was bound by the act or intention (in the case of pre-immigrants) of traditional non-school-going in New York City. This case has a particular historical and temporal element (Miles and Huberman, 1994), as I investigated the phenomenon at a particular point in time of immigration, or when both US immigration laws and policies are under special scrutiny (Capps, et al., 2006; Fry, 2003). I examined a case of school-going among similar youth, also undocumented and recently arrived for purposes of comparison.

Consideration of the individual empirical cases helped me to understand the theoretical case. By not treating the undocumented youth as individual theoretical case studies, but rather as empirical case studies, I kept the focus squarely on the phenomenon of undocumented Mexican immigrant youth non-school going, to generate a broader explanation of this phenomenon, rather than on the numerous specific explanations of the phenomenon. For example, Ragin (1992) uses the example of obtaining individual-level survey data from a sample of adults in the United States. While this study could be seen as the analysis of the many individual cases derived from

the many individual adults in the survey sample, it could also be viewed as a case study about the United States. The use of the United States as the unit of analysis can also be conceptualized in various ways including as a case of a larger phenomenon of advanced societies, or as reflective of an important process such as partial implementation of meritocratic principles

Likewise, while the immigration and employment of undocumented Mexican immigrant youth is observable in various United States cities and states (Hill and Hayes, 2007; Gonzalez, 2007), this dissertation examines the specific manifestation of this phenomenon as it occurs between poor areas, both rural and urban, of Mexico and New York City. New York City may also lend itself as a case of interest due to the relatively recent arrival of Mexican immigrants, the emergence of newer sending communities from which immigration to New York has occurred (Smith, 2006, 2005; Cortina, 2003), and the accelerated nature of youth immigration that has accompanied Mexico to New York City immigration (Binford, 2003; Smith, 2003). In addition, unlike other southwestern urban areas experiencing higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment, New York City, more or less, continues to possess a benevolent reputation of welcoming hard-working immigrants in search of the American Dream, and in the case of more recent undocumented Mexican immigrants, as a place in which *la migra* (immigration officials) will not harass them (Marroni, 2002).³⁶

I chose to define the case study in this way because of my future desires to compare receiving community contexts, searching for differences between New York City and other receiving cities which are similar to and/or differ from New York City. City differences may

³⁶ While this may still be true, New York City has seen a rash of recent hate crimes against Mexicans, particularly in Staten Island, as well as factory raids. The city's benevolent reputation has been tarnished in recent months with high levels of xenophobia, and Governor Paterson's signing of the Secure Communities Act which will include NYC.

include city economies and their ability to absorb low-skilled young workers, histories of receiving Mexican immigrants, and histories of racial and ethnic politics within the city.

Transnational Case Study Data Collection

While the case in question is the aforementioned specific phenomenon as it manifests in New York City, the research design draws from transnational theory to capture a more holistic impression of the youth immigrants' lives. Data collection then, was not limited to New York City, but rather crosses nation-state borders into Mexican communities whose primary immigration destinations for youth (as well as adults) is New York City. This bore consequences for the feasibility of data collection in both nation-state contexts, as well as how data was impacted by the location in which they are collected as it intersects with my own social and political positioning as a Chicana researcher who lives in New York.³⁷ Both influenced participant responses and behaviors, both in Mexico and in the United States, while my fieldwork in rural Puebla, and subsequent discussion of it with research participants in New York City, facilitated the building of trust between researcher and participant, or in some cases, created hesitation, for fear of *chismeando* (gossiping) to their relatives in New York or back home.

³⁷ In attempting to establish myself as kin-folk by self-identifying as Chicana, associating the social and political meaning to it that various southwestern Chicana feminists write of (Zavella, 1996), I was more likely identified as a gringa (white, US citizen) of Mexican descent, or an *Estado Unidense*, or someone from the United States, whose roots are Mexican. More recently, several scholars teaching in both new destinations of Mexican immigration in which previous generations of Mexican Americans are not present, or in locales where identification labels held by the researcher do not match those held by the research participants (Calafell, 2004; Zavella, 1996) have written about the absence of meaning associated with the term Chicana by both Mexican immigrant and subsequent generation individuals of Mexican-descent. While I shared with the hosts and the research participants that my paternal grandfather was a sharecropper in South Texas, tied to the land just like most of their parents were, this attempt to minimize class and national-citizenship differences and create a 'fictive' kinship with the participants may or may not have been successful. Williams (1996) explores this same but different concept by making the distinction between skinfolk and kinfolk. While skinfolk may only share race, kinfolk share cultural understandings, leading to a deeper trust. Zavella (1996) writes extensively about Chicanas' insider/outsider status when interviewing working class women of Mexican-descent who may identify themselves differently, and see little kinship with the researcher, in spite of assumed shared descent. This may affect responses, as well as the manner in which data is collected.

While my research participants were found in two nation-state locales and three ‘home-front’ locales (Guerra, 1998), most imagined themselves and/or only participated across nation-state borders, as well as across socially-understood developmental, and temporal boundaries including youth and adulthood, and more specifically, within a transnational immigration pipeline spanning the two countries and developmental contexts, between poor rural and urban areas Mexico and post-industrial New York City.

Data Collection

Site Selection

During the late 1990s, I became increasingly aware of the demographic shift that was occurring in New York City. Whereas during a visit in 1998, I had not noticed the presence of Mexican immigrants, two years later, still living in the traditional Mexican Southwest United States, I would be amazed that Mexican immigrants had found their way to New York City. In 2002, upon beginning my doctoral work at Columbia, I would delight in being able to find my grandmother’s Mexican hot chocolate, tamales and pan dulce, providing me comfort during my first brush with New York winter (in October!) as I was far from my warm, Texas home. While street blocks in the middle of formerly Italian, turned Puerto Rican Spanish Harlem, were increasingly becoming host to a myriad of restaurants and retail stores selling Mexican goods to meet their consumer demands, *Duranguense* (a genre of Mexican music linked to the state of Durango, Mexico) could be heard emanating through the kitchen doors of Morningside Heights restaurants. Spread across the five boroughs, the Mexican population would increase by 202% between 1990 and 2000 (Rivera-Batiz, 2004), with Little Mexicos emerging in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, East Harlem, Manhattan, Jackson Heights, Queens, as well as other areas across the city (Smith, 2006; Sachs, 2001).

New York

In selecting New York City as my primary site for my study, I took several factors into consideration, related to both time and space. These include:

1. New York City as a “new destination” for Mexican immigration
2. New York City as a new destination for *rural* and urban Mexican immigrants
3. New York City as a receiving destination for non-school going, rural, unaccompanied, undocumented youth

1. New York City as a “New Destination” for Mexican Immigration

For one, as reflected in my personal observations, New York City has recently been identified as one of the United States’ *new destinations* for Mexican immigration (Zuniga and Leon Hernandez, 2006; Cortina, 2003). While New York has long been the destination for immigrant groups, a visible increase in Mexican immigration to New York has been a more recent phenomenon (Cortina, 2003; Binford, 2003; Foner, 1998). In the past twenty years, New York City has become one of the newest destinations for Mexican immigrants, with most arriving from previously non-traditional sending communities in southern states of Mexico, including Puebla, Guerrero and Oaxaca (Cortina, 2003; Binford, 2003; da Marroni, 2003). By the late 1990s, over 60% of all families in Mixteca, a region overlapping Puebla, Guerrero and Oaxaca, counted at least one family member in the United States (Binford, 1998). According to the 2000 Census, between 50% and 75% of the native Mexican population in New York City is from rural Puebla, with Guerrero and Oaxaca also contributing to the explosive growth in smaller percentages (Rivera-Batiz, 2004; Binford, 2003; Cortina, 2002).

A combination of push-pull factors is used by immigration scholars to explain reasons for mass immigration from sending to receiving communities. In New York City, pull factors such as increasing low-wage employment opportunities in the service sector, growing anti-immigrant backlash in traditional receiving states, and the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control

Act of 1986 are all pull factors which encouraged increased immigration from Mexico during the late 1980s (Rivera-Batiz, 2004). In Mexico, and especially in rural areas of Mexico, a number of factors pushed immigration from rural Mexico. While the economic crisis of 1982 may have begun the impetus for accelerated immigration from the Mixteca, subsequent economic restructuring policies stemming from NAFTA in the 1990s as well as diminishing support for small agricultural producers and decreasing wages in Mexican urban areas to which these immigrants would have earlier immigrated to, created conditions in which immigration to the United States, and the \$2000 to \$3000 price tag that accompanied immigration seemed like the only viable option (Rivera-Batiz, 2004; Binford, 2003; Marroni, 2002). In addition, Marroni (2002) cites Mexican immigrants' sense of protection from harassment by police as reason for immigration. In 2003, New York City was declared a sanctuary city, or a city in which officials could not report the presence of undocumented immigrants to federal officials, and for the most part, where undocumented immigrants are free from judicial harassment. Whether conscious of this policy or not, more recently immigrated undocumented Mexican immigrants may experience a heightened sense of (relative) freedom in their daily lives.

2. New York City as a receiving community for rural and urban undocumented Mexican immigrants

More specifically, the late 1980s saw increased migration from rural communities in Puebla. While the Mixteca region is most often studied and cited in studies of Puebla-New York immigration, another region of Puebla is increasingly represented in Mexican immigration to New York City: the Valle de *San Benito de los Lagos* region.³⁸ Less studied, immigration from this region accelerated within the last 20 years and has added to the heterogeneity of the Mexican

³⁸ Da Marroni (2002) attributes delayed immigration from *San Benito de los Lagos* to its increased fertility. A more fertile region, *San Benito de los Lagos* was able to sustain itself longer economically, relying on its varied agrofishing and horticulture industry.

immigrant population in New York City. Gathering speed *after* the passage of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, Mexican immigration from *San Benito de los Lagos* is more homogeneous in terms of legal status, with the majority of immigrants arriving *sin papeles* at younger ages, with trends and practices of this population reflecting those of less incorporated individuals. Martinez-Leon and Smith (2003) placed out migration from *San Benito de los Lagos* and surrounding communities at approximately 200,000, whereas the entire state of Puebla has sent roughly one in five of its residents, or one million individuals to the United States. By 1992, approximately 15% of Mexicans in New York hailed from Mexico City, and as of 2000, however, Mexico City was the second largest sender of Mexican immigrants to New York City, behind Puebla (Smith, 2003).

3. New York City as a receiving destination for non-school going, unaccompanied, undocumented youth

Bringing attention to how rapid immigration from Mexico to New York developed, Binford (2003) calls this growth *accelerated*, referring to high rates of immigration in a short period of time. While other traditional sending states, including Jalisco, Michoacan, and Zacatecas experienced a more gradual rate of adult immigration, with immigration networks developing over decades, the Mixteca region experienced a rapid rate of adult immigration, with youth immigration following closely behind. According to Smith (2003), unaccompanied semi-permanent and medium-term adolescent immigration occurs alongside accelerated immigration, leading to the settlement of large numbers of unaccompanied out-of school youth in New York City.

On any given day in New York City, Smith's statements can be easily verified. One can walk the streets of New York and see adolescent Mexican males working in kitchens, as

busboys, dishwashers and delivery boys for New York City restaurants, as well as stock boys in the small, family grocery stores unique to New York. On weekends, you can see many of these lithe bodies running across soccer fields, kicking goals alongside their adult counterparts, or late night, in bars, drinking Mexican beers, looking lonesome for their native lands. Young Mexican females who are not enrolled in schools may lead more isolated lives, most often relegated to crowded apartments, where they act as caretakers for their older siblings, in charge of cooking, cleaning and keeping house. In other cases, they may find work as nail technicians or domestics, and in some cases, finding love with older Mexican immigrant males, and becoming teenage mothers, living in crowded conditions with other immigrants.

Examination of both Mexico's CONAPO census and the 2000 US Census also support Smith's allegations. The Mexican census shows significant rates of immigration among youth ages 10 to 14 and 15-19 to the United States.³⁹ Upon immigration, United States census data show their absence from New York schools. According to the 2000 Census, adolescent Mexican youth remain out of school at higher rates than other New York City youth (Rivera-Batiz, 2004). While Mexican males ages 14-17 exhibited school enrollment rates of 62.2%, females exhibited rates of school enrollment of 70.7%. Overall, New York City youth ages 14 to 17 attend New York City schools at rates of 93.8% and 95%, respectively (Rivera-Batiz, 2004). At ages 18-19, rates of school enrollment decline, with Mexican youth attending school at rates hovering around 30%, while New York City youth average a school attendance rate of approximately 70% (Rivera-Batiz, 2004).

San Pedro and San Valentín

The intersection of a unique moment in the history of Mexican immigration and in New

³⁹ INEGI (2005) reported that Mexican youth immigrants to the United States totaled 15,954 ages 10-14 and 12,822 ages 15-19, which totaled to 83% and 80% of the total international out migration.

York City's immigration history led me focus on the immigration pipeline between high outmigration communities in Mexico and New York City. I also observed accelerated rates of Mexican immigration from high outmigration communities in rural Puebla, in which immigration no longer is limited to independent adults, but rather, now includes independent youth (Smith, 2003). Due to the transnational nature of the Mexican immigrant youth's lives, and the influence of individual's habitus upon their decisions both in Mexico and in New York City, I chose to conduct this study not only in New York City, but also in Mexico.

In Mexico, most of my data were collected in two differently developed, but both agricultural communities located in the *Valle de San Benito de los Lagos*, Puebla, Mexico.⁴⁰ *Valle de San Benito de los Lagos* is a more recent site of immigration to New York City, compared to the oft-mentioned southern Mixteca region, and is made up of five different *municipios*, or the United States equivalent to counties. Of these five, I was able to collect data in two distinct communities within the two different *municipios* of *San Luis Tlalapa* and *Coyopec*: San Pedro, Puebla, Mexico and San Valentín, Puebla, Mexico, both of which reflect the many rural Mexico to post-industrial New York City immigration pipelines.⁴¹ In addition, I was able to conduct limited observations in *San Benito de los Lagos*, the town which has emerged not only as an agricultural center, in which rural residents come to sell their products twice a week (Marroni, 2002), but also a commercial center, due to the increased immigration activity in the surrounding towns. This is visible by the volume of businesses emerging to accommodate remittances. Businesses include more wire service companies, internet centers, as

⁴⁰ In order to reach each town, I traveled by bus from Puebla, Puebla to *San Benito de los Lagos*, Puebla, a nearby smaller city from which I would transfer to small, van-like buses to reach these rural areas. Overall, the travel time averaged approximately an hour and a half, each way.

⁴¹ To protect the identities of the participants, I use pseudonyms to name the *municipios* and towns in which I collected data. The city, state and region in which I collected data, however, are factual.

well as furniture stores and construction/hardware stores to buy supplies for homebuilding. Traveling to the two rural communities required my travel to *San Benito de los Lagos* from Puebla, after which I would transfer to other vans or buses, depending on where I was collecting data that day. *San Benito de los Lagos* provided an additional site for limited participant observation, as some youth accompanied their parents to sell goods on Tuesdays and Saturdays in *San Benito de los Lagos*, and *San Benito de los Lagos* was viewed as a site of potential waged employment and/or schooling opportunities to the youth.

In selecting the communities in which I would work, however, I took various factors into account. First, the state of Puebla accounts for over fifty percent of the Mexican immigration to New York City (Smith, 2006; Cortina, 2003; Martinez-Leon and Smith, 2003). From the state of Puebla, whereas the particular region, *San Benito de los Lagos*, has demonstrated increased immigration to New York City over the past twenty years, scholarship on Mexican immigration to New York City has emphasized the Mixteca region while neglecting the broader and more recent immigration trends from other areas (Smith, 2006; Binford, 2003; da Marroni, 2003).

The two communities in question, San Pedro and San Valentín, were also selected due to various reasons. First of all, both are poor communities experiencing high levels of out-migration to New York City. The absence of teenagers and young adults in both communities is palpable, as teachers and parents reported the immigration of the youth from the area to Nueva York. Teachers reported that in many cases, many of the youth would disappear the day after graduation or the end of the school year.

Also important, these sites were selected due to the ease with which I could enter into the sites. After contacting Dr. Sonia Sanchez, a noted scholar at the Benemerita Autonoma de la Universidad de Puebla, and establishing an immediate, warm rapport, she agreed to assist me in

entering these two rural sites close to the capital. Rocio, her assistant, would be invaluable in also helping me get oriented with the sites by providing me background information and introducing me to families, as well as help me get settled in Puebla. Both Dra Sanchez and her student, Rocio, had conducted extensive fieldwork in the sites, and would be able to introduce me to a variety of informants and community members.⁴²

San Pedro

San Pedro, Puebla, located approximately forty-five minutes from the state capital of Puebla, is reached by first traveling by bus from the capital to *San Benito de los Lagos* and then by transferring in *San Benito de los Lagos* to a smaller, less modern short van. The van travels along the *San Benito de los Lagos*-Izucar de Matamoros highway, making stops along the way. Arrival to San Pedro is marked by the intersection of the main road, Reforma Zaragoza, in San Pedro with the highway, and by various stands on the North-East and South-East corners. A barbecue stand marks the South-East corner, where one of the research participants works, and a stand selling elaborately painted brick marks the North-East corner. Another restaurant stand specializing in roasted chicken is approximately ¼ of a mile ahead, where another research participant also works, both easily accessible to the hundreds of trailer trucks which pass along the recently paved *San Benito de los Lagos*-Izucar de Matamoros highway easing commerce between the southern region of Puebla and the capital.

Bound by fields devoted to horticulture and flowers and a ravine, the Barrancas de Cacahuat, San Pedro is populated by 1749 inhabitants, or 804 males and 945 females (INEGI, 2000). Of these residents, approximately 165 are youth ages 12-15, and 143 are between the ages of 15-17. Approximately 547, or 47% of the working population are listed as economically active, while 52% reported not being economically active. The majority of workers list

⁴² To protect the identities of my colleagues, I use pseudonyms.

agricultural production as their primary occupation (Manjarrez, 2006; INEGI, 2000).⁴³ Only 8% of the population has access to health services through formal employment.

While in San Pedro, I observed mixed housing, with homes receiving *migradollars* (remittances) noticeably more modern, usually made of concrete with linoleum floors, and separate spaces for sleeping, cooking and bathing.⁴⁴ Large covered patios with concrete floors have been constructed as well, most utilized when families invite relatives over for various events, including birthday parties, graduation parties, baptisms, and other events. These homes are usually hidden from sight behind high walls and a door, at which one must knock for entry. Other homes indicate a lack of *migradollars*, usually because the children are not old enough to immigrate, older children have sent little money back, and/or because the adult head of household does not participate in the immigration pipeline. These homes are noticeably poorer, with some homes possessing dirt floors, aluminum roofs, and made of cardboard. Animals may roam freely in and out of the rooms, and kitchens are usually spaces which have been set aside and outside, away from the main home. Stoves are constructed from cinderblocks, with fires lit and meals made on these open-range stoves.

Of 364 homes, approximately 34% of the homes have only two rooms including a kitchen. Approximately 45% use gas for cooking, while 52% use wood. While 55% of the homes have full plumbing, approximately 19% of homes have outhouses, or bathrooms that are separated from the main house. Almost all homes have electricity, with only 5% not having access to electricity. Slightly over half of the homes have refrigerators, or 58% reported having

⁴³ The Census reports most working in the primary sector, or in occupations dedicated to obtaining resources from nature. These occupations include agriculture, mining, hunting, fishing, extracting and *ganaderia*.

⁴⁴ Remittances which are sent home are stretched even further by the 3 x 1 program implemented by former Mexican President Fox. To encourage return investments, Fox designated one federal dollar to every one dollar that is remitted by an individual. State governments also contribute one dollar to families.

refrigerators, while only 10% have telephones. Most use a town telephone center owned by one family (INEGI, 2000). When someone calls for them, a signal is sounded to let families know that they have received a call (Manjarrez, 2006).

Education levels are also low in this community. The average level of schooling in San Pedro is 4.86 years of schooling, or less than the completion of primary school. Illiteracy rates range around 84%, with 54% of the population ages 15 and over either not having attended school and/or not completing elementary school. Approximately 28% of the population 15 and over completed primary schooling, and 16% possessed some level of secondary schooling, with 6.5% completing *secundaria*, or the United States equivalent of middle school. Roughly 3% of the population has some sort of post-high school instruction (INEGI, 2000).

Currently, approximately 300 youth attend elementary school and 65 attend the *telesecundaria*, averaging a total of 81% of eligible youth.⁴⁵ One can observe attrition at the *telesecundaria*, with the first year starting with approximately 32 students, the second year having 21 students, and only 12 students graduating in 2006, the year I attended their graduation. Of youth ages 6-14, 17% are not in school, while from ages 15-17, only 25.8%, or 37 youth attend school. Of the entire town, 32 people possessed some level of education beyond high school.

San Valentín

Like San Pedro, San Valentín is approximately 45 minutes from the state capital and requires travel by bus from the capital to *San Benito de los Lagos* and then a transfer once in *San*

⁴⁵ The *telesecundaria* was built only the previous year, and stands in a three room building, with two bathrooms and a computer lab and principal's office, off the highway. When I arrived to the *telesecundaria* on the first day, a class of students was outside, painting a map of Puebla on the external wall facing the highway. During graduation, the principal made a heated plea to present *municipio* officials that the school needed more investment so that they could lay down a concrete slab on which to hold recess. During that year, four computers had been stolen from the computer lab, effectively ending computer classes. Two years before they had begun the *secundaria*, but had held classes in town, in an old one-room building which had been turned into a sporadic public health center. Government officials would hold literacy classes and/or public health classes in the space.

Benito de los Lagos to a school bus. The school bus passes through several towns, including *San Francisco*, a town full of plant nurseries in which most of the town's flowers are sold, and many residents work. San Valentín also lies in south central Puebla, in a fertile part of the state. Its main industry is also agriculture, with the majority of its inhabitants dedicating themselves to the agriculture. Arrival to San Valentín is marked by the start of concrete homes, with the bus passing one interesting home in particular: an unfinished, vacant two-story home, with construction begun two years prior (Marroni, 2006). The bus eventually stops in the plaza, across from the church and a video arcade. On any given day, at least seven stray dogs would mull around the plaza area, sometimes catching shade underneath the parked buses.

Also bound by fields, San Valentín is home to 4,881 inhabitants, including 2,309 males and 2,572 females (INEGI, 2000). Approximately 1,302 residents are between the ages of 6 and 14, with 457 youth between the ages of 12 and 15 and 536 individuals ages 15-19 (Conteo de Poblacion y Vivienda, 2005). In characterizing employment and unemployment, the INEGI reported that 45% of the San Valentín population was employed, while 55% is unemployed. Approximately 74% of the unemployed population is either a student or homemaker.⁴⁶ Only 6% of the population has access to health services through employment (INEGI, 2000).

More small businesses exist in San Valentín than in San Pedro, including one Internet center, a video arcade, three restaurants, an English language school, and numerous *abarrotes*, or convenience stores. The small businesses however, held inconsistent hours, with few clients purchasing from them during the week, and the school for English classes was never open. San Valentín also boasts a library, and holds computing classes on a daily basis.

Homes in San Valentín were larger and more modern than the homes in San Pedro, but

⁴⁶ The Census places a lower age parameter of employment/unemployment at 12 years old, by reporting the % of the economically active population 12 and over due to student status.

also hidden behind large metal gates. The homes in San Valentín resembled compounds instead of homes, with street blocks comprised of differently colored gates, each gate covering a large width of space.

Of 913 homes, approximately 12% have only one room, 80% possessed two to five rooms, including an indoors kitchen (INEGI, 2000). Approximately 48% use gas for cooking, while 52% use other materials, such as wood. While the majority of the homes have full indoor plumbing, approximately 32% of homes have outhouses, or bathrooms that are separated from the main house. Almost all homes have electricity, with 9% not having access to electricity. A total of 58% of the households reported having all three: plumbing, drainage and electricity. Slightly over one quarter of the homes reported having refrigerators, or 26%, while only 13% have telephones. Approximately 21% of the households reported owning a car or truck, and 1% of the households had at least one computer (INEGI, 2000)

Education levels are also low in this community. The average level of schooling in San Valentín is 4.96 years of schooling, or less than the completion of primary school. Illiteracy rates range around 84%, with 43% of the population ages 15 and over either not having attended school and/or not completing elementary school. Approximately 37% of the population 15 and over completed *primaria*, and 18% possessed some level of schooling beyond *primaria*, with 11% completing *secundaria*, or the United States equivalent of middle school. Roughly 4% of the population has some type of post-high school instruction (INEGI, 2000).

San Valentín possesses one elementary school, two *secundarias*, and one *Bachiller*, or the United States equivalent of a high school that prepares students to continue their college studies. Currently, approximately 85% of youth ages six to fourteen attend school in San Valentín. Statistics are not available for the *secundarias* and *Bachiller*, but interviews with the

Director of the *Bachiller* revealed high levels of retention at the *Bachiller*. After a slow start, the *Bachiller* had a population of forty-five youth, with eighteen in the first level, fifteen in the second, and twelve in the third level. These higher rates of enrollment and retention in San Valentín may be related to a protective factor attributed to high school enrollment. Mexican immigrant youth who are enrolled in high school levels are less likely to immigrate before the age of eighteen, and may be more likely to continue onto university studies. The Director shared with me that one of the graduating students (out of twelve) sat for the university exams and was accepted for university studies.

It is important to also note that both communities are included in counties that are considered among those with the highest rates of immigration to the United States. CONAPO (2000) ranked San Luis Tlalapa and Coyotepec as having both very high and high intensity of immigration, with San Luis Tlalapa ranking within the top 162 Mexican counties exhibiting immigration to the United States (Marroni, 2002).

By selecting New York City and San Pedro and San Valentín as the three sites for the study, I centralized the phenomenon of non-school going within an immigration space in which sending and receiving communities differ by levels of development. Purposefully, I wanted this study to draw contrasts between the immigrants' pre-immigration and post-immigration lives. By exploring their lives as Mexican habitants, and then juxtaposing these against the adaptations which may accompany settlement in New York, as well as the elements which do not change, I am able to explore acts of transnationalism, cultural and social reproduction and life course theory as they occur across two differently structured settings.

This decision to conduct my study within and across two national contexts also has had consequences on data collection in both sites. Entering and spending time in the communities in

Puebla, I was able to share stories about New York with youth who had only received pictures and videos from their parents and siblings about New York City, but had never visited. Some of the youth had more extensive knowledge about New York City, as their parents had told them stories about living in New York, or return immigrants would regale them with stories of how it is in the *Gran Manzana*, or the Big Apple. I was asked, in some cases, to corroborate these stories, including whether or not females had more *libertad* or freedom, whether or not parents had more limited freedom, and whether or not different racial and ethnic groups were “good” or “bad.”

In New York City, my knowledge about communities in Mexico also served to break the ice between potential participants and myself. As Cornelius (1982) states, conducting fieldwork in the immigrants’ community (ies) of origin may help alleviate issues of distrust and fear among potential participants. Being able to identify at the very least, landmarks, such as cities, towns and *municipios*, and more specifically, families, friends and relatives, appears to increase the participants’ confidence in my authenticity as “good people,” and not *la migra*. In addition, social barriers seemed to be broken down with the sharing of these intimate details about the communities in which they exist, with study participants being pleased that a “North American professional” had visited and gotten to know their home community (Cornelius, 1982).

Entering the Sites

Conducting field research in unfamiliar sites requires the assistance of someone familiar with the research site, or the presence of a host (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973). In the case of my research in Puebla, I was introduced to both contexts by researchers who were intimate with the sites, but due to various circumstances including scheduling and availability, my introduction into one of the sites, San Pedro, was more comprehensive, which made a difference not only in

the number of interviews and observations I was able to conduct, but also the sense of being welcome and after time, feeling less and less like an outsider, but more like a friend to some of the community members.⁴⁷

Upon arrival to Puebla, my academic hosts planned days to take me to the communities. Sonia is an older, highly respected sociologist at one of the private universities in Puebla whose research focused on rural female Puebla immigration to New York and New Jersey. Rocio, now a Ph.D., was her doctoral candidate whose research also examined gender relations between generations of immigrants between rural Puebla and New York City. While Sonia introduced me to director of the local high school in San Valentín and a mother whose sons have immigrated to New York City, Rocio introduced me to the most respected family in San Pedro, a status obtained as a result of their historical ties to local political parties, their status as both a small-business owning family and a professional family, and their leadership in town politics.

The ease with which I was able to conduct my research differed in each local context, due to the sizes of the towns, as well as to how formalized my introduction was to key community members, as well as the visibility of my introduction. San Valentín reflected a longer history of immigration, and this was easily observable in the types of housing existing in the town, as well as the modernity of the infrastructure, including roads, the existence of small library, a high

⁴⁷ In Spring 2006, I made initial contact with Dra. Sonia Sanchez, seeking sponsorship from her and her university in obtaining a Fellowship committed to the exchange of scholarship on transnationalism between the United States and Mexico. Unfortunately, I was unable to procure the fellowship, but with other funds, I continued to plan to collect data in Puebla. Upon back and forth emails, including the exchange of research proposals and academic articles, Dra. Sanchez agreed to host and facilitate my stay in Puebla. Her assistant, Rocio Lara, was of great assistance, in assisting finding accommodations, and facilitating my entrée into Site 1, San Pedro. Dra. Sanchez, introduced me to Site 2, San Valentín, although my entrée into this site was not as concentrated. In San Pedro, Rocio introduced me to the host family, *la familia* Gonzalez, who have various sons and daughters residing in Queens and in Brooklyn, and for various reasons, enjoy great respect in the community. In site 2, Dra Sanchez introduced me to the principal of the *preparatoria*, and one woman whose sons are in New York City. This site has a more formalized form of government, and Dra Sanchez did not have as rich ties to potential gatekeepers in this community. My data collection in this site was not as rich, nor did I have a central place to check-in and out every day. This posed problems for data collection, in seeking participants, in conducting participant observations, as well as in providing me an overall level of comfort and security, which affected the ease with which I conducted observations and interviews.

school, etc. San Pedro showed signs of more recent immigration, with very few homes exhibiting outward signs of wealth accumulation and investment. In addition, I experienced different levels of community introduction. In San Pedro, the host family walked me around the town, pointing out the houses of potential participants, as well as potential participants in New York. The symbolic ‘adoption’ of me as being their charge while in the community provided me with a certain level of credibility among the parents of research participants, which facilitated obtaining their consent, as well as symbolic “protection” when walking around the town unaccompanied. This protection would turn out to be contested during the last days of my stay.⁴⁸

In New York City my fieldwork is also bound by the city boundaries, but is comprised of a greater population and geographic area. Whereas the bounded towns of San Pedro and San Valentín in Puebla had populations of 1,641, and 4,881, respectively, New York City population totals almost double the entire State of Puebla, at 8.2 million (New York City Government, 2005) and 5,630,713 (INEGI, 2000), respectively. Thus, *entrée* into communities in New York City, as conceptualized compared to my *entrée* in Puebla, was qualitatively different, resembling less the *entrée* associated with ethnographic studies, as I am not focusing on one single smaller community, but rather focusing on the individuals as they moved in and out of different communities, with the possibility that they do not belong to any one community as they do back home. In this sense, *entrée* into communities referred to *entrée* into places of recruitment in which speaking with the potential participants was a delicate endeavor. To this end, I recruited participants from public places, such as community based organizations, soccer fields, English

⁴⁸ During the final days of my data collection, several events occurred in which my presence as a stranger and an outsider in the community bore problems. I partly attribute the occurrences to the inability for me to establish my presence and trust in the community to the extent that I would have liked to, which would have required, I believe, a lengthy residence in the community with community hosts, rather than my rushed, short introduction and relative independence in the community. Additionally, I may have not fully considered issues of how the intersection of gender and nationality would physically manifest in the field.

classes, as well as in their workplaces. Sensitive to the concern employers may take if they see me speaking with their employees, as well as establishment owners may take if they view my speaking with their other patrons, and the subsequent actions which may be taken against the potential participants, when recruiting in workplaces or establishments, I recruited from places where I already have established trust, either as a loyal consumer/client, or patron, and I was as discreet as possible.⁴⁹ In these settings, I explained the research project, including the methods employed in and built trust with the potential participant with any potential gatekeepers or suspicious employers, establishment owners, etc. (See following section on recruiting and selection).

Thus, rather than the more geographic stability and familiarity I was able to achieve over time in Puebla, my entry into sites in New York extended to multiple sites and boroughs, in which establishing familiarity was more difficult, due to both my time availability and the sheer circumstances surrounding establishing trust in some of the sites in which one's presence is usually limited. In all sites, I continuously evaluated the relationships in the site, as well as established my credibility and construct and maintain relationships with the appropriate actors (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973).

Participant Recruiting and Selection

Selecting research participants reflected criteria-based selection, based on the explicit criteria mentioned in defining the population of interest: In New York, I recruited and screened undocumented Mexican youth to interview who fell into one of the three categories of non-school going youth, enrolled in English or other non-traditional types of schooling, including

⁴⁹ On August 10, 2007, the Bush Administration took an unusually stronger stance on cracking down on employers who employ undocumented youth. Announcing their employer policies and sanctions, the Bush Administration announced tougher enforcement of verifying employee social security numbers, with sanctions if employers do not comply (Moscoso, 2007). In addition, over the past several years, the number of employee arrests has increased sevenfold, from 500 in 2002 to 3600 in 2006 (Capps, et al., 2007).

trade classes, and enrolled in New York City high schools, including traditional high schools, alternative schools and Newcomer schools. In Puebla, seventeen research participants were screened along similar lines, but as they would exist prior immigration: expressing plans of immigration, with plans to either study once arriving in the United States or not. Due to the age-specificity of the population in question, the decreased likelihood of enrollment after age 12 and average age range of New York City high school students, as well as laws regarding compulsory education, the sample of participants will be between the ages of 13-19.⁵⁰ To account for possible differences in achievement between men and women (Smith, 2003), I sought a gender balance between men and women.

In New York, I relied on purposive and snowball sampling to identify research participants. Purposive sampling took several forms. In one form, I relied on my own personal impressions of who may be potential research participants, and I engaged them in Spanish conversation to discern whether or not they meet four criteria: age range, country/state of nativity, length of time in New York City and educational status.⁵¹

During the conversation, I revealed my origins of Mexican ancestry, as well as my role as a teacher who teaches and writes about Mexican youth immigration to New York City and is interested in helping Mexican youth go to school. I introduced myself as a teacher, or a *maestra*, who has taught English classes but who now teaches college students about Puerto

⁵⁰ New York City law places compulsory education until age 16 or 17, but free public schooling is legally provided until age 21 (NYSED, 2004).

⁵¹ Sampling undocumented immigrants may be a contested practice due to the 'danger' posed by outright identifying youth who are in the country unlawfully. (Chavez, 1982). I did not obtain citizenship status until interview. This was performed by asking them to tell me how they arrived to the United States and for them to tell me a bit about it. In introducing myself and the study, I emphasized my role as a teacher, and in wanting to learn about schooling and life in Mexico and then in New York. And lastly, in obtaining consent, I discussed the role of the Certificate of Confidentiality.

Ricans, Dominicans and Mexicans in New York.⁵² In my attempt to establish kinship, I offer that I spent my summer in Puebla and have been to Oaxaca, which almost always guarantees their question about my nativity. I shared that my grandparents were from Mexico, Guanajuato and Nuevo Leon, describing their immigration experiences, and then I revealed that I was born in Texas, but have lived here only five years. Finally, in the course of the conversation, I let the youth know that I would like to speak more in depth with them, and if we could set up time to do so, either establishing time and place then, or seeing if we can schedule some time in the future.

In the other form, I relied on trusted community and family members to identify potential participants and provide my introduction to them. For their help, I am greatly indebted. Over the course of this study, three young Mexicans who fell just outside of the age maximum helped me recruit, and in some cases, interview, youth who included their cousins and friends, whose lives are told in this study. In addition, I relied on my contacts with several Mexican human rights organizations in the Bronx and Brooklyn to make announcements, distribute flyers, and also identify potential participants who would qualify for my study. Through their established credibility, I was introduced to youth, and begin to establish my own relationships and credibility with them.

In Puebla, I also relied on various forms of recruitment. In both communities, I asked to speak to the classes about coming from New York, and I then asked the youth if they had ever thought about immigrating to New York. The class session tended to be a mix of my explaining my presence in their communities, followed by a Question and Answer session in which they asked me questions about New York and I asked them what they knew about New York and if

⁵² Early on I committed an error in identifying myself. The literal Spanish translation of researcher is *investigadora*, or someone who investigates. This label is affiliated with representatives of the government or police, which is apt to negatively impact my ability to speak with undocumented youth for fear of reporting. I quickly corrected this and am introducing myself now as a *maestra*, or a teacher, a label which the youth are familiar with and it invokes more positive images.

they had relatives or friends who had immigrated to New York. In San Pedro, I visited the middle school, and in San Valentín, I spoke to older *Bachiller* (high school) students. I passed around a sheet of paper so that students who had and were willing to speak with me could write their names, addresses and phone numbers. While in class few hands rose, upon passing a sign-up sheet around, youth signed up. After, I would spend many days going home to home, looking for the youth who had signed up, and then after the interviews, stopping by to see how they were and chatting awhile. This was more effective in San Pedro than in San Valentín, as the older youth were working, mostly in jobs that took them far outside of their home community.⁵³

A few of the youth in both communities did work, and I took the opportunity to go by their workplaces and observe them. Of concern, however, was the impression the youth and parents had of my role in the community, and after several weeks, I heard that some youth and parents thought that I was in the community because I could help them immigrate to the United States. During the interviews, I purposely cleared up these misconceptions, and upon visits, cleared it up with their parents. Some of the parents asked me if I knew about how they could obtain visas for their children, to whom I confessed I knew little about. Other parents asked if I could take items to their older children who lived in New York, including accompanying their grandchildren to join their parents in New York.

⁵³ Conducting data collection in San Valentín was more difficult for several reasons. For one, more families owned *ejidos* away from the town, and would leave the town during the day to work in the fields. San Pedro's families owned *ejidos* that were adjoined to the community and would either come home for an extended lunch, or arrive home earlier. Other families who were not land owners worked in San Francisco, a nearby town full of the plant nurseries which sold the flowers grown by San Valentín families. In addition, San Valentín is larger and more developed. The town possessed more signs of more mature immigration networks, with more newly constructed homes, an Internet Café, a library, a high school, and numerous small businesses, including restaurants and *abarrotes*. San Valentín showed less signs of life and intermingling of residents than San Pedro in public spaces, with little sign of life in the plaza at any time of day, and no sign of movement on the streets. Lastly, Dra. Sanchez also shared that the community of San Valentín had experienced an increase in international drug and human smuggling activity, one of the by-products of international migration. This may have led some to view me suspiciously, as my introduction in the community was done only at the school, and not effectively done throughout the community.

In addition, my community hosts helped to recruit youth to speak with me. Because the Gonzalez family owned a bakery which had video games in front of it, I could find many of the same young men playing video games every day after their work or during the day. In addition, the bakery was situated directly across the plaza, which would fill with mostly male youth every day after 5pm or so for pick-up games of soccer and basketball. On more than one occasion, Luz or Juanita would sit outside with me and identify who was thinking about immigrating. As soon as these youth would take a break and come to buy a soft drink, they would confirm their suspicions, and then ask the youth to speak with me. In some cases, we would set up times where I could go to their home, or because the bakery was spacious and the Gonzalez family was well-respected and trusted, as well as generous, they could come by to speak with me.

In San Valentín, because of the difficulties I had in finding youth during the day time, I solicited the assistance of one of the high school students to help me. She did not want to immigrate to the United States now, but maybe later, after she completed her studies—she wants to become a lawyer. Catarina is a responsible student who makes good grades, and is well liked by the principal. She helps her family during the day by taking orders for their package company.⁵⁴ Catarina also taught local religion classes to younger youth and had taken a liking to me. She would conduct three interviews for me, able to schedule time and speak with several students who were her friends.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Another business which has emerged with immigration has been Puebla-New York package delivery. Families can send items to their loved ones in New York for a mere \$70,000 pesos per kilo (Marroni, 2002). Mothers told me of homesick daughters who asked for homemade mole paste, as well as candies and other items from home. One mother told me of her daughter, who could not find all of the ingredients in New York to make mole paste. The mother went through the whole process of making mole paste with me, from collecting ingredients, then taking them to Chinquapin to be ground, and then mixed together at home. At the end, she would package up the mole paste in plastic containers, and sent them to her daughter, with money she had sent her.

⁵⁵ Although I conducted a mini-training session with Catarina on interviewing, the interviews, although full of information, did not include richer descriptions. The interviews sounded rushed, unnatural and rote.

Several scholars have discussed the challenges of conducting research with undocumented immigrants, but have been optimistic in overcoming these challenges (De Genova, 2002; Chavez, 1982). Current United States immigration laws have forced the silence and invisibility of undocumented individuals making sampling more difficult than with non-clandestine participants. Accurate or near accurate representation of citizenship is compromised, and fear of being identified inhibits recruitment and participation (Chavez, 1982). In addition, people who, according to law, are complicit (or are perceived as) in these immigrants' *unlawfulness*, especially employers, business owners, and landlords may also be suspicious of outsiders speaking to their workers in Spanish.⁵⁶ Due to the risk involved with undocumented immigrants speaking with any person who is conducting investigatory work, undocumented immigrants are less likely to engage in a lengthy interview process with a relative stranger.

These challenges did make the interviewing process difficult, with youth and their family members suspicious of my intentions. It usually took several tries and persuasion to obtain an interview, and in one interview, which took place at an indoor soccer field, the youth merely stopped coming to play after promising me that we would resume the interview the following week. Regardless, I did success in obtaining consent and participation but usually only after being allowed to speak at a community based organization, or through other individuals I met in my activism work. Finally, towards the end of my data collection, I relied on three Mexican students who fell just outside of my maximum age parameters but who knew several eligible youth.

Obtaining Consent

⁵⁶ On numerous occasions when I have engaged in dialogue with Mexican workers in Spanish, we have been interrupted by English-speaking staff who assumed that I am not being assisted by the Spanish-speaking employee, or perhaps want to interrupt/end dialogue between clients and workers.

There are multiple issues around obtaining consent from undocumented youth who may or may not be living with their parents or legal guardians, but are acting as adults. Per the regulations of the College's Institutional Review Board, I was able to argue that the signing of documents by undocumented youth would place their presence at risk, and thus significantly limit my ability to recruit participants. The IRB has allowed me to obtain verbal consent, in which I read the formal consent form to them, and then obtain their verbal consent, both taped. In addition, the Institutional Review Board made my approval conditional on the acquisition of a Certificate of Confidentiality, granted by the National Institutes of Health.⁵⁷

In spite of the procurement of formal, legal protection of the *data* in which the youth may identify themselves as undocumented, and the sharing of this information with them, I still faced challenges in obtaining consent to interview, and procuring accurate, truthful responses to the questions. In some cases, youth refused to answer particular questions they found sensitive, including who they lived with in New York, and the amounts of money they earned and/or sent home.

After noting their hesitation, even in the interview, and considering how my intrusion into their households and worksites would then make their relatives and/or roommates, as well as employers vulnerable, I abandoned plans to observe these youth in New York City. Notably, although meant to protect my participants, my understanding of the Certificate of Confidentiality leads me to believe that its primary concerns are with protecting the researcher and the data themselves from unlawful conduct, and only indirectly protecting the participant.

⁵⁷ Application and approval for the Certificate of Confidentiality required a letter penned by my advisor explaining and taking responsibility for my study. Application must be made to the proper division within the National Institutes of Health, which is, in this case, the Office of Adolescent Health initiatives. A copy of my IRB application was required in addition to the letter, with full detail of how I was protecting the identities of the study youth, and the data obtained. This process took approximately six months.

In approaching the youth, I sensed hesitation in their agreement to speak with me, but perhaps it is their loneliness in New York, their learned respect of *maestras*, instilled during their school days in Mexico (Levinson, 2001) which they bring to New York, or the kinship, fictive or not (Smith, 2003; Williams, 1996) that they may feel with me that leads to their agreement to sit down for a one and a half hour talk. Also notable is the gender relationship which oftentimes exists, which may also contribute to their willingness to speak, whether it be their perception of me as a mother or an older sister, or with others, as a romantic interest. On several occasions the latter role arose, and out of fear, I ended the interview. After this occurred several times, I relied more heavily on two male interviewers who assisted in the recruitment/approach, and interviews.

Stratification of Sample

To understand the reasons behind school entry and non-entry which may both be rooted in pre-immigration contexts and affected upon arrival into New York City, I ended up sampling fifty-three youth in two national contexts [18 in Puebla and 35 in New York]. I divided these youth into five subpopulations of approximately ten youth each, one reflecting the existing literature on immigrant school-going youth, but with special attention to the youth's unaccompanied and unauthorized status in New York City. Although at first I wanted to pay special attention to their rural origin youth, the sheer difficulty of recruiting this highly marginalized group of youth forced me to abandon those plans and I included urban youth. This proved to work well, as I could note how differences in origin were rendered insignificant in New York.

Whereas I originally set out to interview twenty youth who were situated in their pre-immigration context, in *San Pedro* and *San Valentin*, and thirty youth in the post-immigration context of New York City, in the end, only eighteen youth were interviewed in rural Mexico, and

thirty-five were interviewed in New York City.⁵⁸ Population A was comprised of eight pre-immigrant youth who were only interested in working, while Population B represented ten Mexican youth who were considering continuing their schooling once in New York, whether it be English classes or traditional schooling. Of this group, only three were considering traditional schooling, while the additional seven were interested in English classes only. Post-immigration, I divided the non-traditional school-goers into two groups: Population 1 included ten youth who did not drop into any sort of New York City educational classes, formal or informal, Population 2 was comprised of ten post-immigration youth who had taken non-formal educational structures, such as community-based organizations offering ESL classes. Lastly, the traditional school-goers, or Population 3, included fifteen youth who were currently enrolled in the formal New York City school system, all in high schools, while.

Data Collection Methods

To understand the significant processes and structures which may influence non-school going among undocumented Mexican immigrant youth, I employed two types of data collection methods: in-depth, semi-structured interviews and observations. In-depth semi-structured interviews included both pre-immigration youth and post-immigration youth, to note any changes which may occur with immigration, in terms of beliefs and practices focusing on schooling, as well as to note transnational practices, both foreseen and actual, which may impact their school entry.

Interviewing

⁵⁸ While I was in Puebla, I was able to conduct sixteen interviews. I left two interviews pending, and after several visits from Sonia and Rocio to New York City, we were able to identify two more potential interview candidates through their relatives in New York [whom Sonia and Rocio knew]. Rocio was able to conduct these two interviews for me and send them with Sonia on a return trip. In addition, due to the inability to conduct participant observations, I added five more traditional school-goers.

Interviews are of paramount importance in collecting data for case studies due to their ability, when conducted with appropriate techniques, to generate information about social phenomena, as well as provide insight into their meanings for people (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Weiss, 1994). By employing methods and questions that follow a semi-structured, yet focused pattern (Weiss, 1994), I was able to conduct more of a directed “conversation” about the Mexican youth’s life, including questions about his/her life in Mexico, prior to immigration, his participation in schooling, the labor market, and in his/her household, as well as his/her life as a Mexican immigrant in the United States, and about his/her process of immigration. More importantly, though, the youth will be able to share the meanings s/he has attached to these phenomena, and how these meanings have and continue to guide his/her life.

Because formal interviewing does not occur often, if at all, in their communities, interviews may seem inauthentic and cause awkwardness. The addition of a tape recorder appeared to make it more artificial, and in the eyes of the participant, potentially risky. To help ease anxiety, I explained all of the precautions I am taking against anyone else hearing the interview, and made sure that the participant selects a pseudonym in the interview, including the name of the town s/he hails from. Prior to the recorded interview, I made sure that I [and interviewers] wrote down the real hometown name, but on tape, we did not use names and/or used pseudonyms.

The interviews were approximately one to one and a half hours, and followed a semi-structured interview protocol.⁵⁹ I approached these interviews as conversations, following the protocol, but also pursuing comments the study participants made that illuminated the study. In New York, upon completion, I offered the youth information on local English classes, including

⁵⁹ For interview protocol, see Appendix 1

ones provided by Columbia University, as well as other social services available to immigrants in New York City.

In toto, fifty-three interviews were conducted, both in Mexico and New York. All of the interviews except for one, Julieta, were conducted in Spanish. A breakdown of the interviews is below:

Pre-Immigration Youth

Alejandro	San Valentin	Puebla	A
Jenni	San Pedro	Puebla	A
Judith	San Valentin	Puebla	A
Teresa	San Pedro	Puebla	A
Marco Antonio	San Pedro	Puebla	A
Clementina	San Valentin	Puebla	A
Alejandra	San Valentin	Puebla	A
Esmeralda	San Pedro	Puebla	A
Julio	San Pedro	Puebla	B
Concha	San Pedro	Puebla	B
Jorge	San Valentin	Puebla	B
Gregorio	San Valentin	Puebla	B
Esteban*	San Valentin	Puebla	B
Izel	San Pedro	Puebla	B
Kristian*	San Pedro	Puebla	B
Rosa*	San Pedro	Puebla	B
Milagros	San Pedro	Puebla	B
Erik	San Pedro	Puebla	B
*denotes interest	HS		

In New York City, I conducted a total of thirty-five interviews, twenty-nine males and six females. They are as follows:

Interview Participant	Group	State	Urban/Rural
Armando	1	Puebla	Rural
Samuel	1	Mexico	Urban
Julio	1	Guerrero	Rural
Manuel	1	Guerrero	Rural

Lazaro	1	Mexico	Urban
Felipe	1	Guerrero	Rural
Lalo	1	Puebla	Rural
Solomon	1	Distrito Federal	Urban
Marco	1	Guerrero	Rural
Hilaria	1	Puebla	Rural
Cesar	2	Distrito Federal	Urban
Diego	2	Oaxaca	Urban/Rural
Pedro	2	Guerrero	Rural
Jose Luis	2	Puebla	Rural
Gabriel	2	Mexico	Urban
Narciso	2	Puebla	Rural
Carolina	2	Puebla	Rural
Luis	2	Oaxaca	Urban/Rural
Teofilo	2	Puebla	Rural
Cuahtemoc	2	Puebla	Rural
Baltazar	3	Puebla	Rural
Jesus	3	Morelos	Rural
Julieta	3	Distrito Federal	Urban
Herminda	3	Puebla	Rural
Lisandro	3	Morelos	Rural
Miguel	3	Puebla	Urb/rural
Patricio	3	Puebla	Rural
Roberto	3	Puebla	Rural
Florinda	3	Puebla	Rural/Urban
Rey	3	Distrito Federal	Urban
Leonardo	3	Distrito Federal	Urban
Catarino	3	Michoacan	Urban
Antonio	3	Tlaxcala	Rural
Faustino	3	Oaxaca	Rural
Alicia	3	Morelos	Rural

Participant Observations and Observations

While any type of observation automatically disrupts the naturalness of an environment, participant observation suggests a more active role of the researcher and places direct responsibility on the researcher as not being a passive observer, but rather as being someone who actively engages and participates in the phenomena being studied. Engaging in both observations and more active participant observations, my activities have ranged in level of intrusion from quietly sitting at a table and taking notes while watching participants work to engaging in

lengthy conversations with the youth at their schools and in their homes, celebrating my 32nd birthday eating a mole dinner with a mother and female youth participant, and playing basketball with them in the plaza. In Puebla, in two bounded sites, in mixed gender company, this was significantly easier and safer.

Observations occurred in several settings in Puebla. In Puebla, both observations and participant observations occurred in various locations throughout each site, including in homes, at graduation and birthday celebrations, at their schools and at youth's work sites. I also was able to observe the youth in San Pedro, as they interacted with each other in the plaza, in front of Teofilo's home. In all, I conducted 33 observations and participant observations in various settings.

Town	Number of Observations	Average Length of Observations
San Valentin	11	4 hours
San Pedro	22	4-6 hours
Total	33	5 hours

Data Analysis

As a first level of data analysis, I transcribed each interview personally. During the transcriptions, I would stop and keep a log of themes and ideas that arose. My analytic strategy moved between the theoretical case of Mexican immigrant youth's school-going and non school-going in New York City and the individual empirical cases of each youth to gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon of schooling, labor market participation and social mobility in the lives of Mexican immigrant youth it relates to their transnational lives pre and post-

immigration, and across their continuous participation in two nation-states and their communities.

My analysis uses inductive, interactive and recursive processes to understand how transnational, life course and cultural and social reproduction theories may explain why these youth are not entering into New York City schools (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). While comparing information gleaned from each interview, I looked for general trends across the cases of the youth. To create themes, analysis of the data gathered in this study underwent recursive analysis, or a continuous ‘back and forth’ between the interviews and observation notes and the theories. This analysis engages inductive analysis, or the analysis of specific and concrete data to generate general explanations about social phenomena and deductive analysis, using ‘general explanatory statements’ to groups of specific items to create themes’ to create an interaction between data and theory, increasing the possibility of generating new theory which weaves these three theories together.

Because data analysis was recursive (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999), interview coding was ongoing, informing subsequent interviews. Due to the ongoing data collection and back and forth comparisons, themes shifted throughout data collection and analysis, as subsequent data informs past data and vice versa. Code revision was ongoing. Memoing occurred throughout data analysis to begin to bring together data in coherent clusters that will represent codes and their relationships to the study in order to answer research questions.

Finally, ongoing triangulation between the data collected from the different groups of youth informed each other and illuminated differences and similarities among groups.

Chapter 4: Intersections of Age and Social Institutions: Mexico and the United States

The shaping of one's life course occurs over time and space in dialectic with social institutions. Reflective of historical, political, social and economic changes, these social institutions then act upon individuals and vice versa, to shape understandings of the life course (Elder, 1974; Fussell, 2005). As Mexico and the United States have modernized at different rates, the life courses of Mexican immigrant youth and the age-appropriateness of particular activities and their interactions with particular social institutions and locations have all changed, not only with respect to the changes experienced in their home countries and communities, but also as a consequence of immigration. For example, while forty years ago, a rural Poblano teenager could be most likely found back home in Puebla, tending to fields, today, it is just as likely that a sixteen year old rural Poblano male is now a Mexican immigrant in New York, and can be observed returning home from restaurant work at midnight on the 1 train in New York City (Kershaw, 2010; Smith, 2006).

Additionally, one's class standing, as well as one's race, bears much influence over youth's understandings of their life courses and how youth are socialized into thinking about social mobility and what behaviors they should engage in at particular ages (Clausen, 1986; MacLeod, 1987; Hernandez Perez; 2007; Willis, 1977). For example, when asked about adolescence, several of the adult African American male respondents in Young's 2006 study reported that gang involvement was common for teenage males in their community (Young, 2006). Alternatively, in MacLeod's *Ain't No Makin' It*, most of the Clarendon Heights males in the study, White and African American, steer clear of discussions of college-going upon high school completion. Rather, when asked to predict what they envisioned themselves doing twenty years after high school, most answers ranged from the optimistic of "having a good job" to the pessimistic of "being in jail" (MacLeod, 1987). These responses, tied to life course categories,

are mediated by the material conditions currently available to the youth, and the range of opportunities they believe they have at their disposal. Whereas adolescence (neither childhood nor adulthood) is associated with gang involvement for Young's African American males, employment and/or prison is most associated with adulthood for MacLeod's working class white and African American males.

In this chapter, I discuss how the development of particular social institutions of schools, the labor market, and the family, both in the Mexico and the United States, may contribute to notions about age and life course categories over time, in their particular countries. Although I consider social institutions in the Mexico and the United States separately, I also consider particular changes brought on by globalization that have in some ways, entangled these two nation-states' social institutions, and shaped these Mexican youth's experiences and understandings of the life course. Lastly, I examine how these developments have/may impact the *class* of youth in question, youth most likely to immigrate in their teenage years, and Mexican youth who *have* immigrated during their teenage years.

Section I: Social Institutions, Class and the Life Course

Social institutions such as the school, labor market and family exist in dialectic with social, economic and political forces. These dialectics have led to their continual restructuring, and as a result, changes in their processes and outcomes. For Western nations at the beginning of the 21st century, these transformations have resulted in significant increases in nation's average years of schooling, delayed average age of entry into full-time employment, and delayed age of family leaving and family formation (Arnett, 2004; UNICEF, 2007). These changes have also corresponded to shifts in how the life course is conceptualized, including introduction of new life course categories, such as emerging adulthood, as well as redefining established life course

categories, such as childhood, adolescence and adulthood (Aries, 1967; Arnett, 2004).⁶⁰ Alternatively, while non-western countries have also seen their social institutions undergo changes, the outcomes have not been as dramatic as Western nations, especially in rural areas. In some cases, these countries' conceptualizations of the life course have been "borrowed" from the United States, including discussions of adolescence (Levinson, 2001; Mabry, 1985).

More recently, globalization has illuminated significant unevenness in the development of different nations' social institutions [ie availability, quality, etc.] and their production of inequitable life chances across, as well as within, their boundaries. Specifically, choices affecting rates of school-leaving and labor market entry, while supposedly constrained or liberated by individual choice, differ based on the material, institutional and cultural contexts in which youth and the social institutions of schools and the labor market, find themselves. Youth find their 'choices' conditioned by these contexts, acting upon what they perceive is available to them, as well as what they have been made to believe is appropriate for them. For example, currently, in most Western nations, including the United States, upper and middle class childhood, adolescence and young adulthood are largely associated with not only schooling, but high quality schooling, while middle and later adulthood is associated with professional work. In these post-industrial countries, among the middle and upper classes, children and adolescents enjoy mostly universal access to "good" schooling, from grades K-12, emerging adults are in college and adults are employed full-time and have left their parents' home, in most cases, forming their own households (Arnett, 2004). Alternatively, in rural, developing countries, youth average less than *secundaria* completion, must leave their home communities to find employment, and establish their households, some separate from their parents (Dreby, 2010; Sawyer, et al, 2009). Partially

⁶⁰ In Zelizer's *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Social Value of Children*, Zelizer (1985) makes the argument that between the 1870s to 1930s, the child became economically worthless and emotionally priceless.

based on their own individual resources, these choices are also functions of the unequal developments of educational systems and labor markets in these youth's contexts. Barring quality and differentiated curricula, in Western nations, youth are guaranteed K-12 schooling, and if they desire to continue to higher education, in most cases, they are able to access some type of educational institution, even in highly stratified systems.

In the case of recently arrived Mexican immigrant youth, however, these youth, as a result of living in globalizing, transnational communities, are participating in multiple, differently developed contexts, simultaneously and apart (Cornelius, et al, 2009; Levitt, 2001). Prior to their immigration, these youth are already living in communities that are being transformed not only by Mexico's formal participation in globalizing practices, but also by the immigrants who have left before them and have sent both economic and social remittances, and/or have returned back home. Rather, these local communities have experienced not only economic restructuring due to the government's commitment to modernization as well as individuals' remittance monies, but also social restructuring, due to processes of immigration as well as the ideas and other resources immigrants have either brought back with them or have sent back (Dreby, 2010; Hirsch, 2003; Levitt, 2001). For Mexican immigrant youth, though, the impacts of government and economic restructuring are complex. Whereas Mexico's modernization may be having positive effects for some, especially in terms of educational expansion, for others, the effects have not been as positive. Rather, for many of the poor, globalization policies have exacerbated conditions leading to their immigration (Fernandez-Kelly and Massey, 2007; Gutek, 2006; Fernandez-Kelley and Massey, 2007). Social restructuring may have introduced ideas of increased levels of educational attainment, but also of immigration at particular ages.

Conditioned by their class and age-based encounters with social institutions in their global-local Mexican communities, these youth arrive in the United States with preconceived understandings of social mobility, age-appropriate behaviors and their own life stage identifications. Once in the United States, they either continue on trajectories that were formed in relation to these original global-local contexts, or adjust to their new contexts in which opportunities, some not found in the prior context, may present new possibilities for their lives. Maintaining an earlier trajectory is, perhaps, easiest, as immigrant youth are surrounded by other immigrants, individuals, and messages that reinforce this pathway. Exploring pathways and opportunities specific to their new contexts that take them away from their preformed ideas is more challenging, as these territories remain relatively unexplored by their adult and same-aged immigrant family members.

In their new contexts, they also discover that, whereas their participation or absence from particular social institutions in Mexico may be “normal,” in New York City, their participation or absence from these same-named institutions may be abnormal and lead to differently perceived outcomes. Plainly said, what may be defined as a positive behavior, or successful in the youth’s home contexts in Mexico, may be considered almost catastrophic in New York City. In Mexico, while working full-time at age sixteen may define success, in post-industrial New York City this is largely a recipe for disaster, leading to a life of dead-end jobs and poverty. Alternatively, full-time schooling at age sixteen in Mexico is not nearly as frequent as in the United States.

These differences in youth school-going, labor market participation and interdependence in the family, however, did not merely emerge overnight in either context. The following discussion focuses on transformations occurring in the social institutions of the school, the labor market and the family, over time, in Mexico and the United States. While it appears that in their

early stages, these three institutions did not act in tandem, producing competing demands on youth, and as a result, competing expectations for similarly aged youth, over time, these three social institutions reformed, albeit at different rates to enable, for some, staggered participation. This, as illustrated, has occurred more rapidly for youth in the United States than in Mexico, and for urban youth rather than rural, regardless of locale. Again classed, however, simultaneous participation in all three social institutions appears to occur earlier for poorer youth, and later for wealthier ones (Clausen, 1986; Hernandez Perez, 2007). These transformations have also affected national and local definitions of life course categories, such as childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, as well as changes in understandings of the appropriate age at which transitions between these categories should occur, in Mexico and the United States.

The following section examines the development of the schools, the labor market and the family in both Mexico and the United States. In examining the development of schools and their effect on the life course, two issues are of utmost importance: the expansion of schooling to reach greater percentages of the population so that schooling up to a particular level becomes customary for all, and the establishment of compulsory education, or both the minimum and maximum ages at which youth are legally obligated to attend school. In the case of the labor market, the minimum age for youth participation in the labor market helps to shape ideas about the point in the life course where employment is acceptable – one point among many at which the dominant social institutions and individuals interact. Lastly, in an examination of the family, it is most important to note at what points in the life course separation from and in some cases, reunification with parents, as well as ages of family formation occur. Over time and place, we have observed changes in the relation between the life course and each of these social institutions. An examination of these phenomena follows.

How Schoolhouses Shape the Life Course: The Case of Mexico

Just as in the United States, Mexican school systems have been designed to maintain a highly stratified and unequal social order. Prior to the Spanish conquest, Mexican education was highly stratified, reflecting the castes of the hierarchical indigenous societies. For example, upper-caste Aztec youth were educated in the ways of astronomical calculation, calendar reading and ritual, while there is evidence of Mayan schools, educating Mayan priests and nobility (Gutek, 2006). After the Spanish colonization of Mexico, upper class males received classical training in arts and sciences, whereas upper class females were educated by nuns in convent schools (Gutek, 2006). Separate institutions were established for Indians, with the intent to convert Indians to Catholicism, teach the Spanish language, and rid them of their indigenous customs (Andrade de Herrera, 1996; Gutek, 2006). With the goal of assimilation, the Spaniards taught them rudimentary skills.

Three centuries later, after winning independence from Spain in 1821, the State and the Church fought for control of the national organization of education. By 1833, public education was controlled solely by the government and not the Church, but over the next 25 years, educational expansion for the middle classes and poor would be restricted.⁶¹ After several wars, during which plans for comprehensive, expanded education were forced into the background, education would become a constitutional right in Mexico. Then President Benito Juarez, himself an Indian from Oaxaca and a liberal reformer, led the charge to educational reform, first separating church and state, and then establishing education as secular, compulsory and free so

⁶¹ According to Gutek, 1833 ushered in a new era for education. The religious foundation of the University of Mexico was eliminated, and a government-created institution took its place, the federal General Directorate of Public Instruction. This institution was to regulate schools, teacher appointments, and the selection of textbooks. State governments were then charged to determine education in their own state boundaries. Between Mexican independence from Spain and the end of the U.S. Mexico war, and the subsequent ascendancy of Benito Juarez, education in Mexico would remain primarily for the Mexican elite.

that all youth could have access to Mexican schooling (Andrade de Herrera, 1996; Gutek, 2006; Levy and Bruhn, 2001). Interrupted by the War of Reform from 1861 to 1864, and then France's occupation of Mexico, these educational reforms would not be fully implemented until 1867.

In 1867, Benito Juarez would resume the presidency of the Republic of Mexico and during his administration, would finally implement his reforms that would continue to shape Mexican public education to this day: Basic Mexican education was to be free, obligatory, and non-religious (Andrade de Herrera; 1996; Gutek, 2006). Over the next ten years, *primaria* education would be expanded, but it would not be until the turn of the century that *primaria* instruction would emphasize critical thinking and attention to the holistic development of the child (Gutek, 2006)

Unfortunately, even under this single system of education, lower socioeconomic classes remained marginalized, marked by inequalities in expansion, as well as in curriculum and teacher assignment (Gutek, 2006). Many of the newly built *primarias* were located in urban centers, and due to locale, only upper and middle class youth had access to the schools. In an attempt to address the inaccessibility of schools for rural, predominantly indigenous Mexicans, by 1910, or at the start of the Mexican Revolution, then- President Diaz established rural schools to teach predominantly indigenous Mexicans how to speak, read and write Spanish and do basic mathematics. This separate form of schooling, the predecessor to Rural Education, was institutionalized into law by 1911.

Over the next seven years, however, Mexico was engaged in an internal revolution, and from this, an ideology of equal education and strong nationalism would emerge (Andrade Herrera, 1996; Gutek, 2006; Levinson, 2001). Under the leadership of President V. Carranza,

the Constitution of 1917 would reestablish the guiding principles for public education in Mexico, reinforcing its free and compulsory nature. Although the federal government mandated increased control over educational structure, organization and curriculum, they also set the fiscal contributions the federal, state, municipal and local governments would provide to support local schools. Attractive in theory, but not in practice, resources varied dramatically across and within states, with many local rural communities unable to build schools, hire and retain teachers, and even furnish their classrooms (Adan da Herrera, 1996; Gutek, 2006; Larroyo, 1986, Solana, et al, 1982). While some communities were able to construct schools, even if multi-age, the most impoverished rural communities remained without accessible schools for many more years. Such variations in resources continue to have consequences for today's educational outcomes.

Additionally, of significant importance to shaping the life course in Mexico, the Constitution of 1917 established the age limits for compulsory school attendance. Youth ages six through fourteen were mandated to attend schools, even if they were in multi-age/grade classrooms. Unfortunately, however, much like today, there was little enforcement to ensure youth's attendance (Gutek, 2006; Sawyer, et al, 2009).

By the early 1920s, organizational plans for the construction of and functioning of rural *primarias* were finally established, with teachers [missionary] selected to develop and instruct in these schools. With a focus on Spanish language instruction and skills best utilized in the local economies, these schools were meant to assimilate indigenous into Mexican identity, as well as enable their productivity in their local environs. By 1924, approximately a thousand rural schools existed (Adan de Herrera, 1996; Gutek, 2006). Additionally during this time, greater attention

was paid to the development of secondary studies, but a lengthier discussion follows after this section.

By the 1930s, greater emphasis was placed on school enrollment, and primary and secondary school enrollments experienced significant increases (Guttek, 2006; Vaughan, 1997). The SEP continued to oversee the construction and management of rural primary schools across the country, and by 1940, the federal SEP managed 12,561 rural *primarias*, and over 720,000 rural students (Vaughan, 1997). Between 1930 and 1940, *primaria* enrollment increased by over 100%, the percentage of youth between the ages of six and ten enrolled in *primaria* increasing from 30% in 1930 to 70% in 1940 (Vaughan, 1997).

Between 1940 and the end of the 1970s, Mexico saw significant increases in enrollment in urban areas and among the middle class, as the size of the urban middle class continued to grow. With such growth, educational reformers in urban areas renewed their call for increased emphasis and resources for secondary and higher education. Between this time period, Mexico witnessed over a 1000% increase in secondary enrollments, primarily in urban areas (Guttek, 2006; Levinson, 2001).

From the end of the 1950s to the start of 1980s, several presidents and education ministers led campaigns to improve overall *primaria* school coverage. These reforms included accelerating the construction of elementary schools, increasing the number of *primaria* teachers, and improving *primaria* teacher salaries and benefits. The Federal Education Law of 1973 specifically called for more successful inclusion of chronically marginalized populations, including indigenous youth in both in rural and urban areas (Estrada and LaBelle, 1981; Guttek, 2006; Ulua y Potter, 2008). By the mid 1970s, under President Lopez Portillo (1976-1982), more deliberate educational reforms were enacted to meet this call, including a federal free lunch and

breakfast program and improved teacher training.⁶² Abiding by economic restructuring conditions and modernization opportunities, at the end of the 1980s, President Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) enacted a new educational plan. This new plan, *El Plan de Modernización Educativa*, or the Education Modernization Plan, called for commitment to several major educational reforms including raising the general level of schooling for Mexicans, and improving the quality of education.⁶³ This plan would provide the blueprint for the 1992 ANMEB, or the first National Agreement on the Modernization of Basic Education, which would later be inserted into the 1993 *Ley General de Educación*, or General Education Law.⁶⁴ Of great significance in this agreement turned law, is its resolution regarding compulsory education. Whereas prior to 1992 compulsory education was only six years of schooling, or the completion of *primaria*, the 1993 law mandated that the length of compulsory education be nine years, or until the completion of *secundaria*. It is understood, however, that the law is largely symbolic. Weak enforcement of this law has resulted in high numbers of *secundaria* incompleteness, especially in rural areas (Gutek, 2006; Magazine and Ramirez Sanchez, 2007 ;Sawyer, et al, 2009).

⁶² Included in the educational reforms implemented during the Lopez Portillo administration which facilitated increased levels of school attendance at the level of *primaria* were reforms to teacher training, including the establishment of the UPN (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional) and the certification of community teachers, or youth who, with completion of *secundaria* education, were qualified to teach pre-school, *primaria*, and adult literacy courses in rural communities, additional funds for teachers who taught courses to school dropouts who wished to complete their educations, subsidies for rural communities and families whose own communities did not possess an elementary school so that families could send their children to other communities for schooling, and a free breakfast/lunch program (Alvarez Mendiola, 1994; Ulloa and Potter, 2008).

⁶³ In fact, by the 1990s, *primaria* school enrollment reached rates of approximately 90% (INEGI, 1970 a 2000).

⁶⁴ Ex-president Carlos Salinas de Gortari is credited for negotiating Mexico's role in the North American Free Trade Agreement. A staunch supporter of neoliberal policies, President Salinas de Gortari and his administration strongly supported economic globalization, privatization, and modernization. To support Mexico's transition to a globalized nation, Salinas de Gortari also supported educational reforms that are strongly associated with neoliberal economic policies including increased school privatization, as well as other modernization initiatives including expansion of *secundarias* in rural areas (Gutek, 2006).

Currently, *primaria* enrollment is near universal, with 97.9% of boys, and 98.6% of girls, ages 6 to 11 enrolled in *primarias*, and completion rates of over 90% for all children ages 6 to 11 (UNICEF, 2007; INEGI, 2005).⁶⁵ Some education scholars, however, point to regional [urban vs. rural], as well as class differences that are masked by national statistics (Muniz, 2001; Schmelkes, 2005). In fact, in rural areas, the completion rate for *primaria* is approximately one-seventh of the completion rates in urban areas, and in a local study of rural Oaxacan youth, Sawyer, et al (2009) found that rates of incomplete *primaria* in the local rural community for those fifteen years of age and older were four times higher than those of the national rates, 57.0% and 14.3% respectively. Among adults in rural areas, 69.5% possessed less than a primary education, while less than half, or 31.1% of adults in urban areas had incomplete primary educations (Bracho, 2000).⁶⁶ Alternatively, while 15.6% of the total urban population possessed some years in higher education, only 1.5% of the rural population possess some years of higher education (Bracho, 2000). When income deciles of youth's households within each region are considered, one sees even starker differences in school enrollment. *Primaria* youth whose households are in the highest income decile exhibit 100% school enrollment with 1.6 % of their youth earning money. This is contrasted with the lowest income decile, where not only are 4.4 % of youth ages 6-12 working to earn money, but only 91.8% of these youth are attending school, while 8.2% of these youth are out of school (Bracho, 2000).

Demonstrating the unevenness in development across states and communities within Mexico, as well as illuminating the severity of age and grade alignment or misalignment, an

⁶⁵ Rates of on-time *primaria* completion, however, are significantly less than universal. Schmelkes (2005) places "efficient terminal completion at 55%, with 18 out of every 100 students failing their first year of *primaria*. Each year, 700,000 students drop out of *primaria* (Schmelkes, 2005).

⁶⁶ Whereas data on adult levels of education may accurately capture the adult human capital in Mexico and in local communities, they may be bad predictors of the current human capital or predicted future capital of youth in Mexico and these same local communities. Due to modernization efforts in the last twenty years, youth's educational levels of attainment should be higher.

evaluation of PARE, a compensatory program in four of Mexico's highest poverty states, Chiapas, Hidalgo, Oaxaca and Guerrero, found that rural, indigenous youth exhibit higher rates of delayed *primaria* enrollment than urban youth (Munoz Izquierdo, et al, 2000). They also found that 35% of indigenous youth began *primaria* after the age of six (the minimum age of *primaria* enrollment) and over 57% of the youth were overage for the grade they were studying in. This is compared to over 33% of all youth in all states, across all stratum: urban, rural and indigenous, being overage for the grade they were studying in. Rather, in the four poorest states, two of which are high sending states to New York [Oaxaca and Guerrero], youth are twice more likely to be overage for their studies than youth in all in Mexico (Munoz Izquierdo, et al, 2000). Being overage for one's studies has implications, as previous research has shown, for eventual dropout before school completion (Lee and Burkam, 2003).

Lower Secundaria Studies

Lower *secundaria* participation is free of charge, and occurs from ages thirteen to fifteen, after completion of *primaria*. Similar to junior high school in the United States (Grades 7-9), *secundarias* were legally established in 1915 to provide the upper and middle classes with professional studies. Expanded in the 1920s, the National University would dictate a curriculum privileging the elite, but soon, the purpose of the *secundaria* was questioned. By 1923, the undersecretary of education suggested that not only would the *secundaria* provide *preparatoria* studies, but it would also act as an extension of *primaria* studies (Gutek, 2006; Levinson, 2001). It would not be until the presidential decree in 1925 that its focus on elite preparatory studies would end, and it would be three years later that then Secretariat of Public Education Moises Saenz created a separate Office of Secondary Education (Levinson, 1999)

As was previously mentioned, the emphasis of *secundaria* gradually shifted from professional studies to an extension of *primaria* studies. In doing this, the *secundaria* would extend the cultural and ideological objectives of *primaria*, while providing some content knowledge. The mission of *secundaria* transformed to “focus on the formative education of the character rather than the instruction of specialized knowledge,” but curriculum also kept an eye to training future workers (Gutek, 2006; Levinson, 1999). With respect to growing industrialization in Mexico, *secundarias* were increasingly charged with producing skilled workers, as well as producing rural teachers [as school coverage expanded into rural areas]. While instruction in the arts and sciences were joined by courses reflecting vocational pathways, the *secundaria* curriculum was deeply embedded in nationalist notions of integration and national unity (Levinson, 1999).

Initially, *secundarias* began primarily as an institution meant to educate the urban and professional classes. By the 1930s, however, *secundaria* instruction expanded beyond the elite, as *secundaria* enrollment increased, including more working class and peasants (Levinson, 2001).⁶⁷ With their locations in urban areas, however, *secundarias*, even after the 1940s, continued to be primarily oriented towards urban middle class aspirations (Gutek, 2006; Levinson, 2001). It would not be until the 1960s that *secundarias* were expanded into rural communities. Their expansion, however, would be accompanied by their curricular differentiation. Whereas all urban centers possessed *secundarias generales* (or general *secundarias*), *secundarias tecnicas* (technical *secundarias*) were built in large rural communities

⁶⁷ Influenced by Western [US] thought, Saenz may have conceptualized much of the *secundaria* model during his studies at Columbia University with John Dewey. Also an acolyte of G. Stanley Hall, his ideas about the *secundaria* reflected the needs of the emerging life course category of adolescence. Choosing to focus more on collectivity and cooperation, Saenz conceptualized the *secundaria* as a site for “creating the revolutionary subject.” Again, however, both Dewey and Hall’s ideas about child development were heavily classed, reflecting the material conditions and resources of the upper and middle classes.

or small provincial cities (Gutek, 2006; Levinson, 2001). Emphasizing vocational skills such as husbandry, farming, fishing, construction, etc., *secundarias tecnicas* provided a skilled labor force for their local communities, as well as for the Mexican elite and bourgeoisie.

Even with the introduction of *secundarias tecnicas*, national *secundaria* coverage was nowhere near universal. To meet this challenge, by the late 1960s the Mexican government installed *telesecundarias*, or distance-learning *secundarias*, in isolated rural and urban communities with fewer students. Still in widespread existence, *telesecundarias* were established so that rural schools could receive standardized, nationally broadcast lessons into each classroom through a television with instructors available to facilitate exercises and answer student questions (Uhler and Potter, 2008). Rather than teach the materials, instructors are responsible for assisting the students with their lessons, acting more as support to the national lessons than as main teachers. Upon completion of *telesecundaria*, students receive a regular *secundaria* certificate (Levinson, 2001; 36).⁶⁸

After experiencing significant increased levels of participation due to the innovations of the 1960s, universal levels of educational attainment neared only *primaria* completion by the early 1990s (Levinson, 2001). It would not be until the signing of the ANMEB and the authorization of the 1993 *Ley General de Educacion*, that lower *secundaria* completion (or nine years of schooling) would become compulsory. Part of a larger modernization plan coinciding with the start of the North American Free Trade Agreement, ANMEB and the *Ley General de Educacion* outlined plans to increase *secundaria* enrollment and raise levels of educational

⁶⁸ By employing *telesecundarias*, the Mexican government avoided higher costs associated with *secundaria* construction and the hiring of more qualified teachers. Youth who lived in isolated communities could now access *secundaria* curriculum more easily, but its quality, as well as the effects of not having live instruction were, and remain, questionable (Schmelkes, 2005). In absence of general *secundarias*, rural youth were and are effectively being excluded from schooling that would guarantee them a broader choice of educational pathways, including university studies (Levinson, 2001).

attainment, specifically among rural Mexican youth. Critics, however, believed that this would only reinforce educational disparities between urban and rural youth, as many rural communities would be unable to comply with such a law due to the absence of *secundarias* from their communities. Even if *secundarias* existed in their areas, however, the financial realities of many rural families prevented continued school-going beyond *primaria*. Many believe that rather than signifying a real effort to educate all Mexican youth, at least until the end of *secundaria*, this amendment was a symbol spearheaded by President Salinas de Gortari to mark Mexico's commitment to the economic development of the country. Coinciding with the start of the North American Free Trade Agreement, this law was meant to further exemplify the country's commitment to industrialization through increasing advanced, modernized education (Levinson, 2001).

Symbolic or not, this law formalized an association between *secundaria* studies and adolescence that had begun nearly sixty years before. Although unevenly enforced across urban and rural communities, *secundaria* schooling had long been considered the institution most widely associated with adolescence. From the start, national discourse characterizing the *secundaria* invoked the term “adolescent,” a life course category learned in the United States and imported to Mexico by Moises Saenz (Mabry, 1985). By the 1960s, educators constructed *secundaria* curriculum to facilitate the “integral” formation of adolescents that continues today (Meneses Morales, 1988). Contemporary analyses of discourse surrounding the *secundaria* and its curricula continue to suggest that the Western concept of adolescence, and particular meanings and practices associated with adolescence are still/more deeply intertwined with the ideology and practices of *secundaria* education. Since school curriculum, including *telesecundaria*, continues to be centralized in Mexico City and transmitted across the country,

even rural areas are exposed to Western, more modern ideas of adolescence which may be misaligned with their local realities. In these communities, then, the youth may be forming hybrid ideas about adolescence that are rooted both in Mexico City and in the material conditions of rural Mexico. This may even include the idea that adolescence is synonymous with school-going, even if the material conditions of the youth suggest otherwise. Intermixed with local educational traditions, however, definitions of adolescence have been customized to reflect the youth's realities and do not fully reflect Western notions of adolescence.

At the close of the 20th century, however, *secundaria* enrollment was approaching universal rates. By 2000, school enrollment rates of 13-15 year olds increased from 69% in 1990 to 77% in 2000 (INEGI, 2000). However, just as in rates of *primaria* enrollment, national data also mask local differences in *secundaria* enrollment. Various scholars find that vast differences continue to persist between urban and rural levels of *secundaria* enrollment. Challenging the notion that *secundaria* attendance and adolescence go hand in hand for all, data gathered from 1996 INEGI and ENIGH data show that for Mexican youth ages thirteen to fifteen in the four highest poverty states, Chiapas, Guerrero, Hidalgo and Oaxaca, *secundaria* attendance differs across household income deciles. For those youth who are in the lowest income decile and are household earners, only 26.9% were enrolled in *secundaria*. Alternatively, for those in the highest income decile, a full 88.9% were attending school (Bracho, 2000). Due to differences in attendance rates, for the poor, adolescence may not be as closely associated with *secundaria* attendance as for wealthier households. This is doubly true of Western notions of adolescence, as their absence from *secundaria* classrooms precludes them from being exposed to, at least in school, these globalizing curricula of adolescence.

Upper Secundaria: Bachilleratos and Preparatorias

Although Mexico exhibits close to 80% of lower *secundaria* enrollment, rates of continued schooling beyond this level drops off dramatically. In 2000, only 30% of the Mexican youth ages 15 to 17 were enrolled in upper *secundaria* (UNICEF, 2007). Also a consequence of limited upper *secundaria* expansion, it has been severely limited to predominantly urban areas. Additionally, education scholars agree that although the introduction and expansion of upper *secundarias* has expanded school participation to more youth ages 15-17 (thus extending the idea of school participation at these ages to more youth), the quality of this education is relatively poor (Uhler and Potter, 2008).

One could argue that the expansion of school coverage, at the levels of *primaria* and both lower and upper *secundaria* has been weakly associated with the introduction and expansion of life course categories in Mexico. Rather, life course categories, at least in the early years, may be defined by youth's relationship with schooling. The association between childhood and *primaria* school, however, may be weaker in Mexico than in the United States, due to the *primaria*'s five hour, or half-day schedules. *Primarias* schedules are divided into two *turnos*, or five hour programs: the morning and the afternoon (Gutek, 2006). As a strategy to ensure school and teacher coverage, these half-day school programs may actually lead to weaker associations between schooling and age-appropriateness and the life course category of childhood. While half of the day is devoted to school, the rest of the day is filled with other activities, including paid work, household chores, and/or play, possibly allowing other social institutions to compete with schooling for primary childhood association.

Whereas little discussion exists regarding about how *primarias* have assisted in constructing childhood in Mexico, more thought is devoted to how *secundarias* have been strictly associated with adolescence. Rather, whereas thought about *primaria* curricula focuses

on its quality, as well as its curricular focus on notions of citizenship and national identity (Gutek, 2006; Vaughan, 1997; Schmelkes, 2005), Mexican education reformers appeared to have paid special attention to integrating notions of adolescence into the *secundaria* curriculum.

Youth, however, may not be socialized into conceptualizing their life courses in these particular ways if they do not attend school, or have limited school attendance. Although parents are now legally liable for their children's school attendance or absence until grade 9, enforcement, especially in rural areas, remains quite lax. In addition, as mentioned before, critics of the ANMEB and *Ley General de Educacion* believed that these accords were only symbolic, as many rural and indigenous households would not be able to fully comply with these new laws (Levinson, 2001; Sawyer, et.al, 2009). To quiet critics, the Mexican government created compensatory programs to assist these households with costs not only associated with school-going, but also with the loss of youth labor. Further discussion of these programs exists in Section II of this chapter.

In the absence of schooling, the labor market and the family may then be the most responsible for socializing youth to conceptualize their life courses in particular ways. To understand youth labor in Mexico, and how it may influence Mexican youth's understandings of the life course, I now turn to the development of youth labor laws in Mexico.

Youth Labor in Mexico

In spite of different factions problematizing its place in modern Mexico, child labor has long been part of the sociocultural traditions of Mexico (Cos-Montiel, 2000).⁶⁹ First documentation of

⁶⁹ One could even argue that some of the poorest Mexican children are born into work. In his study of youth farmworkers in Culiacan, Sinaloa, Cos Montiel (2000) reported that it was hardly odd to observe pregnant women working in the fields, as well as women who brought their babies, only months old, with them into the fields. Babies are either left with a woman, the *mayordomo*, or steward, or even kept with them on their backs, wrapped in a *rebozo* (cloth). More recently, PRONJAG (National Program with Agricultural Workers) and UNICEF have collaborated to install nurseries in these worksites where women may leave their children with women who earn a similar wages to the farmworkers themselves.

its problematic nature came in the Mexican Liberal Party's 1906 political platform, calling for the "absolute prohibition of (the employment of) minor children under the age of fourteen." Little more would be mentioned for several years, and during the Mexican Revolution, youth labor included the use of youth soldiers in the armies. In general, however, it appears that child labor was tolerated for youth beginning as early as age nine.

Individual states began to pass youth labor reforms, albeit uneven, in their own territories. As years passed, ages of legal employment across states ranged from twelve to eighteen years, depending on the location of and the intensity and danger of the work tasks. Gender was also taken into account in legislation, with females legally allowed to work at later ages, and males allowed to work at younger ages. Special attention was paid to the size and strength of the particular youth in question.

The first code regulating youth labor appears just months prior to the start of the Revolution in the Mexican state of Yucatan (1910). In Article 147, the Yucatan Sanitary Code placed the lower limit of work at age 14, prohibiting employment of children less than fourteen years of age in workshops and factories. By 1915, however, this Article would be amended, allowing for differences in gender. In Article 74 of the Labor Law of Salvador Alvarado, the ages at which youth could legally engage in factory and workshop work were lowered to age thirteen for males, but increased to age fifteen for females (de Buen, 1980).

In 1913, the Jalisco state government passed Article 98 of the Sanitary Code. This code prohibited the employment of youth under the age of ten years in factories and only allowed youth eighteen years of age and older to engage in dangerous factory work (de Buen, 1980). Several years later, in Article 2 of the Labor Law of Manuel Aguirre Berlanga, the State of Jalisco established that youth under the age of nine could not work in agriculture. Between the

ages of nine and twelve, youth could be employed, but only in work “compatible with their age and development.” Lastly, in the State of Coahuila, Article 9 of the 1916 Labor Law Espinosa Mireles prohibited work by children under the age of twelve except in special instances (De Buen, 1980).

At the federal level, several articles were also legislated. In 1912, then President Madero signed Article 5 of the Police Regulations for Mining and Safety into law, prohibiting youth under the age of twelve from working in underground mines. For youth ages twelve to eighteen, their physical stature and strength would determine their work assignments. It would not be until the Constitution of 1917, however, that the federal constitution would specifically outline Mexican children’s labor rights for all youth. Regarded as a “fundamental document on social rights,” two sections, Sections II and III, in Article 123 (Worker’s Rights) of the Constitution explicitly outlined the conditions under which youth could and could not work. Minimum age for employment was placed at twelve years of age: youth under the age of twelve were not to be contracted to work.⁷⁰ In terms of conditions, dangerous work was and remains prohibited for youth under the age of sixteen. Additionally, youth between the ages of twelve and sixteen were only allowed to work a maximum of six hour a days, and if they were working in industrial and commercial establishments, they were not allowed to work beyond ten o’clock in the evening. Ultimately, the Federal Constitution still allowed states to continue to set their own guidelines regarding child labor, as long as they abided by Article 123. By 1931, the aforementioned provisions were absorbed into the Federal Labor Law of 1931.

By the 1960s, however, child labor reformers would successfully alter the conditions under which youth were allowed to work. The 1962 Federal Labor Law reforms increased

⁷⁰ Again, due to lax enforcement of labor law in Mexico, this did not end youth labor under the ages of twelve, but rather only unofficially sanctioned uncontracted youth work for youth under the ages of twelve.

minimum ages to work to age fourteen, and youth workers between the ages of fourteen and sixteen were subject to special vigilance, including periodic medical checkups. In addition, youth under the age of sixteen were not allowed to work in establishments that sold alcohol on site for immediate consumption, or that could negatively influence the youth's morality. Reinforcing prior legislation, the reforms of 1962 also prohibited employment in dangerous conditions, in employment that required underground or underwater activities, and in employment that could stunt the youth's normal physical, mental or emotional development. Total daily and weekly work hours were again regulated, with youth under the age of sixteen prohibited from working a) no more than six hours a day (which included one hour of rest), b) on Sundays, c) and overtime, and these youth were mandated to be granted eighteen work days of vacation a year. (de Buen, 1980). Perhaps most reflective of minor status attributed to youth under the age of eighteen, the reforms also required that youth obtain the written permission of their parents or legal guardians to work. In a sense then, one could argue that, according to law, youth between the ages of 14 and 18 experienced a very particular status, which although under the parents' supervision, allowed them participate meaningfully in another site separate from the school and family.

Current Youth labor in Mexico

In spite of reforms made in the last forty years, underage youth employment continues to be a serious issue in Mexico. An estimated 8 to 11 million children under the age of fourteen are employed in Mexico, and in 2005, over 3 million youth between the ages of five and fourteen were working under illegal conditions (Munoz Rios, 2005). Many of these young people can be found working in fields and factories. For youth under the ages of fourteen, the majority of youth working are employed in agricultural work (48%), followed by artisanal employment (20%),

informal commercial services (14%), and then domestic work (4%). In these employment sites, over 64% of the youth are not receiving wages (Munoz Rios, 2005).

It is not surprising that indigenous communities, which tend to be the most marginalized and poorest of all Mexican communities, demonstrate the highest rates of youth labor, double than the national average. The southern states of Chiapas, Puebla and Veracruz (all with significant indigenous populations), possess the highest rates of youth employment between the ages of six to fourteen years, between 22.4 and 29% of the youth in these states are employed full time. While poverty tops the list of reasons for youth employment, other reasons, such as school discrimination and abuse push youth from schools into the labor market (Munoz Rios, 2005; Yasukawa, 2005).

Cos Montiel (2000) points to globalization and its effects on Mexican agriculture as being one of the main reasons that underage youth labor remains a problem in Mexico. Between 1980 and 1997, agricultural exports have tripled, and with it, a demand for cheap, plentiful labor. As these agricultural exports have increased, several consequences have surfaced. For one, the agricultural market has transformed to meet export demands, and thus requires a larger (exploitative) labor pool. Secondly, in rural areas where families had previously relied on subsistence farming, poverty has increased and a greater demand for outside sources of income has increased. Lastly, more and more of the country's social services have become privatized, requiring individuals to shoulder more and more of the costs of basic services such as health and education, creating a further strain on poor families (Cos Montiel, 2000).

At the turn of the 21st century, SEDESOL estimated that just under a million youth were working in export farms, some of them as young as four years of age. Of those, 374,000 youth were between the ages of six and fourteen, and 526,000 were between the ages of 15 and 17. All

in all, youth comprised over 25% of the total agricultural export labor population (SEDESOL, 1999). Woefully undereducated, these youth exhibited high levels of school incompleteness and illiteracy. Whereas 64% of the youth over the age of 12 had not completed *primaria*, 40% of those between the ages of six and 14 did not know how to read or write (SEDESOL, 1999). Considered in combination with high levels of malnutrition, chronic exposure to agrochemicals, as well as physical labors incommensurate with their abilities, these youth's low levels of education are setting them up for a lifetime of marginalization.

Discussion now turns the development of these same institutions in the United States: to the school and the labor market, to understand how, in relation to these social institutions, the life course developed and is understood in the United States.

How Schoolhouses Shape the Life Course: The Case of the United States

In colonial times, education in the United States was the charge of parents and occurred privately, in the household. Alongside their parents, youth assisted and learned the vocation that they would most likely continue into their adult years. It was here that the "knowledge, practical experience and human worth that he was supposed to possess" were transmitted to children (Aries, 1962). Additionally, the church and the work site provided additional opportunities for youth to learn trades and a moral way of life. In the case of higher income youth, parents were also charged with their education and preparation for citizenry. Wealthy parents oftentimes hired private tutors to teach their children particular content knowledge, reading skills, etc. Regardless of class then, education (albeit differentiated) was the responsibility of the household, and youth spent the majority of their time alongside their family members, with no age separation. At this time, participation in activities was determined not by age, but more so by size and gender, as the tasks one would learn were more determined by strength (Aries, 1967; Tyack, 2001).

Where formal schools were available, citizens viewed these sites as providing *supplementary* training to youth, with households still entitled and able to transmit the bulk of necessary knowledge. As early as 1642, the Massachusetts General Court required parents to ensure their children's knowledge of the Commonwealth laws, religious tenets, as well as know how to read. By 1647, the "Old Deluder Satan" Act required that every town whose population exceeded fifty families possess a reading and writing instructor (Gutek, 2006). Few short-term formal schools, controlled and financed by locals, existed in northern British colonies. Here, schooling was provided for only ten to twelve weeks a year, parents' were charged fees for school enrollment, and males were preferred for school attendance (Tyack, 2001).

Although not specifically discussed in the United States Constitution, the Tenth Amendment's reserved powers clause designated education as a state responsibility. Reflecting the federal-state divide, Jefferson was one of the earliest advocates for state systems of education, beginning with Virginia, but he also saw the need to promote increased school expansion across states.⁷¹ Other advocates and states followed suit, but they suffered failure in the widespread opening of schools much as Jefferson had. In 1789, New England finally passed laws mandating towns to provide elementary school coverage, but weak enforcement led to the opening of few schools. A year later, New York State began its campaign to support local schooling, but monies soon ran out, effectively ending this campaign.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, radical changes in Northeastern settlement, population and technology created conditions for which common schools were more desirable. Increased urbanization and industrialization and increased Roman Catholic immigration prompted political leaders to develop and expand social institutions that could address these

⁷¹ Although advocating for more widespread schooling, Jefferson's plan was highly gendered and racialized. His plan called for only three years of schooling for females, enough to prepare them for marriage and motherhood, while excluding slaves altogether (Tyack, 2001).

changes and contain social ills emerging from such extreme changes and development (Lasonnde, 2005). In the absence of universal schools, independent charity schools emerged to treat problems arising from concentrated populations and poverty. Other local citizens, like the Quakers, shaped local schools to reflect their communities. Quakers created schooling to teach their children and other community youth their religious and social beliefs. Unregulated, these schools were developing inequitably, providing vastly different curricula and opportunities for youth.

Drawing attention to the lack of state regulation that enabled the creation of these unevenly developed educational opportunities and schools, educational reformer Horace Mann determined that, at least in Massachusetts, not only did school quality vary by community, but who attended school, and their length of schooling also varied. While wealthier youth not only attended school and enjoyed lengthy periods of schooling, poor children did not attend school at all (Tyack, 2001). Upon completion of his evaluation, Mann held a series of public meetings calling for the establishment of a common school, free of charge, to which rich and poor children alike could attend and learn a common body of knowledge to produce equal life chances (Tyack, 2001). Voluntary, high standards and quality would attract wealthy youth as well as poor youth to these schools. Unfortunately, in spite of its purported accessibility, many youth, including enslaved African American youth, could not and did not attend.

Power over school expansion remained a contentious struggle as some citizens resented government intervention into what they believed was the private decision of education, while many religious and libertarian Americans opposed state interference and the religious and political biases inherent in educational plans. By mid-nineteenth century, however, Mann's idea of a "common school" was finally federally legislated. Funded by local property taxes, common

schools were available free of charge to white youth. The schools became a vehicle through which common citizenship could be transmitted, and soon became tightly associated with the American ideals of democracy and equality. This would be a first step in establishing a social institution, separate from the family, in which youth, en masse, would receive an alternate socialization. Establishing the age appropriateness for participation, as well as legislating this participation, would soon follow.

Compulsory Education and Age

By the late 1800s, efforts to establish age parameters for school-going were underway. By 1874, the Children's Aid Society assisted New York State in passing a state compulsory education law requiring New York children between the ages of eight and fourteen to attend school at least fourteen weeks a year, of which eight would be consecutive. Tied to child labor, youth were required to show proof of fourteen weeks of school attendance prior to employment, with school officials charged with enforcing these rules at factories (Felt, 1965).⁷² Following suit, by 1879, seven other states had compulsory attendance education laws for youth under the age of twelve.

Legislation, however, did not quickly translate into compliance. Partially explained by the simultaneous expansion of the men's garment industry, by 1880, only 35% of New York's youth, between the ages of five and twenty-one, attended school (Felt, 1965). At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, only half of children ages five to seventeen were enrolled in school, and most received only between five and eight years of schooling, after which youth returned home to the family industry and/or household to assume responsibilities or enter into the labor market (Modell, 1989; Ravitch, 2001; Tyack, 2001).

⁷² Severely under-resourced, school officials were unable to enforce these requirements. Employers, more interested in profit than compliance, did little verification, and largely ignored these guidelines (Felt, 1965).

In the next decades, however, schooling enrollment expanded to accommodate increases in immigrant and children of immigrant populations.⁷³ Differentiated curricular tracks emerged, as upper class white students were prepared for continued education, while other youth, predominantly immigrant, children of immigrants and black were tracked into industrial and vocational programs, preparing them for the world of work: industrial, commercial and domestic. While schools were internally differentiated, levels of educational attainment were also differentiated by race, and/or immigrant group. In 1920 New York, for example, two-thirds of Southern Italian youth left school by the eighth grade while Anglo-Saxon Protestant youth were shown to exhibit higher levels of continued schooling.⁷⁴

The American High School

In addition to compulsory laws, the expansion of the universal high school influenced ideas about what constituted school completion, as well as the age and life course category at which this normally occurred (Gutek, 2006; Modell, 1989). In the 1870s, public monies were mandated to be used to open and support high schools, and by 1890, over 200,000 youth were enrolled in over 2,500 high schools (Gutek, 2006). Meeting the needs of a nation undergoing industrialization, high schools began to provide multiple curricula, including more advanced curricula, as well as vocational programs (Gutek, 2006; Tyack, 2001). Individual school administrators extended schooling with lengthier required attendance, and they also began to incorporate policies of age homogenization by grade, effectively creating strict boundaries around content/curricular knowledge, development and age. Increasingly, classes were organized

⁷³ In Chicago and New York City, approximately 2/3 of the student population had at least one foreign-father. Tyack (2001) also argues that black youth in the South were largely left out of educational expansion movements. For these youth, access to secondary schools did not occur until the middle of the 20th century.

⁷⁴ These Southern Italian youth were predominantly from rural backgrounds. In gendered terms, Tyack (2001) describes how family expectations determined their children's levels of schooling. A good son was one who, at age 15, began to accompany his father to work and earn money to provide the home. A bad child was one who continued to be idle, going to school and playing sports.

by curriculum, an average age, period of time, space, and end point at which transition to another level would occur, based on the similar conditions (Aries, 1962). In fact, Aries (1962) attributes the birth of the school class with influencing the differentiations between childhood and early adolescence, with elementary school known as the school for children, and gradually, the American high school became the “school for adolescents” (Guttek, 2006). In this way, schools structurally enforced the association of age separation and life course categories with expected skills and knowledge.

Establishing the upper parameter for school completion, by the 1920s, a small yet significant percentage of seventeen year olds were graduating from high school. By the 1920s, 17% of all seventeen year olds graduated from high school. Additionally, school districts such as Duluth, Minnesota were institutionalizing the structural changes to separate grades by age. Whereas in the 1920s, 25% and 36% of the sixteen year old males and females attending school in Duluth were grouped into a single grade, by the mid 1930s, these figures increased to 42% and 54%, respectively (Modell, 1989). These gains, however, were occurring disproportionately by race. By 1928, disaggregation of these rates by region and race showed that urban, native-born whites of native parentage continued to attain higher levels of education, while nonwhite youth exhibiting from two-thirds to less than one half of native levels of educational attainment.⁷⁵

These changes accompanied the passage of federal law mandating school attendance until age 16, as well as the prohibition of full-time youth employment. By the 1930s, youth were required to attend school full-time and prohibited from full-time labor, in or outside of the household until at least until the age of sixteen. School enrollment to the age of sixteen would

⁷⁵ Whereas in 1918, 38.7% and 8.2% of rural, white and non-white males, and 47.0% and 12.7% rural, white and nonwhite females completed at least one year of high school, by 1928, these figures increased to 51.4% and 13% for rural white and nonwhite males, and 59.7% and 20.8% for rural white and nonwhite females, respectively (Modell, 1989). Completion of one year of high school remained double the rate of high school graduation.

increase prior to World War II, as numbers of similarly aged (and younger) youth in the labor market declined. Osterman (1979) explains this phenomenon by drawing attention to the simultaneous labor market reforms and compulsory school legislation. Sensitive to a labor market that no longer needed child workers and were thus released from paid work, schools could absorb a liberated youth population.⁷⁶

Demonstrating the interdependence of the economy, the labor market and schooling, it has been proven that expanded schooling, along with high rates of adult (as well as youth) unemployment due to the Great Depression, can be credited with the increased rates of high school enrollment and completion by the 1930s (Modell, 1989; Osterman, 1979). Numbers of youth graduating from high school increased dramatically, and whereas age at school completion for males in the 1927 birth cohort was 17.8 years, for those born in 1937, average age at school completion was 19.0 years. The inability for youth to find employment, in addition to expanded school services underlies the higher levels of youth educational attainment in the United States.

By World War II, however, demands in manufacturing and increased work opportunities threatened these trends. Between the years of 1942 and 1943, for the first-time since the expansion of schooling, workers were showing lower levels of educational attainment. Modell (1989) argues that the expansion of the manufacturing industry led to increased rates of male school incompleteness; for example, in Duluth, Minnesota, war time saw an increase in male

⁷⁶ A close analysis, however, of school enrollment between the ages of fifteen and sixteen demonstrated, however, that school-leaving and work entry was delayed until age sixteen. Little simultaneous activity of school-going AND work was observed, but rather youth exited school to engage in labor market entry. In 1930, fifteen year old males exhibited rates of full-time school-going of nearly 80%, while nearly 10% engaged in both work and school, and nearly 10% were engaged in full-time employment. By age sixteen, school-enrollment dropped to less than 60%, whereas full-time employment increased to over 20% (Modell, 1989). Females showed similar trends of school-leaving, but instead of corresponding percentages showing up in full-time employment, more females' post-school-leaving behaviors were unknown (perhaps due to the lack of importance and reporting dedicated to domestic work). Whereas in 1930, 80% and approximately 5% of fifteen year old females were school-going and working, respectively, by age sixteen, only 60% and approximately 13% of females were school-going and working. For both ages, small percentages of females engaged both in school and work.

dropouts: $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ more males dropped out of school at ages 15 and 16 than had dropped out pre-war.

Currently, in New York State, the site of this study, compulsory education law requires youth to attend school until the age of sixteen, but the New York City Department of Education, provides free K-12 education until the age of twenty-one. The city established various schools to provide youth “second chances” to obtain a high school degree or general equivalency degree. To further facilitate the school completion of older students, several of these schools provide established schedules that may meet the needs of these older students who are most likely also working full-time. While not mandated, the availability of these opportunities relays two messages, albeit obliquely: one, that, at least up to age 21, if you are a New York City resident, you have the opportunity to obtain a high school degree, or equivalent, and two, at these older ages, individuals can engage in school AND work. Again, these messages are weakly transmitted, as knowledge of these schools and programs is not universally available.⁷⁷

As outlined in the previous section, school expansion and the development of compulsory school laws have over time, led to greater and lengthier school participation, as well as has expanded society’s understanding of minimum completed schooling. In addition, movements to group youth by age led to the development of age distinctions now considered natural, increasingly associated with the transmission and mastery of particular skills and knowledge. Rather, school expansion enjoyed a simultaneous, if not interdependent, influence on the creation and separation of youth life course categories, childhood and adolescence, as well as their

⁷⁷ This may warrant an entirely separate discussion on the complexity of the New York City school system, and the difficulties faced on a daily basis by not only first-time school-goers, but also second-chancers, including immigrant youth who may have recently arrived. Knowledge of these programs, although available on the internet, is not readily available and shared by alternative means. For a Spanish-speaking population with low levels of education and hardly if any experience with computers, such as recently arrived Mexican immigrant youth, information about high school and alternative education programs is hardly accessible.

numerical associations. As was suggested earlier, these educational reforms were intimately entwined with youth labor reforms. To demonstrate their interdependence, I now turn to a brief history of these reforms, and the gradual disappearance of youth in the labor market.

Youth Labor in the United States

In the United States' early history, work dominated youth's lives. In colonial America, child labor was a central economic strategy of households (Felt, 1965; Hindman, 2002; Zelizer, 1985). Youth labor was not only economically necessary for the household, but it also provided opportunities for youth to learn skills and lessons. Work provided valuable apprenticeship and lessons for adult life and was considered an "adult-oriented form of upbringing (Aries, 1962; Demos and Demos, 1969; Zelizer, 1985). There was no separation of work and education, and parents were responsible for providing the youth's moral, industrial and social education, by providing work tasks to be completed in the home (Hindman, 2002; Zelizer, 1985). Experiencing no age separation, youth worked alongside their parents, supporting the family's economic self-sufficiency in rural and agricultural work.

In the neediest of cases, youth were found to also work outside of the home. Some youth were hired out to do similar tasks on other households and farms, while an additional youth subgroup worked as indentured servants. Accommodating for these needy cases, the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1598 allowed for the apprenticeship of pauper children, and in Virginia, a 1646 statute sanctioned outside employment, stating that (outside) work was necessary for "the better educating of youth in honest and profitable trade" and "(it) manufactures as a way to avoid sloath and idleness wherewith such young children are easily corrupted" (Hindman, 2002).

By the mid 1800s, the United States was undergoing an industrial revolution, drawing adult workers to factories, mills, and mines. As waged work moved to these sites, youth followed their parents, and soon, youth filled occupational niches in factories, mills, large-scale farms and mines. Between 1870 and 1900, the number of children entering into the labor force increased by over a million children, with one-third of the youth age ten to thirteen, and younger working full-time. By 1900, approximately two million children between the ages of ten and fifteen, or one in every six children, were employed (Modell, 1989; Zelizer, 1985).⁷⁸

Simultaneously, child labor reformers were calling for the end of such practices. Recognizing that youth were occupied in hazardous working conditions, various interest groups including labor organizations, charities and legislators began efforts to reform child labor laws. Child labor reformers were engaging in state-level organizing, with different states introducing child labor reform legislation. In Massachusetts, as early as 1836, the Massachusetts legislature put forth one of the first statutes on child labor requiring three months education for youth factory workers (Zelizer, 1985). In 1853, New York State legislators also called for limits to child labor but faced defeat. By 1870, the Children's Aid Society of New York reintroduced legislation calling for a cap to the number of hours worked at sixty hours or less a week for youth under sixteen, as well as to require youth under the age of sixteen years to prove literacy skills, and to provide documentation certifying their school attendance for at least three months of that year (Felt, 1965). Lobbying the state legislature for four sessions, they were still unable to obtain passage. By 1886, however, youth labor reformers finally found success as New York State passed its first state factory act, placing restrictions on child labor (Felt, 1965). Other

⁷⁸ Separate statistics on adult and child laborers began in 1870. In 1900, the US Census reported over 1,750,178 youth between the ages of ten and fifteen were employed. This figure excluded, however, child laborers under ten, as well as children who either worked at home or accompanied their parents to factories for work, but who were not working full-time (Zelizer, 1985).

states followed suit, and between 1880 and 1920, nationally, child labor significantly dropped. Almost twenty-five years later, in 1909, forty-three states went further, establishing age fourteen as the minimum age and maximum number of daily and weekly working hours for full-time employment in manufacturing, as well as particular industries deemed dangerous and/or immoral, such as quarries, coal mines, etc. (Levine, 2003).

Child labor reformers faced unique challenges due to the economic realities facing the nation: additional labor was required in a country that was industrializing and expanding at rapid rates. For example, in New York City by 1880, at least 100, 000 youth between the ages of eight and sixteen were reported to be working (Felt, 1965). In this particular city, businesses such as the men's garment industry were expanding in the city and required more labor, and at this time children comprised a full 25% of the workforce. The passage and subsequent enforcement of child labor legislation, in addition to compulsory school laws, however, eventually had their effects. Nationally, by 1900, children comprised approximately 6% of the labor force, with 1.75 million youth, or one in five youth between ages ten to fifteen employed full-time.⁷⁹ By 1920, just over a million children between the ages of ten and fifteen remained employed full-time (Fisk, 2003; Levine, 2003; Zelizer, 1985).⁸⁰

Efforts to reform child labor laws, however, were largely rooted in class divisions. The assault on child labor was led predominantly by the white, middle class, while working class and immigrant families and their representatives staunchly defended the presence of their children in the work place, and their right to be in the labor market. In these families, child labor was both a

⁷⁹ Increasing mechanization encouraged even greater child employment, and after the Civil War, in the South, the loss of so many men in the war, as well as the necessity for rebuilding, had facilitated this trend (Levine, 2003).

⁸⁰ Tied to the school expansion movement, early incarnations of youth labor legislation included proof of schooling for factory workers. First in Massachusetts and then in New York, state legislation requiring proof of consecutive weeks of school-going for employment explicitly coupled child labor and schooling

household economic strategy and tradition and had become associated with *young* ages. For the working classes, youth labor was normal and commonplace, just as they regarded middle class youth absence from the labor market as something abnormal that was a signifier of laziness (Zelizer, 1985). Mostly middle class reformers condemned the acts of immigrant and working class parents, criticizing their “exploitation” of their children. Many reformers attributed these beliefs to the pathological values of foreign parents.

In addition to setting minimum age requirements and numbers of hours worked, youth labor reformers began to also monitor the conditions under which youth could labor. By 1904, the National Child Labor Committee sought not only to limit youth labor, but also to advocate for safer work conditions for the youth. Dickensian stories of child labor, including horrendous injuries to children, as well as death, led to increased inspection on work sites, but few resources translated into weak enforcement of regulations. In states and cities where youth worked in dangerous conditions, including in Pennsylvania mines, Baltimore canneries, Indiana glassblowing factories, New York factories, as well as in agricultural fields, calls for strict child labor regulation also existed. These calls marked the beginning of efforts to define youth-appropriate labor.

The agricultural industry, much like today, managed to ward off regulation. Powerful agricultural lobbying groups evaded child labor reform efforts, citing high costs, as well as the infringement on private agriculture-based family-child relations. In contrast to sweatshop work, which in child labor reform efforts was cast as immoral and dangerous, agricultural work continued to be characterized as noble and character-building. Its immunity from child labor reform, unsurprisingly, ultimately led to a higher influx of child labor. Due to the crackdown on

child labor in urban areas and industrial employment, greater numbers of needy youth sought agricultural positions for employment (Levine, 2003).

In spite of weak and uneven regulation, by the 1930s, numbers of children in the workplace had declined sharply. In addition to child labor reforms, various other factors converged to create this trend: increased immigration of unskilled adult workers, spikes in levels of adult unemployment due to the Great Depression, a greater need for skilled labor, technology, and of course compulsory education laws all acted to push youth out of the marketplace and into schools (Elder, 1974; Osterman, 1979; Tyack, 2001; Zelizer, 1985). By the 1930s, youth ages ten to thirteen working in nonagricultural occupations dropped to fewer than 30,000, and youth aged fifteen in the labor market dropped to 660,000. At age fifteen, the year before the end of obligatory schooling, only one in six and one in twelve of all males and females, age fifteen, were employed. By 1938, the federal government passed the Fair Labor Standard Act, legally prohibiting the employment of most youth under fourteen, and severely limiting the employment of youth under the age of 18 from work in hazardous conditions, including construction, mining, and operating motor vehicles (Zelizer, 1985). This law now legally separated youth from paid work until at least age fourteen, after which youth were gradually introduced into the labor market. Like compulsory school legislation and its association of childhood and adolescence and schooling, one could argue that the FLSA now structurally disassociated youth from labor, effectively creating a stronger association with labor and adulthood.

One could also attribute much of these shifts to the country's economic condition. The Great Depression had a significant effect on the limiting of child labor. As the pool of unemployed adults grew, efforts were taken to limit further youth participation in the labor market. Not only were Progressive reformers actively calling for legislation limiting child labor,

but, now, organized labor chimed their voices, so as to reduce the already inflated unemployed adult labor pool. Unable to secure employment, and with schooling offering guarantees of proportional economic reward per years spent in the classroom, youth stayed in school until graduation.

These trends would suffer a slight relapse, however, upon the end of World War II, as labor demands returned. After World War II, the country entered into a post-war production boom, and youth were once again needed in the labor market. Keenly aware of labor needs, legislators introduced legislation to relax child labor restrictions that had been enacted in previous years. By 1943, more sixteen and seventeen year olds were working full-time than before, with 35% of males between the ages of fourteen and seventeen working full-time and out of school. Younger and younger youth were lured back to the labor market and oftentimes were in violation of the FLSA, due to age and number of hours worked (Modell, 1989). In the name of national defense, courts narrowly interpreted child labor laws to enable youth return to the workplace, but employment sites were charged with providing safer work conditions for youth.

By the 1980s, after almost half a century of unchallenged economic expansion, the United States began to experience its first significant challenges to its economic prosperity since the Great Depression. In turn, these economic crises, as well as immigration and the legislation enacted to manage both, may explain the increased rates of youth labor from the 1980s to the end of the twentieth century. Specifically, the Reagan Administration not only weakened enforcement of the FLSA, but it also repealed particular restrictions on youth labor, including the assignment of housework. During the Reagan Administration, bans on housework (materials given to youth to assemble at home) were lifted, and instead this work would be regulated.

Resources to regulate, however, such as funds for worksite inspectors, have also been slashed in recent years (Levine, 2003).

Although they are no longer concentrated in factory and agricultural work, today's teens are twice more likely to work than they were in 1950, albeit part-time. Currently, between 5.5 and 6 million youth are working, part-time or full-time, although the number of teenage workers has declined in recent years (Levine, 2003; Sterrett, 2007). The most explicit difference, between then and now, of course, is the length of time spent in work versus time spent in school, as well as the types of industries youth are found in. Rather, today, a sub-sector of the labor market is recognized as a teenage niche, or comprised of jobs held, part-time, by school-going youth (Newman, 1999). This delicate balance can be attributed to social understandings about the division of work and school, reinforced by not only unlevel formal and informal enforcement of school-going, at least until age fourteen or so, but also to somewhat unlevel formal and informal enforcement of child labor restrictions.⁸¹ The Fair Labor Standards Act can be attributed to such changes. I now turn to a discussion of the FLSA and its development over the past seventy years to examine its impact on youth labor.

The Fair Labor Standards Act, then and now

Current child labor laws set age guidelines for youth employment, as well as the conditions under which youth may work. All children under the age of 12 are prohibited from all types of employment with the exception of few types of work including agricultural work, acting and newspaper delivery, to name a few. Under the age of eighteen, employment that prevents or interferes with K-12 school attendance (occurring during school hours or after certain hours) is

⁸¹ Although earlier in 2010, Bloomberg announced a task force to develop strategies to enforce school truancy, under his administration, funds to enforce truancy laws have been slashed. Beginning in fall 2010, a cornerstone of the "new" anti-truancy program includes assigning mentors to youth who have been identified as chronically truant by their schools.

prohibited, as well as work performed under hazardous physical and emotional conditions. More specifically, seventeen occupations are currently deemed too dangerous for sixteen and seventeen year olds, including jobs that required driving, mining, logging and slaughtering. Currently, due to the emergence of new occupations, labor officials are suggesting changes to the FLSA, as well as the disappearance of former occupations (Levine, 2003).

While the FLSA sets minimum guidelines for child labor, states are able to adopt stricter regulations on age, occupations, and maximum number of hours per week worked. Section 218 allows for stricter child labor codes as deemed appropriate by states. These codes usually differ by age at which youth may be first employed, as well as by the weekly and daily number of hours youth may work. Most states restrict first-time employment to age fourteen and further age-differentiate types of employment. While certain occupations require a minimum age of employment at age sixteen in general, more strenuous and dangerous jobs have set their minimum ages at eighteen.

Additionally, state laws restrict the number of hours youth may work on a weekly and daily basis. For youth ages seventeen and under, state laws specify maximum number of hours one may work a day and week, as well as set the times of day youth may work. Youth are allowed to work before and after school hours, up until a particular time of the evening. During vacation times, these requirements may be relaxed, but in most states, youth may not work over eight hour a day and forty hours a week when school is not in session, and three hours a day when school is in session. In twenty-eight states, work beyond 7pm is prohibited.⁸²

⁸² Restrictions on employment also differed by whether or not the employment was agricultural or nonagricultural. More lax labor rules were attributed to agricultural youth employment, with, in most cases, no maximum number of hours set. For 57% and 78% of states respectively, there are no maximum hours of agricultural employment set for fourteen to fifteen year olds and sixteen to seventeen year olds, respectively. In states that have established maximum hours, hours run as high as sixty hours a week for these age groups. Interestingly enough, while FLSA protects youth from working over eight hours a day in an air-conditioned office, it does not protect youth who work over eight hours a day picking fruit in the hot sun (Levine, 2003).

Lax Enforcement

Under current US federal guidelines, however, minors are not obliged to produce proof of age. The FLSA only requires employers to prove that they are complying with codes related to the number of hours worked and conditions in which the youth work. Different states possess different requirements for permission to work, with some states requiring employers to write letters including a detailed description of the duties required of the youth, as well as hours the youth will work, while other states have adopted stricter enforcement guidelines, with some states (MA) requiring letters from the school district superintendent to determine the child's welfare for work (Levine, 2003). While some states issue only one type of work permit with narrow guidelines for youth employment, other states, like New York, have created multiple work permits for youth in labor that are differentiated by conditions of employment, including number of hours required, etc. With lax enforcement, hiring youth without a work permit is a common practice across states. With insufficient enforcement, state and federal labor laws are easily violated (Levine, 2003).⁸³

Current Youth Labor in the United States

While many employers publicly denounce child labor, competition in the global as well as local marketplace force employers to seek strategies to lower their costs, including employing child labor and, although not a new practice by any means, undocumented immigrant labor. As of late, employers have found a way, perhaps to lower their costs even more; by hiring undocumented youth labor. For example, in 1988, Census data reported that 166, 000 youth age

⁸³ The most common violations of youth labor laws have been related to excessive work hours and undesirable work conditions. Between the 1983 and 1990, child labor violations increased by over 150%, with restaurants leading the type of employment in which the greatest number of violations occurred. According to GAO, in 1991, 55% of all federal child labor violations resulted in injuries and of these 55% were attributed to restaurant work (Levine, 2003). Today, the restaurant industry remains one of the top employers for youth, especially the youth who are the focus of this study: Mexican immigrant youth.

15 were employed in the construction industry either illegally due to age, or were working excessive hours (Levine, 2003). Approximately 4 million children and adolescents are now employed in the US labor market, more than in any other developed country (Levine, 2003). Over 2 million of these youth are working under conditions violating FLSA, including as underage workers, working in hazardous conditions (such as construction), earning below a minimum wage, or working excessive hours not allowed by law (Levine, 2003).⁸⁴

Postindustrial cities such as New York City have developed a growing service sector that has absorbed many of these youth workers. Among native-born workers and families, as single-parent homes have increased, adult unemployment has risen and wages have decreased among adult household heads. Youth workers have picked up the slack to replace disappearing household head incomes, and have become consumers themselves, using their money to pay for consumption costs increasingly associated with adolescence: educational expenses, cell phone use, transportation, clothes, food, entertainment, etc.⁸⁵ In the case of recently arrived Mexican immigrant youth who arrive in the US as early as twelve or thirteen, these youth, especially males, are also entering into the labor market, violating FLSA, as well as state regulations so as to support themselves, as well as their families back home in Mexico (Boehm, 2008). In an environment of lax labor law enforcement, whether it be for age or immigration status, employers are only too eager to hire these youth at lower wages, for more hours, and who can engage in more strenuous work than their older counterparts.

⁸⁴ Child labor laws have been increasingly weakened over the years. In 1991, in opposition to the Child Labor Amendments of 1991, assistant secretary of labor for employment sanctions, Gerard Scannell, opposed severe criminal sanctions for worksite violations leading to a minor's death or bodily harm. Rather, the assistant secretary advocated for civil penalties that would secure compliance from employers.

⁸⁵ In New York City, these costs will increase in the near future. MTA repealed free transportation to attend school.

In spite of lax labor law enforcement enabled by legislation already on the books, there is still consensus in the United States that youth should largely be absent from full-time labor until at least the age of eighteen, or high school graduation. Established by the Fair Labor Standards Act and reinforced by states, and employers, for the most part, it is still common practice that youth in the United States do not begin employment until age fourteen, and even then, only in types of employment and during hours which will not interfere with their school-going. Rather, work and school schedules are to be complementary. For the most part it is not until age eighteen, when most youth graduate from high school that work may interfere with school-going – something that is considered by many as voluntary and flexible. Thus, for many recently arrived Mexican youth entering into the labor market full-time, not only do they violate compulsory school and youth labor laws, but they also upset popular ideas in the United States about the age at which youth should participate in school and work. Rather, they pursue strategies about age and work formed back home in Mexico.

The Family in the United States

These changes in schooling and work have of course also taken their toll on the American family. Touched upon in the earlier sections of school and work, the family also underwent restructuring as a result of the intrusion of government into what were perceived earlier as family decisions. These changes have, over time, influenced the ways in which individuals experience their life courses. In colonial times, households were perceived as the main socializing unit. The birth of a child was celebrated not so much as the birth of a family addition, but for its worth as a future laborer [for the family's benefit], as well as security for the future care of the parents (Zelizer, 1985). Children were obligated to their parents, and “paid their parents back” at early

ages through their labor and wages earned. Additionally, youth and parents were not separated until older ages, if at all, with multigenerational families increasingly found residing together in the same dwelling, much like many of the Mexican families found in this study.⁸⁶

Family relationships, as they were formed in the United States' early history, underwent major threats from educational and child labor legislation. Family relationships had been structured on the premise that parents, not the State, decided the activities of their children, including what and where they should learn, and many opposed this assault on family autonomy, including former Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler (Zelizer, 1985). Whereas middle class parents were supporting these interventions guaranteeing responsibility-free childhoods (largely because they were not dependent on their children's earnings), immigrant and working class parents resented child labor regulation and compulsory education because it not only infringed on their rights as parents, but also restricted their reliance on their children's wages.

With youth no longer assisting at home, the family underwent significant restructuring. Previously, with children providing supplementary income, wives could remain at home and run the household. Once youth entered into school, working class wives were forced to enter into the labor market AND continue to run the household. Among working and lower class parents, the implementation and enforcement of compulsory schooling and child labor legislation reluctantly ended their daily reliance on their children for financial support. To avoid government reach, many families, in fact, lied about their children's ages so that they could continue their children's participation in the labor market (Zelizer, 1985). Others reluctantly shifted their financial reliance on their children for only emergencies, in times of family economic hardship (Modell,

⁸⁶ The Pew Research Center report, "The Return of the MultiGenerational Family Household" finds that, due to economic hardship attributed to the recession, United States families are returning to multigenerational residences (Pew Research Center, 2010).

1989).

Others also argued that changes to schooling and labor were a ploy to remove immigrant youth from family influence and shift immigrant youths' main ties from the family to the 'benign' school and state (Zelizer, 1985). Schooling would now be the main socializing agent, and could remove the negative influence of the family. Compulsory schooling provided an opportunity to free them from the uncouth and un-American ways of parents and assimilate them to the American way of life.

Class position further influenced the idea that adolescence was a separate life course category that was comprised primarily of dependence and consumption. Upper and middle class families were to treat adolescence as a particular life stage where parents dedicated money to develop idleness among their older children, providing money for clothes, recreation, etc. (Modell, 1989). By the 1950s, the idea of a separate youth culture among the middle classes, in which consumption was critical, was accepted. Teenagers became a targeted marketing group, and even teen magazines emerged during this time. *Seventeen* magazine, a fashion magazine targeting teenage female consumers, was born and developed during the 1940s (Massoni, 2006). One could argue then, with the ushering in of the teen as consumer, motivations for child labor changed as well. Whereas early child labor was meant to supplement the family economy, later child labor, among the upper and middle classes, would now enable individual consumerism. This era of early individual consumerism went hand in hand with an era in which economic security, after a period of economic uncertainty, had taken hold. This highly classed separate life course category would slowly trickle into the imaginations of the working and lower classes, if only in idea and not in practice.

Also classed, the Great Depression brought changes to families that continue to be observed today. By the 1930s, upon graduation from high school, older, upper middle and upper class youth experienced unprecedented unemployment for longer periods of time. In Massachusetts, almost a third of all males age nineteen were unemployed, as were 22% females. In Michigan, a higher proportion of youth than ever before were out of school and not looking for a job rather than out of school and seeking employment (Modell, 1989). With growing numbers of older youth out of school and out of the labor market, a period of complete idleness and parental dependence emerged for individuals lasting well into the early twenties (Modell, 1989; Zelizer, 1985). A 1936 survey of Maryland families revealed that in households in which the fathers held professional and/or technical occupations, parental dependence on children for supplementary income was less urgent, enabling this complete idleness.⁸⁷ One could argue then, during one's mid to late teens, particular economic conditions helped bring about a period of idleness for upper and middle class youth, the predecessor, perhaps of the dominant Western life course category of emerging adulthood.⁸⁸

Because of the hegemonic nature of upper and middle class practices, distinct youth cultures, via the institutional shifts, were forming. One could argue that while upper and middle class families were redefining mainstream life course categories that were dependent on possessing adequate amounts of resources, working class families had to resort to alternative strategies that strained their experiences of childhood and adolescence, and ruled out a post-adolescent period of idleness. By the years after World War II, however, there was no doubt that an age-stratified society had crystallized and was reflected primarily by age-graded school-going,

⁸⁷ Approximately 15% of youth whose parents were employed in professional or technical occupations reported having parents who depended on them economically (Bell, 1938).

⁸⁸ One could argue that this is one of the first indications of the life stage Arnett has named "emerging adulthood." After school completion, yet unemployed (and not looking) and still in the parents' households, youth are able to engage in this life stage while postponing and/or determining next steps.

an age-graded labor market, and as a result, the treatment of youth in families resulting in protected status for these youth.

Section II: The Effects of Globalization on the Lives of Mexican Immigrant Youth

Globalization: The Intersection of Social Institutions across borders

Globalization has been the most significant process that has influenced how youth experience their lives in the past thirty years (Katz, 2004). De-territorialization, free movement of goods and capital, increased competition, and accelerated spread of networks and knowledge across nation-state boundaries have impacted how youth shape and are shaped while they come of age. Not readily attributed to globalization, youth undertake strategies and practices in reaction to these global and local changes that impact how they will live their lives. Of course, the manner in which globalization has impacted these youth, including their schooling, employment experiences, as well as family structures differs by the particular class standing their country, their region, and their households within a larger global economic matrix. The status of one's country region and household, developed or developing, investor or invested in, dictates much in terms of the life chances that one may be able to expect by coming of age there.

In Mexico, global integration has had particular, recent effects on how youth come of age. The confluence of particular economic policies that has enabled the penetration of US [and other countries'] capital into Mexico appears to have brought about drastic changes into youth's lives. These social, political and economic forces converged to bring significant changes to Mexican households. Whereas some Mexican families have experienced social and economic benefits, other families, predominantly rural and poor families, disproportionately experienced drops in their household and income levels. Related changes in educational policies, as well as policies associated with immigration, have responded to these disruptions, as the State has

continued to promote Mexico's neoliberal modernization in spite of negative outcomes. In their own attempts to disrupt social reproduction and the cycle of poverty, youth have responded to such changes in multiple ways, including immigrating at young ages to the United States.

Several events linked to globalization have occurred within the last twenty years and have been significant in affecting how young people live their lives in Mexico and in the United States after immigration. Perhaps the most significant event, which has had trickle-down effects and that may explain subsequent policies affecting various social institutions including schools, the labor market and the family, was the ushering in of neoliberal economic policies. Perhaps most significantly embodied in NAFTA, this body of policies was meant to integrate Mexico into a global economy and lead to its modernization. Instead, however, many critics have attributed these policies to increased poverty in southern Mexico (Fernandez-Kelley and Massey, 2007). Neoliberal economic policies have not only abolished farming subsidies previously granted to farmers, but also raised prices on goods essential to farming. In effect, several policies have been enacted that have privileged not only U.S. agriculture-related exports, but also, larger Mexican farms. Effectively pushing southern farmers deeper into poverty, these policies devastated predominantly independent, southern farmers whose livelihood depended on their own subsistence farming. Without any other training or other types of employment in their communities, these farmers have been left with little recourse but to immigrate.

More directly related to youth, various educational reforms were also instituted in anticipation of NAFTA and to comply with the conditions for neoliberalization and modernization attached to these set of policies (Gutek; 2006; Levinson, 2001). For one, ANMEB, as well as compliance policies, were signed into laws, legally establishing the minimum age for school-leaving, or in other words, legally establishing a minimum level for

completed schooling. In light of the newly expanded laws regarding obligatory education, however, the educational system ran the risk of demand outweighing supply. ANMEB's increased decentralization of education in Mexico brought newfound powers to Mexican states, including perhaps most importantly for rural youth, the ability for the individual States to expand and construct schools as and where need was determined. Monies now accompanied decentralization so that States were not only authorized to meet these demands as they saw fit, but had the financial resources to do so. Lastly, in recognition that many families, in spite of the availability of schools, could not afford to send their children to schools, the Mexican government implemented a conditional cash transfer program to pay households to send their children to school. PROGRESA, now known as Oportunidades, has been cited as extending the years of educational attainment for many rural, as well as urban poor youth.⁸⁹

Following a model of "lifting all boats," NAFTA was meant to help modernize Mexico and integrate it into a competitive economic bloc with the United States and Canada. The demands of participation would mean that Mexico would need to be able to rely on a larger supply of skilled workers. Educational reforms were passed so as to create such a supply, and would be regarded as occurring in response to the conditions and needs created by NAFTA. While educational reforms have, for all intents and purposes, improved educational access and opportunity for many youth, including the youth in this study, other, unforeseeable effects, namely the economic ruin of sustenance farmers in southern Mexico, and as a result, increased

⁸⁹ Other policies in and impacting Mexican youth which may have emerged due to globalization and its "discontents" include responses to immigration from Mexico and the United States. While NAFTA eased restrictions around goods flowing across the border, more restrictive policies regulating the flow of human migrants from Mexico to the United States have resulted in militarization of the border. Intended to prevent unauthorized immigration to the United States, these policies have instead achieved unexpected results. Instead of engaging in circular migration, there is a larger percentage of unauthorized immigrants, including parents of Mexican youth, who have instead been forced to spend more time in the United States without returning, due to increased costs and risks associated with a more difficult crossing due to increased border militarization.

immigration to new destinations in the United States, have also impacted the lives of the youth in this study. In effect, NAFTA impacted social institutions in Mexico, which in turn, affected the lives of the youth of this study. A discussion of NAFTA's effects on various institutions, mainly education, follows below.

The Effects of Globalization in Mexico

The most recent and profound incarnation of economic, political and social integration between Mexico and the United States has been the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994. Preceded in 1986 by the signing of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) which removed barriers protecting Mexican domestic products, NAFTA was touted as a solution to Mexico's economic woes caused by the financial crises of the 1980s (Blecker and Esquivel, 2009; Fernandez-Kelley and Massey, 2007). Unfortunately, however, NAFTA was also yet another in a long history of Mexico-US policies that more severely reinforced the first world/developing world relationship that has long characterized the relationship of these neighboring countries: first world as investor, developing world as worker (Fernandez-Kelley and Massey, 2007). Although far from declaring NAFTA an astounding success or failure in Mexico, many agree that the economic reforms and restructuring, once touted as panaceas to diminish the social inequalities both within and across nation-states, have resulted in uneven outcomes: industrialization and development in some areas, reduced wages and higher unemployment in others. Whereas some regions of Mexico have emerged victorious, experiencing healthy economic expansion and development, mostly the industrialized North, other regions, mostly rural regions, have suffered from under/unemployment, a decline in wages, and an overall collapse of local economies (Fernandez-Kelley and Massey, 2007; Helper, et al,

2006; Scott, 2008)⁹⁰. Agricultural households actually experienced a fall in real wages of over 23% during the 1990s (Helper, et al, 2006).

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement and related structural reforms, rural southern Mexico dwellers whose livelihoods were largely dependent on agricultural subsistence farming have experienced severe economic penalties. For example, Article 27, passed in its original form shortly after the Mexican Revolution to redistribute land wealth among the poor, was repealed. As a result, many families who had engaged in subsistence agriculture on these lands for generations were now displaced by private owners who purchased these areas from the government. Additionally, NAFTA demanded the elimination of agricultural subsidies, including fertilizer, which enabled affordable agricultural production. Removal of these subsidies, then, has made subsistence farming too expensive to engage in and has forced farmers into unemployment and poverty. Of the subsidies that remained under PROCAMPO, or *Programa de Apoyos Directos al Campo*, only 48.2% of the cash subsidies reached farmers in the lowest fifty percent, while almost a quarter of the subsidies went to farmers in the highest decile (Cortes, 2005). Lastly, the deregulation of the agricultural market allowed heavily subsidized and mechanized-produced fruits, grains and vegetables from the United State to flood the agricultural market (McKinley, 2008). Lower production costs due to mechanized production and subsidies from the United States government allowed for these imported U.S. grains and fruits to be priced lower than the cost of home-grown agricultural foodstuffs. The importation of U.S.-grown fruits, grains and vegetables has now made it more difficult for local Mexican growers to compete in economic market. Many small farmers in Mexico have been pushed out of business and/or merely cannot afford even subsistence farming (McKinley, 2008).

⁹⁰ McKinley (2008) reports that southern Mexican farmers state that much of the \$1.8 billion in agricultural aid has gone to larger agricultural businesses in the North rather than local, independent farmers in the South.

Perhaps the most dramatic example highlighting the vulnerability of Mexican foodstuffs and small farmers in this economic project has been the lifting of tariffs on corn prices this past year. One of the final acts of the fourteen year transition to the North American, open market tariffs were lifted on corn, beans, sugar and milk from the United States and Canada (McKinley, 2008). The lifting of the tariffs enabled U.S. grown yellow and white corn to enter into the Mexican market at cheaper prices, and in addition to the end of agricultural subsidies, small, local farmers experienced the demise of their own small, local industries. Pushed out of occupations that, in many cases, have been conducted by their families for generations, these Mexican farmers have also not received assistance or training from the government which could have prepared them for a transition into other types of industries. With corn and bean production disproportionately located in southern Mexico, the negative effects have also been disproportionately experienced in the South.⁹¹

There is already evidence that NAFTA has had varied effects on the different nation-state partners. By 2000, six years after the inception of NAFTA, families in Mexico, especially small farming families, experienced disproportionate economic insecurity. This is partially explained by the Mexican government's weaker public income supports.⁹² Conditions of the trade agreements, including deregulation, the end of agricultural subsidies for smaller farmers, and the privatization of previously public lands have effectively lowered the incomes of predominantly agricultural producers. In spite of assertions to the contrary, alternative means of wage-earning, as well as training, have not been introduced into these areas rapidly enough to improve the livelihoods of the farmers and their households.

⁹¹ The lifting of tariffs on corn, as well as beans, is not only has economic implications but cultural implications as well. Corn or *maiz*, has been a symbol of indigenous and then Mexican nationalism—the entry of and dominance of foreign corn could be viewed not only as an economic but a cultural assault as well.

These negative impacts have occurred largely in southern Mexico, where small farmers have been disproportionately located. In fact, over half of all children ages 0-17 living in southern Mexico were poor (52.9%), compared to 11.2% of children in Northwest Mexico (INEGI, 2005). Left with little alternative, over the past twenty to thirty years, immigration from these non-traditional sending areas has increased. Imagining and actually immigrating as a means to escape poor economic and employment opportunities appears to be increasing in popularity among southern Mexicans. Not just imagined, poor Mexicans are experiencing the negative shocks of economic adjustments and have sought alternatives to remaining under/unemployed in Mexico.

This may be especially true for Mexican youth. In a study of Poblano youth in Puebla, over one-third of the youth ages 15-24 report intending to immigrate to the United States upon completion of high school (*secundaria*) (COESPO, 2009). These figures may be understood in the context of young people believing that few occupational opportunities exist in Mexico. In a survey of youth in various Latin American countries, over 65% of the Mexican youth surveyed reported believing that there are few employment opportunities for youth.

We cannot deny, however, that prior to leaving, youth are, to a certain point, experiencing longer lengths of time in schools than prior generations. These experiences undoubtedly have impacted the life courses of Mexican youth, including those preparing to immigrate. Again, partially a result of NAFTA, the expansion of both school coverage and length of time in school is further discussed below.

Schooling in Mexico

Another component of Mexico's modernization project was a series of educational reforms that would further expand education, both in years of attainment and percentage of coverage. From

1970 to 2000, the percentage of the Mexican population with a ninth grade education rose from 9% in 1970 to 41.4% in 1998, while post-secondary enrollment grew by 46% during the 1990s (Rolwing, 2006). Enrollment rates of 13-15 year olds increased from 69% in 1990 to 77% in 2000, and 16-17 year olds who had completed secondary school reached 61% (Helper, et al, 2006). These figures translated into increases in overall average levels of schooling between 2000 and 2004. Whereas in 2000 the average level of schooling for men and women age 15 and over was 7.7 and 7.1 respectively, by 2004, these levels had increased to 8.4 and 7.9, respectively.⁹³ Beyond obligatory schooling, however, gains were much less. Between 1990 and 2000, 19-20 year olds who had completed upper secondary (*preparatoria*, technical school and trade schools) changed from 22% to 29%. Scholars attribute these increases to educational reforms which included the expansion of obligatory education, decentralization of the educational system and subsequent expansion and new construction of schools, and the introduction of a conditional cash-transfer program that enabled poor Mexican households to send their children to school, up to the age of twenty-one.

To quiet skeptics who believed that ANMEB was merely a symbolic gesture, a concerted effort was made not only to decentralize the educational system, but to transfer certain decision-making powers to states and municipalities. Among the most important of these decision-making powers would be the construction of schools where they were deemed most needed. Prior to these changes, reasonable access [in terms of distance] to schools could be blamed for depressing the educational levels of Mexican youth, especially in rural areas (Schmelkes, 2005). Many communities, especially in rural areas, lacked both *primaria* and/or secondary schools, with the next closest schools far away (Helper, et al 2006; Schmelkes, 2007).

⁹³ Note, however, that even with increased average years of schooling, the average still has not reached completion of *secundaria*, or 9.0 years. Average rates still fall short, with significant numbers of youth still attaining even less than the average years of schooling.

Answering the call for increased school coverage, between 1990 and 2006, the construction of schools increased. At the primary level, most of the increase included the construction of *comunitaria* schools (multi-grade schools found in mostly isolated regions) and indigenous schools (Parker, et al, 2007). Increased infrastructure construction resulted in a national increase in student enrollment in these schools by 40%.

At the level of *secundaria*, expansion of satellite television-broadcast distance learning, or *telesecundarias* seemed to dominate *secundaria* school expansion. Whereas *telesecundarias* began in the 1960s, few were actually built until the 1990s. In fact, *telesecundaria* construction has comprised the majority of recent *secundaria* expansion efforts. Studies examining the effects of regional residence on educational attainment demonstrate that the expansion of *secundarias* has resulted in significant increases in educational attainment (Parker, et al, 2007). Approximately 20% of the Mexican *secundaria* population are now enrolled in *telesecundarias*.

Although *telesecundarias* have been a quick and relatively inexpensive solution to extend education in harder to access, rural areas, evaluations of the quality of instruction in *telesecundarias* have been inconclusive (Parker, et al, 2007). While studies have shown that *telesecundaria* student test scores have been lower than those enrolled in other secondary schools, these studies have not controlled for differences in regional levels of educational attainment (Parker, et al, 2007). Unmistakable, however, are pedagogical differences that exist between the types of *secundarias*. Although teachers were employed in these schools, students receive nationally broadcast lessons through the classroom television for approximately twenty minutes, after which teachers assist the students with their lessons, acting more as support to the national lessons than as main teachers.

Paying for Schooling in Mexico

In spite of expanded school coverage, other obstacles have prevented universal rates of school-going and lengthier attendance in school. With increased school coverage, one of several factors attributed to low levels of educational attainment in Mexico has been costs associated with obtaining an education. Although advertised as free, school participation is costly, and depending on the school attended, fees vary. Unlike the United States, families must pay numerous fees to enroll their children, including registration fees, building maintenance fees, class fees, etc (Sawyer, et al, 2009). At the high school level, or upper *secundaria*, greater costs accrue. For one, school attendance at the high school level is no longer free. Latapi (2006) puts semester costs at over \$2000 pesos a semester to attend *preparatoria*, including approximately \$1000 pesos in registration fees, \$150 pesos a week for materials, computer costs and other supplies, and transportation costs to travel to school from home.

To calm critics who claimed that rural and poor youth would be unable to pay the costs associated with extended schooling, President Zedillo (1994-2000) ushered in PROGRESA, a conditional anti-poverty social policy to improve the health and life chances of Mexican youth by ensuring their school-going, as well as the economic well-being of families (Parker, et al, 2007; Molyneux, 2007). This conditional cash-transfer program assists poor rural households with school costs, as well as with costs associated with lost labor.

With approximately half of the Mexican population labeled as living in poverty, and the majority of these living in rural areas (ECLAC, 2006), PROGRESA/Oportunidades began as an anti-poverty program targeting those living in extreme poverty. In 1999, approximately 40% of all rural families [2.6 million families] received PROGRESA payments, and by 2002, after its expansion to urban and semi-urban areas, approximately 4.2 million families were beneficiaries, of which 2.9 million were rural. In mid 2005, over 5 million households, or approximately a

quarter of Mexico's population, were beneficiaries (Gonzalez de la Rocha, 2003; Martinelli and Parker, 2006). Unfortunately, not all of the households in the poorest decile were reached. Rather, income and eligibility requirements vary, and only 48% and 43% of the poorest households were reached in the country.

Awarded to mothers, mothers are required to attend workshops, take their children for clinic visits, perform service work, and be available for home visits in return for their stipends. The payments themselves are determined by students' gender and grade level, rather than by household income level. For the school year 2008-2009, *primaria* students enrolled in their third year receive \$130 pesos a month, reaching double, or \$265 pesos a month during grade six⁹⁴. At the level of lower *secundaria*, a students' gender is taken into account when determining the amount of payment. Due to the higher dropout rates of females than males, females receive incrementally greater amounts of scholarship monies than males. At the first year of *secundaria*, households would receive \$385 pesos for every male enrolled, versus \$405 pesos for every female enrolled. By the third year of *secundaria*, these amounts reach \$430 pesos and \$495 pesos, respectively. At the high school level, scholarship payments increase once more. During the first year of upper *secundaria*, males may receive \$645 pesos a month, while females receive \$745 pesos a month. By the third (last) year of upper *secundaria*, males receive \$735 pesos a month, while females receive \$840 pesos a month.

Latapi's 2005 study, however, found that for many, PROGRESA/Oportunidades covered less than half of the lower *secundaria* costs, and even less of *preparatoria* costs. In fact, despite the assistance, households were still expected to contribute significant amounts of the household

⁹⁴ Households are eligible to receive PROGRESA/Oportunidades payments beginning the third year of *primaria*. In addition to monthly payments, households receive \$175 pesos at the beginning of every school year for school supplies for students grades 3-6 in *primaria* and \$90 at the start of the second semester of the school year, and \$330 pesos per household for each student in *secundaria* (SEDESOL, 2008). At upper *secundaria*, payments for school supplies occur only once at the beginning of the school year, and total \$330 pesos.

income to their children's schooling. While helpful, it may still be more expensive for households to send youth to school than to enter them into the labor market, especially if they are at higher earning ages. It is only plausible that older youth are able to earn wages many times the wages a younger child could earn. Households make this calculation and opt to keep older youth out of school.

In fact, PROGRESA/Oportunidades shows strong positive effects of the enrollment of younger youth in *primaria* and lower *secundaria*, but no effects on upper *secundaria* enrollment. These trends actually begin to decline after the first year of *secundaria*. Whereas there are high levels of enrollment during the first year of *secundaria*, subsequent years show lower levels of enrollment. At the upper *secundaria* level, enrollment of PROGRESA/Oportunidades eligible households drop to approximately 20% of the eligible school age population (Helper, et al, 2006).

Designed to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty, PROGRESA/Oportunidades is a program that encourages school-going as a means to obtain human capital to be exchanged for greater gains in the labor market. Currently, though debate exists about whether or not it creates a significant effect on the accumulation of human capital. Instead, some scholars perceive it as only a short-term fix, with economic capital provided to poor households as long as children are school-age (Latapi, 2005). Measures of effectiveness have focused more on school attendance rather than concrete skill acquisition, etc., and in households where former PROGRESA recipients were deemed ineligible due to higher incomes, parents have tended to remove their youth from schools rather contribute their own funds to continue their youth's school-going. This suggests that rather than adjusting attitudes about the values of education, households have valued PROGRESA for its immediate economic worth.

Although PROGRESA may improve chances for labor market participation by ensuring longer school attendance, and, by default, school certification, little is known about the actual skill acquisition and its transference into the local labor market.

Most importantly, however, researchers have found increased levels of educational attainment by 2004. Latapi (2005) attributed increased levels of educational attainment to PROGRESA/Oportunidades, but it is remiss not to also consider the simultaneous changes of increased levels of coverage. Rather the two factors together, the increased availability of schools and monies to afford enrollment may explain increased educational attainment levels at the lower secondary level as well as increased educational expectations. Latapi (2005), however, has found that in some communities, school construction and infrastructure is still insufficient to meet increased educational expectations.

As evaluations of PROGRESA/Oportunidades effectiveness continue, the ultimate test will be the ability for the higher levels of educational attainment to be exchanged for employment and social mobility that is attractive enough to prevent immigration. Two recent studies of social mobility in Mexico based on 2000 national data show that general odds of upward social mobility have fallen, class-based inequality of achievement has increased, and rigidity has risen. For children of farm workers, this means that farm worker children, if they extend their educations to at least high school completion, may not have significant access to formal, non-manual and technical employment. In an analysis of Oportunidades' first cohort of high school graduates, Janssen (2004) found that compared to non-scholarship recipients, scholarship recipients experienced only modest improvement in their labor market performance. Few had enrolled in university studies, while others remained unemployed⁹⁵. Compared with the

⁹⁵ Latapi (2005) believes that analyses of subsequent cohorts of Oportunidades recipients will find greater impacts. These subsequent cohorts are less poor and less physically and socially isolated. This analysis, however, suggests

lure of immigration, a deficient labor market and the inability of these youth to exchange their increased human capital for significant wages, the effects of PROGRESA may prove to be minimal in the long-term.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I outline the development of the three major fields in the two different contexts in which Mexican youth will participate: the school, the labor market and the family. In both contexts, class differences have influenced the types of participation individuals enjoyed, with significant outcomes for the different classes of individuals.

More recently, however, globalization and the ushering in of neoliberal policies have brought significant changes that affect the youth's lives. Economic as well as educational policies targeting increased educational levels for Mexican youth have had significant effects on not only the youth's households, but the youth themselves, setting the stage for their practices after immigration. Increased household insecurity intersects with limited increased years of school-going to influence the ways youth live and understand their lives, as well as plan for their futures. Their understandings of their families also influence these plans. Met with differently designed fields in the United States, upon immigration, the youth's ideas may or may not be challenged.

Chapter 5: Social and Economic Organization of Youth's Spaces: Mexico

In his analysis of early Italian immigrant behaviors, Shanin (1978) suggests that to understand immigrants, one must examine their origins. Increasing numbers of scholars are exploring immigrant home communities (in addition to their settled communities) to understand how they live their lives in their new settings. Following the trend of immigration research that first focused on adults, this trend has extended to understand the lives of immigrant youth as well, particularly in their former educational settings (Macias, 1990; Sawyer, et al., 2009; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995).

In addition, studies of cultural and social reproduction have long emphasized space to understand the lives of the individuals under study. As Fernandez-Kelley (1995) asserts, cultural and social capital are “toponomical” defined by physical vectors. She further states that people “derive their knowledge from the physical spaces where they live and they also anticipate that which is probable in their nearby environment.” Just as Alford, Jr. examines the lives of adult Black men living within the boundaries of Near West Side Chicago and MacLeod (1987) observes Black and White youth within specific spaces of Clarendon Heights, Ohio, Fernandez-Kelley also bounds the cultural and social reproduction for African American youth to the local space of Baltimore, Maryland.

In this study, however, the physical spaces in which the cultural and social reproduction of the youth occur are not set or confined to nation-state boundaries, but rather exist both as defined by the particular rules of the nation-states in which they are found as well as rules which are found across differently developed nation-states, as well as across multiple local communities. These local communities are differentially valued, however, and in fact, are organized by “geographies of power, in which locations may be imagined as existing along a

(linear) continuum, with different types of empowerment to be found at each” (Gardner, 1993, *Ibid*, 5). In the case of Mexican immigrant youth, they learn that although their home, local communities in Mexico are where personal and social identities are centered, these sites are also contexts of economic scarcity. In comparison, the receiving contexts in the United States (in this case, New York City) are associated with an abundance of labor and economic opportunities. Some Mexican youth learn of these geographies early in their lives, acting upon them as they reach their teenage years.

This chapter explores one pole in the youth’s continuum, the youth’s home contexts, and considers how these youth are socialized to understand the possibilities and opportunities available to them in these contexts. An examination of the youth’s home communities remains true to Bourdieu’s theories of cultural and social reproduction which privilege bounded home contexts to explain the development of individuals’ subsequent orientations and eventually, practices. In these bounded home contexts, the youth’s primary habitus is constructed through socialization occurring at the hands of their families and parents, and also by other pedagogic agents, in this case, the Mexican communities’ instruments of reproduction, the Mexican educational systems and labor market. According to Bourdieu, it is even under severe crises such as immigration, that this habitus (the primary habitus) will be formed here and remain unchanged, with strategies and practices in New York City structured by schemata learned through the experiences youth engaged in at home in both rural and urban Mexico.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ As discussed in Chapter 4, the most recent economic crises and NAFTA, as well as other economic policies have destabilized these long-time agrarian communities. In actuality, these communities have been in transition for at least the past twenty years, with adults no longer able to survive off their lands. Although long part of Mexico’s relationship with the United States and vice-versa, these communities began to experience strong outmigration within the last twenty years. As such, and like other Mexican communities, the entire economy is not dependent on remittances. Families still engage in farming and some individuals do stay and return to take over family businesses. Rather, one could argue that immigration competes with the traditional industries available to Mexicans. For rural youth, this is farm work. For urban youth, this is mostly working in a market or construction.

What is not evident at first glance is that these individuals, while physically residing in their home contexts, are participating in a larger transnational context and have the opportunity to disrupt social reproduction by becoming unskilled global workers.⁹⁷ Conditioned as such, they develop a primary habitus which may, at first glance, appear to socialize them to assume their parents' occupations as farmers, unskilled workers, and housewives, but in all actuality, prepare them to immigrate and continue to engage in (as well as not engage in) endeavors characteristic of global unskilled workers in a transnational social space. Some youth, however, manage to participate in new fields in the United States, and experience an "adjustment" to their primary habitus, taking them off path, as they may acquire new positions, however so slight, in the multiple fields they participate in. In a Bourdieuan sense, this also includes youth who enter into schooling in New York City, in both English classes and in traditional schooling.

In this chapter, I focus on the premigration contexts of Mexican youth immigrants, and the social and economic organization of their lives prior to immigration. I begin to argue that the social and economic organization of youth's lives in their premigration contexts illuminate how the youth's primary habitus is constructed according to interactions in their home communities, both rural and urban, in Mexico. Growing up in their local communities, the primary habitus of Mexican youth is informed by the characteristics of their households and communities, which – especially for rural youth – possess low levels of modernization and development. Additionally, their own families, many with at least one absentee parent due to death or otherwise, possess low levels of education and are economically strapped. The families' economic conditions impact the lives of the youth, including the levels of education they are able to secure, and determine

⁹⁷ Not a new concept, there has been vast scholarship discussing unskilled Mexican workers in a global economy (!), as well as the how working class youth become working class laborers (Bowles and Gintis, 1976; MacLeod, 1987; Willis, 1977). Little attention, however has been paid to this particular class of workers, Mexican youth, who become laborers prior to adulthood.

whether or not the youth engage in work to help maintain or improve the families' economic situation.

For most Mexican youth who immigrate unaccompanied, household needs dictate their labor and/or wage contributions at early ages. Costs associated with school-going prove to be costly and impose financial burdens on the households, burdens that parents and grandparents cannot maintain past the completion of *secundaria*. Youth also engage in informal and formal work at early ages to alleviate the household economic burden, by either contributing their own labor to the households, or by obtaining waged work and handing over their earnings to the household. At ages and for lengths of time rarely seen in the United States, the youth begin to work, either in the home or in the formal labor market.⁹⁸ Their participation in the labor market only intensifies after school "completion," either at the time of their dropping out or at completion of *secundaria*.

Also at early ages, youth learn that, in their local communities, formal schooling is an endeavor wrought with challenges that additionally provides few economic returns. Even if they wish to continue studying, most schools are not situated within a reasonable distance nor can the youth in question afford schooling without creating great hardship for their families. Confronted with significant obstacles, and with no tangible evidence of high returns for schooling in their communities, youth learn at early ages to disinvest their time in school, and invest their time in work.

Underpinning all of these conditions [early school exit, early entrance into the

⁹⁸ Levinson, et. al (2001) state that in educational studies, market and nonmarket work, such as housework, have not been granted equal status on their effects on educational attainment. This shortcoming has led to insufficient attention to the effect of work on girl's education. Magazine and Ramirez Sanchez (2007), however, differentiate housework from salaried work. According to Tlalcualpenos (study participants), domestic work such as housework and caring for family animals (no monies exchanged) was called *ayuda*, or help, whereas salaried work was '*trabajo*'.

informal/formal labor market] are ideas about the life course that the youth internalize. Rooted in regional and class differences, particular conceptualizations of the life course such as earlier work entry, unpaid and paid, as well as earlier school-leaving persist/exist in these youth's home communities that differ from those found in the mainstream United States. Youth learn how their life courses should be constructed in relation to the economic scarcity that impacts their families, their school-going and their labor market entry. Guided locale-particular understandings of age intertwined with class, youth learn and act upon these understandings to guide their participation [or lack of] in school, the labor market, and eventually, immigration that may not be considered available or appropriate to similarly aged, native-born youth in the United States.

Organization of the Chapter

This chapter is divided into two sections examining the lives of Mexican youth, rural and urban.⁹⁹ In each section, I discuss the communities from which the youth hail and their relationships with institutions and conditions found in these communities that may orient youth to leave school and enter into the workplace at early ages. By examining these relationships, as well as how the youth begin to base their readings of the world and their subsequent actions on these relationships, an understanding of the *raíces*, or roots of their practices begin to emerge.

Next, I turn to a more focused examination of the youth's individual and collective

⁹⁹ The separation of rural and urban youth is necessary in this study due to the differences in poverty found between regions. According to the World Bank, in Mexico, 28% and 57% of individuals living in rural communities were extremely and moderately poor, respectively. World Bank measures of poverty correspond to the SEDESOL's food and assets poverty lines. Whereas those categorized as extremely poor includes individuals whose income is below the SEDESOL food poverty line, moderately poor refers to those below SEDESOL's asset poverty line. Income strategies differ in each type of region, and higher numbers of indigenous Mexicans, comprising the extreme poor, are found in rural areas. Additionally, in comparison with the urban poor, the rural poor have less access to services to alleviate poverty. Alternatively, the rural poor may have stronger, local community ties enabling support during times of economic crises (World Bank, 2005).

experiences in the fields largely defined by national and local sites in Mexico.¹⁰⁰ Their experiences are examined in these fields as they interact with the social institutions found in these communities such as the economy, labor market, education, and families. I examine how these interactions shape the youth's lives and their understandings about their lives, including their ages, as well as their possibilities, particularly if they remain in these communities. Lastly, I explore the ways in which the youth act upon these understandings, especially with regards to continuing or discontinuing their formal studies, or pursuing an early entrance into the labor market. Finally, I draw conclusions from these two sections.

Immigration scholarship has long attributed reasons for immigration to “push” factors, or those largely economic and/or political conditions which cause adults to leave their home communities. In the cases of youth immigration studies however, youth have been oft referred to as “luggage,” as their own agency and reason have been ignored. Instead the effects of “push” and pull factors are discussed in relation to their parents’ motivations for immigration, not the youth’s. In the cases of most of these study youth, it has been their interpretation of sending community conditions and opportunities, not those of their parents that have led to their joining of the transnational labor queue. These readings – of their communities and the institutions in them – ultimately begin to open the youth’s minds to the multiple decisions they begin to make at young ages: whether to work, at what age to work, and in what industry to work; whether to and where to continue or discontinue their formal studies; and ultimately, whether or not to immigrate to the United States.

¹⁰⁰ In an era of globalization, and in the particular case of Mexico and the United States, several scholars argue that neither the educational nor the labor market fields in Mexico are purely bound by the Mexican nation-state and locales. Rather, in the case of Padilla (2006) in regards to the educational fields, and Rosas, among others including Magazine and Sanchez (2007) for labor market fields, it is argued that these fields are inextricably tied to the labor interests of the United States. Transnational fields of education have been institutionalized/formalized through the United States Department of Education via PROBEM, and as demonstrated by recent educational conferences (Civil Rights Project, 2010). Although formalized through the Bracero Program in 1942, authorized and unauthorized transnational labor market fields have long existed between the United States and Mexico (Rosas, 2006).

Section I: Rural Youth¹⁰¹

Sending Communities

Not only were the majority of the study youth born and raised in rural towns, these towns are found in one of three southern states: Puebla, Oaxaca, or Guerrero.¹⁰² Describing their towns as agricultural, the study youth described living in locales where only basic services existed. The youth hail from towns and communities that are “not modern,” with most streets unpaved, and utility coverage scarce and/or recent. Most youth learn at early ages that their towns are outside of representations of progress and opportunity.

Although rural communities in Mexico are experiencing modernization in recent years, there is a stark contrast between these youth’s home communities, and the communities that await them in New York City. I gained a greater appreciation for the stark differences between the youth’s lives pre and post migration during the course of my field work.¹⁰³

Visual evidence of the communities’ generational participation in agricultural and livestock industries was ubiquitous, with towns organized in ways to reflect their primary participation in agricultural industry. On more than one occasion during my fieldwork in rural Puebla, I found myself face to face with a crowd of loose chickens or a donkey loaded with wood walking down the streets. On the daily trips to either San Pedro or *San Valentin*, I would find myself wondering how the youth would adapt to the urban jungle of New York City after growing up in such

¹⁰¹ Various methods exist to distinguish between rural and urban areas. In WorldBank’s (2004) report on rural poverty in Mexico, two definitions are provided for consideration. INEGI defines rural as localities populated by less than 2,500 residents, and one provided by World Bank, which includes semi-urban locales with populations up to 15,000 residents.

¹⁰² According to CONAPO (2006), overall, urban Mexican migration exceeds rural Mexican migration to the United States, 44% vs. 56%. In New York City, however, the reverse is true; rural migration has exceeded urban migration.

¹⁰³ It is exactly the stark contrasts between the simplicity of their home communities and the chaos and concrete often found upon immigration to urban areas that leaves many immigrants longing for the wide open spaces back home, to which they hope to return permanently upon the end of their employment stints in the United States.

beautiful, vast open spaces. The contrast was particularly striking to me as I wrote field notes during one of my bus rides to San Pedro, Puebla.

When traveling through rural areas of Mexico, one is amazed by the beauty of the country's land, covered in rolling hills, snow-capped mountains in the distance, undisturbed by modernization. I can only imagine what one of these youth feels when they find themselves in New York after living their lives in these natural environments free of metal skyscrapers. Talk about culture shock. (Field Notes, June 26, 2006).

Typically, rural Mexican youth are arriving from communities which possessed few municipal and utility services (Massey, et. al; Sawyer, et al.,2009; World Bank, 2005). At best were basic services including electricity and telephones were provided, but in many cases, these services, including water filtration, had been installed only recently. Several of the youth discussed daily chores that included drawing waters from town wells on daily bases prior to their immigration.

The youth commented on their hometowns' recent developments with me during our interviews, recalling that some regions of their hometowns remained underdeveloped, while within the last twenty years, other amenities had arrived. While streets were still dirt roads in many areas, essential indicators of development such as potable, drinking water had only arrived recently.

Manuel: The streets are of dirt, normal, and just recently there is drinking water, there is electricity...

Las calles son así de tierra, normal, y ya apenas hay agua potable, electricidad...

Pedro: [And how were the streets?] They were made of dirt, well, electricity came like sixteen years ago...

[Y como eran las calles?] Eran de tierra, bueno...venia la electricidad como diez y seis años pasados...

The arrival of utilities in their hometowns did not go unnoticed by the youth, as they believed them to be hopeful signs of progress and modernization. Some youth were optimistic about these additions and described their communities in an active sense, as changing and modernizing. Reflective of both Mexico's increased economic and social modernization in

recent years, as a result of government funds and remittance monies, the youth perceived these changes as steps towards their hometowns' development. If on a road to progress, perhaps these towns could provide opportunities that would prevent youth from leaving. One opportunity that seemed to delay the youth's leaving, as well as extend the number of years that they attended school in Mexico was the recent expansion and construction of schools in the communities, both *secundarias* and *Bachillers*. With such developments, the youth were able to extend their own levels of educational attainment more easily. As a result of these particular additions, the youth expressed optimism about the progress these schools represented.

Esteban, a sixteen year old premigration male who had just passed to his second year at the *Bachiller* in *San Valentin* was one such youth, who although had contemplated immigration after completing *secundaria*, opted to stay in his hometown and attend the recently opened *Bachiller*. He planned to complete his *Bachiller* studies and, because he liked and was proficient at math and science, either planned to study at a university in Puebla to become a mechanical engineer, or immigrate. He described his community as growing, with improved services matching the town's growth.

Esteban: Eh, well it has changed, well, since I was young, like it was before. (How was it before?) Now, the streets weren't there, the streets, they were not paved, they just began to pick up trash, since about four years (ago). Also, the opening of my high school, well, the town is growing, before it was smaller, and now it is larger...

Eh, pues ha cambiado desde que yo tenía, bueno, desde que yo era chico, como era antes...(Y como era antes?) Ahorita, las calles no estaban, las calles no estaban pavimentadas, casi apenas empezaron a levantar basura, lleve como cuatro años. También, el abrimiento de mi *Bachiller*. Hay, está creciendo (el pueblo), antes era mas pequeña, y ya está más grande...

Carolina also provided interpretations of the changes in her hometown, including the recent construction and opening of a *secundaria* in her community, as symbols of progress. She believed that San Pedro was growing, with plans for more modernization in the future that would include providing higher levels of education for the town's youth.

Carolina: So then, San Pedro is now in the process of progress, it is growing, it is, actually, San Pedro already has a *secundaria*, that before, did not exist, and hopefully, that they can have a high school in the future.

Entonces San Pedro ahorita está en el proceso de progreso, está creciendo, está actualmente, San Pedro ya cuenta ya con una escuela *secundaria*, que anteriormente, no existía, y ojala, que pueden tener una *preparatoria* en el futuro.”

Arguably, hometown communities’ modernization, especially in the case of the construction of schools, delayed, or in Esteban’s case, prevented, immigration. As seen in the cases of Esteban and Carolina, the youth interpreted the constructions of a *secundaria* and a *Bachiller* as progress, with the youth remaining in their hometowns and continuing their formal schooling. It has also been well documented that remittance monies have sparked the creation of jobs in hometowns, including construction jobs (Meyers, 2002; Orozco, 2002). Such observable developments may actually improve the youth’s assessments of their futures in their hometowns.

However, other rural youth grew pessimistic about the pace of development of their towns and assessed what their futures would be like if they remained in these towns. Their communities’ signs of modernization were insufficient to convince youth that by remaining in their hometowns’ they would find desirable opportunities for employment or improve of their families’/own lots. Amenities such as (somewhat) universal running water and electricity had only recently arrived in these towns, or had not yet arrived by the time the youth had departed. Surrounded by few resources and even fewer opportunities, the youth believed there was too scarce hope and opportunity in their towns, too little to remain. By their early teenage years, the youth began to assess the viability (or lack thereof) of their hometowns’ and their futures in them.

Felipe left Cuartzo, Guerrero when he was fifteen years old and now, three years later, found himself working full-time in New York City. He described his hometown as bereft of resources, with only a few houses and few signs of development, with few people left in the

town. A chicken-egg quandary, he had been unsure as to what had come first: the neglect of his hometown, or immigration. While he attributed the absence of inhabitants to the condition of the town, its ghost-like nature could also be attributed to immigration.

Felipe: Well, the town looks sad, it looks fallen, there is no noise, nor cars, nothing, nothing like that, just sad.

Felipe: Pues, el pueblo se ve triste, se ve callado, no hay ruido, ni de carros, ni nada, nada de eso, así, como triste...

Luis was a seventeen year old dishwasher in New York City from Huajuampa, Oaxaca. Working full-time since he was eleven years old, he left Mexico at the age of fourteen and was now working full-time and was enrolled in English as a Second Language classes. He also discussed the rudimentary services he had left behind in his small town. During his early teenage years, he associated his hometown's low level of development with his inability to envision himself growing into adulthood there.

Luis: No, there (in Huajuampa), we count with the necessary, the basics only, that, you know, water services, the necessities, the basic, with that is what we count on until now, it has been only six or seven years ago, I don't remember if it was even more before, there was not any of that. And because of that, the why, that I changed [moved] over here. Well I said no, that here, I do not have a future.

No, allá contamos con lo necesario, la básica no mas, que este, tu sabes, servicios de agua, el necesario, lo básico, con eso es que contamos allá hasta hora, hace que serán unos seis, siete años, no recuerdo que mucho antes todavía, eso no había. Y por eso, el porqué, que yo me hizo cambiarme por acá. Pues dije no, que aquí, no tengo futuro.

Beginning at young ages, rural Mexican youth are aware that their communities are underdeveloped. This sense of underdevelopment begins to provide the youth with a sense of hopelessness about prospects in their hometowns. Observing desertion and a lack of investment in their hometowns, the youth yearn to go elsewhere, somewhere with abundance where they may have more fruitful futures.

It would be remiss not to mention the presence of indigenous populations in the youth's communities. Although none of the study youth I interviewed self-reported as indigenous, many

of the communities from which the youth were from included indigenous populations. Rural communities whose populations include significant indigenous populations exhibit even higher indices of marginalization (Schmelkes, 2000). Herminda, a nineteen year old female who was now in her last year at Manhattan Comprehensive High School, described a small, marginalized indigenous population who lived in San Pedro. While they are registered members of the town, they do not receive services and resided in unincorporated settlements.

Herminda: There are some, like five percent, who some, do not even understand practically anything of Spanish, I don't know if you saw it, they still speak the Nahuatl language, who are excluded from the society, they live in the outskirts of San Pedro...these people live far away from the fields, where they are around the fields...there are not a lot of people living there, there are people living there without electricity, and without potable water, um, they live from what is there, they are people who are basically very excluded from San Pedro, very excluded, but they are registered there in San Pedro...

Herminda: Hay algunos, como cinco por ciento, que algunos, ya ósea, ni entienden prácticamente nada de español, no sé si viste eso, hablan todavía, es el idioma náhuatl, que están excluidos de la sociedad, viven en las afueras de San Pedro, esa gente viven muy afuera del campo, donde están al redor de campos...no hay mucha gente viviendo ahí, esta gente viven sin electricidad, y sin agua potable, este, vive de lo que hay ahí, son gente básicamente muy excluidos de San Pedro, muy excluidos, pero están registrados ahí en San Pedro...

At young ages, rural Mexican youth are becoming conscious of their life opportunities in their hometowns. What is most striking to this researcher is the level of community assessment the youth undertake to determine whether or not a hometown provides promise for their economic and social success. While discussions of adolescence include reasoning as a trait that begins to emerge during these years, assessments of one's future life chances is a type of reasoning which seems to be premature. This early reasoning may suggest an accelerated maturity on the part of these youth, or a socialization that emphasizes early consideration of one's lot, namely economic.

To explore reasons why rural teenagers may already be assessing their community conditions for future chances, an act that is normally attributed to older individuals, I turn now to

a discussion of how the study youth experience and develop their life course stages before immigration. How the youth conceptualize their life course stages prior to immigration helps to understand the actions they will take that may lead to, or disrupt, cultural and social reproduction. In the case of rural youth, many live in communities that are organized in ways that promote behaviors and acts that are most associated with young adulthood in the United States. In fact, they already possess ideas about their eligibility for early attainment of capital and/or engagement with fields normally reserved for older individuals in other social contexts.

The Intersection of the Life Course and Space in Rural Mexico

By the mid 1970s, James Coleman characterized the twentieth century [in postindustrial Western societies] as a time of unprecedented separation of adults and youth, especially in the work place. Rather, communities were organized in ways in which youth spent most of their time, in spaces that were organized by “narrow bands of age,” and aside from education, were largely dedicated to recreation and leisure (Duzenli, et al., 2010; Hagestad, 2008). While evident in New York City, in the youth’s home communities, such time-spaces were absent and few activities existed that focused on either informal or formal youth leisure.¹⁰⁴ Possessing only recent and little institutional age separation, few age-segregated leisure time-spaces for youth exist in these towns. Reflecting the labor demands and limited attention to formal education in these communities, the absence of these time-spaces meant that youth were largely free to engage in

¹⁰⁴ The concept of leisure in post-industrial Western societies has been defined as a time-space defined by the division that exists between socially regulated time such as paid labor and time in which one has free choice to define their activities. In the case of youth, however, schooling, often occurring in Western societies for at least eight hours a day, is most often the primary activity impacting youth’s leisure time, with tight time parameters surrounding it, hourly, daily, and yearly, between the ages of at least five and eighteen (Belloni and Carriero, 2008). In the case of rural youth, however, unpaid and paid labor share primacy with five hour schools days, in limiting youth’s leisure time. Considering how recently school coverage in rural areas was expanded, the temporal norms that schooling requires in terms of days, hours and years, has had less time to congeal as part of community’s temporal norms for youth. Competing with household economic needs that have long plagued the communities, the inclusion of five hour days, nine months a year, beyond *primaria*, or in some cases, *secundaria*, may take longer to hold in marginalized households.

family labor for as long as they were needed when they were not in school. If youth were able to find some leisure time, it was spent either playing in the fields while working, or once older, hanging out on the streets with their friends.¹⁰⁵ In absence of stimulating activities that facilitate youth development, the youth found their towns boring and monotonous with little hopes of change.¹⁰⁶ Milagros was one such youth who described her town as lacking age-appropriate entertainment.

Milagros: (And are there a lot of things here for the young people, to do, to have fun?) Nothing more, but to go out to the street...

(Y hay muchas cosas aqui para los jovenes, para hacer, para divertir?) Nada mas de salir a la calle...

Without organized activities, leisure time for the youth is aimless, even on weekends. Alejandro describes just “going around” town when he is not working or in school.

Alejandro: Well, on a Sunday, when I don’t go to work, the time that we wake up is about ten in the morning, get up, do some activities there in the house, and after that, get ready, and then go pass by, around there...

Bueno, será el domingo, cuando no voy a trabajar, el horario de levantarnos seria como a las diez de la mañana, levantarme, hacer unas actividades allí en la casa, y después de ahí, arreglarme, y luego hacer una vuelta para ahí...

Instead, if they have time and are permitted to, youth had to leave their towns and go to the nearest larger town, in which they also engaged in economic activities and found waged

¹⁰⁵ In her study of rural Sudanese children, Katz (2004) finds that youth engaged in a close relationship of work-play, or play while they were working. For safety reasons, I did not able to go into the fields with the youth and was unable to observe these practices in the fields. In the home, while the youth may have moments of playfulness, or getting after their younger siblings, I did not observe behaviors or periods of time in which youth engaged in the work-play described by Katz.

¹⁰⁶ One symbol of leisure, an upright video game, was installed in Don Blas’ store. There were a couple of boys who could be seen playing throughout the day, as well as hanging out outside of his store and the convenience store across the way. When I asked Alicia, Don Blas’ sister-in-law who these boys were, however, she made a face and told me that these were the boys who were giving their families the most problems. Rumor had it that Ramon’s father had gone to the United States and was killed in a knife fight, and his mother had just left, leaving him in the care of his grandparents. He was a handful for them. Leonardo too—he had a reputation for being “flojo” and “loco,” or lazy and crazy. These boys would go the fields, “*a vez en cuando*,” or every once in awhile, instead staying home and being “*inutiles*,” or useless (Field Notes, Conversation with Alicia, July 13, 2006).

employment. In the case of San Pedro and *San Valentín*, the next largest town was *San Benito de los Lagos*, existing approximately twenty minutes away.

Judith: Well, there aren't many things for the youth, well, some, because well some because many go to *San Benito de los Lagos*, well, yes, there are things to have fun, but those things are done on Saturdays and Sundays, but during the week, there isn't anything, you just come here, go around, and that's it...(And Sundays?) (Well, after noon), I go with my cousin, just to walk around...

Pues, no hay, muchas cosas para los jóvenes, bueno para algunos, porque pues por algunos porque muchos se van a *San Benito de los Lagos*, pero pues si hay unas cosas para divertirse, pero esos son cosas que se hacen mientras Sábados y Domingos, pero durante la semana, no hay nada, solo vienen aquí dar una vuelta y ya...(Y los domingos?) (Después de las doce) Pues voy con mi prima, solo de paseo...

Many Mexican towns are built around plazas, or open gathering spaces around which are the church and the municipal government offices (Manjarrez Rosas, 2007). This was no different in the towns youth were raised. Of the youth who believed that their towns provided age-appropriate activities, most mentioned their town's plazas as places where youth could go after their work was done, until nighttime. Around five o'clock, a line of trucks carrying entire families who had been working in the fields all day began entering the only entry way into the town. By a quarter to six, youth, as well as adults, began to trickle to the plaza, either to actively engage in play, or loiter around the sides, gossiping about other youth or sharing jokes and stories. This plaza, however, and at this time, appeared to be the only time-space during which youth leisure, albeit with some adults, could occur.

The absence of youth spaces and leisure time sends a powerful message to youth about free time not having a place in their lives. Additionally, the absence of leisure spaces and youth activities in these communities, also suggests that age-segregated leisure activities, outside of schooling, are weakly practiced and may not have a place in the youth's life courses, if at all. Instead, youth's days are filled with work – and during the school year, both school and work –

defining and characterizing the youth's lives and their experiences of their life courses in these communities.

In the absence of youth spaces and activities, rural Mexican youth still discussed experiencing the life course stages of childhood, followed by adolescence in rural Mexico. The youth's experiences of these stages, however, appear strongly related to the organization and socioeconomic characteristics of the community and their households. Knowledge about how these youth conceptualize their life courses can illuminate their thinking about and when and where the youth may obtain particular forms of capital as well as enter or exit fields such as the labor market and education in Mexico – activities and capital that may help or hinder their activity in New York City.

When asked about childhood as a general life course category, the rural study youth conceptualized childhood much like other mainstream depictions which include play as a principal element.¹⁰⁷ In general, youth described childhood as a time for playing with dolls or toy cars, a time described when youth were with their families. When asked about their experiences with childhood, however, most rural Mexican youth described a life course stage in which the concept of work, not play, characterized their childhoods. Instead, due to the economic insecurity of their homes, some rural Mexican youth were taught and did work at young ages so that their labor and/or earnings could help bolster the household economy.

During childhood in rural San Pedro, youth are introduced to the world of work, holding it as a higher priority than play or leisure. Being oriented to work at early ages prepares youth to continue engaging in work throughout their life course, including when and if they immigrate to

¹⁰⁷ Prior research on childhood has illuminated differences and changes in how childhood is experienced, not only across nation-states, but within nation-states (Aries, 1960; Belloni and Carriero, 2008). The concept of “play” has dominated most discussions of childhood, with its presence or absence largely used as one indicator of the level of development of the communities where children reside (Belloni and Carriero, 2008; Katz, 2004).

the United States. Conditioned to engage in unskilled, farm work only prepares the youth not only to seek out unskilled work fields upon immigration, but to place work as their main priority throughout during their youth. Carolina, raised by her mother in San Pedro, described a truncated childhood lasting only until the age of five, during which youth were introduced to work and responsibilities.

Carolina: Well, in San Pedro, they act that they treat you like a baby, I think that there [in San Pedro] there is childhood, but not the childhood of the city, where they give [you] lots of attention, there the child, the child is not the point of attention, s/he is the baby, and really, he is not only the baby, he is a mound, so then from when you are born to five years old, they consider you like a little mound, from there, when this child begins to develop, and that this boy or girl begins to become stronger, or equilibrium communication, s/he begins to be useful, we are talking that they can already help her parents, in agricultural labors and domestic labors, and so then there, the part of having responsibilities, playing in their free time, typical is to play with little rocks, or whatever you find, we are talking about a very natural environment, an environment where the children and they begin to give them responsibilities to take care of the animals, so then a child, after school, five, six seven years, he goes with his cousins, and the uncles, who uh, go to the fields, to take care of the animals, and they begin to play in their free time with other children, so begin five and seven years, begins like another stage of preadolescence...

Bueno, en San Pedro, el hecho de que te traten como un bebe, yo creo que ahí hay niñez, pero no la niñez de una ciudad, donde le prestan mucha atención, ahí el niño, el niño no es el punto de atención, es el bebe, y de hecho, no es ni el bebe, es un bultito, entonces, de desde que te naces haces el cinco anos, te considera como un bultito, de ahí, una vez que este niño empieza desarrollar, y que este niño o niña empieza a tomar fuerzo o equilibrio comunicación, empieza ser ya útil, estamos hablando de que ya puede ayudar a sus papas, en los labores agricultoras y los labores domésticos, y entonces ahí de parte de tener responsabilidades, jueguen en su tiempo libre, típico de jugar con piedritas, o lo que encuentres, estamos hablando de un ambiente muy natural, un ambiente donde los niños y empiezan dar las responsabilidades de cuidar a los animales, entonces, un niño, después de la escuela, cinco, seis, siete anos, se va con sus primos, y los tíos, que este se van al campo, a cuidar los animales, y empiezan y enjuguen en sus ratos libres con otros niños, so entre los cinco y siete anos, empieza como una etapa de pre adolescencia...

Manuel also believed that his childhood had been abbreviated due to his early entry into work in rural Mexico. In order to balance work and school, his life had to be carefully regimented where he had time for little else. This led to his feeling that he had experienced a truncated childhood while living in rural Mexico, and ironically, prepared him for his work in New York.

Manuel: My childhood was a little shortened, no, limited, no limited time. [Why?] Because I always had to be programmed like that, no? With time, no? Same as working now, in the morning, go to school, have to do this, had to go and gather the goats when they were in the fields, to always lock them up, I always had to have fixed hours, to do my activities.

Mi niñez fue un poco recortada, no, limitada, no tiempo limitada. [Porque?] Porque yo siempre tenía programada así, no? Con el tiempo, no? Igual trabajar ahorita, en la mañana, voy a la escuela, tengo que hacer esto, tenía que ir a juntar los chivos cuando estaban en el campo, para encerrarlos siempre, yo siempre tenía mis horarios fijos, para hacer mis actividades.

The intersection of work with rural Mexican youth's childhoods, however, appeared to occur more so in the households of youth experiencing economic insecurity. Drawing a distinction between themselves and other rural households which may have had two parents or were receiving remittance funds, rural youth who lived in households experiencing higher levels of economic insecurity believed that their childhoods were filled with work, not play. This suggests that even in marginalized rural communities, some youth are oriented to work at early ages and ultimately, may join an unskilled transnational labor queue, while others' entry into the labor queue may be delayed, if it occurs at all.

Some youth believed that their childhoods differed from others in their communities because of differences in the household economies. Concha, a seventeen year old premigration female noted that her childhood was different from that of her friends **"because, well, my friends had a little bit more than I did, money.../porque pues mis amigas tenían poquito mas que yo...dinero..."** Likewise, Armando, a seventeen year old male from San Miguelito, Puebla also recalled how his childhood had been different from those of his friends. He believed that, unlike his friends, his life had been consumed with work since he was very young so as to help his parents.

Armando: My childhood was very different [from my friends]. Sometimes I played, sometimes I worked. The majority of the time was helping my parents...maybe once a week I played. They [other children] would always come over to tell me, "Come play with us," and I would tell them I had homework, but instead, I had to help my father. They did not have to work, they wanted to play and have fun.

Mi niñez era diferente de mis amigos. A veces jugaba, a veces trabajaba. La mayoría del tiempo yo estaba ayudando a mis papas, a la mejor jugaba yo una vez a la semana. Los de mas [niños] siempre venían a decirme, “juega con nosotros,” y yo los decía que tenía tareas, pero yo ayudaba a mi papa. Ellos no tenían que trabajar, ellos querían jugar y disfrutar.

Esmeralda also believed that she had experienced a childhood different from her friends. Unlike other girls, she was taken to the fields to work side by side with her parents while her friends' parents left them at home. Instead, these girls stayed home and played with their dolls while she spent her days in the fields.

Esmeralda: [My childhood was] different. Well, see, well there were times when there was no time to play because my parents would take us to the fields. And, well, maybe, others were left at home, and they were more little girl-y. Like my classmates, or girls my age, well, some, well, their parents did not take them into the fields because they were little and that...[Mi niñez] era diferente. Pues, bueno, habia veces cuando no habia tiempo para jugar porque mis papas nos llevaba al camp. Y pues, a la mejor, le dejaron otras en la casa porque eran mas nina. Como mis companeras, o otras ninas de mi edad, pues, bueno, pues, sus papas no les llevaron al campo porque estaban chiquitas y eso...

Perhaps due to the limited playtime she enjoyed during her childhood relative to her friends, Esmeralda believed that she had exited childhood and entered into adolescence before her girlfriends. While they continued to play with dolls, she had left dolls behind.

Esmeralda: [Do you believe that you passed from childhood to adolescence at the same time as your friends?] Well no, because I have some friends, classmates, girls in my class who already like, “oh my child” and that they still carry around their dolls, I don’t think so. [Crees que pasaste de la niñez hasta la adolescencia a la misma vez que tus amigas?] Pues no, porque tengo algunas amigas, compañeras, chavas de mi clase que ya, como que “ay mi niño!” y que todavía cargan sus muñecas, creo que no.

Many Mexican youth who immigrate and work full-time in New York City learned to believe that work was a natural accompaniment to their childhoods while growing up in rural Mexico. Living in households where their parent(s) need and expect their labor and/or wages at early ages, the youth begin to work, before and after school, in jobs that are made available to them in their community contexts. Conscious that their experiences of childhood are different from youth whose parents do not have financial difficulties, the youth believe that their childhoods

were truncated or limited due to the amounts of work they felt obliged to engage in. For many youth in rural Mexico, then, work is a natural activity in which children engage in, as early as four or five years old. In fact, work is primary in defining their lives at this early stage in childhood, with no lessening of importance as they age.

After childhood and prior to immigration, most youth believed that they were experiencing the life course category of adolescence. Their teachers told them that this was their current stage, and following Western influenced SEP curricula, these teachers defined not only the age parameters of adolescence, but also defined adolescence itself as physical and emotional change. Because of this, the rural study youth reported knowing that they had arrived into adolescence by examining their bodies and noting changes in their bodies.

When asked to characterize adolescence beyond Western textbook definitions, they described it as a time when the tendency towards playing ends, and when one becomes more responsible, and ready to make serious decisions. The centrality of responsibility in youth's lives while they are growing up in rural Mexico was evident in many of the youth's statements about adolescence.

Additionally, the notion of work continues to define the youth's lives, and in some cases intensifies during this life course category. Esteban, a sixteen year old premigration male, described adolescence as a time during which you make decisions "**like whether or not to study or work/como de decidir a estudiar or trabajar.**" Other youth defined adolescence as the time when one devoted more time to work. Jorge, a seventeen year old premigration *Bachiller* student, believed that he knew he had passed into adolescence "**because [I] began to work more hours/por lo que empece a trabajar mas horas.**"

Variations due to class continued to define rural Mexican youth's different relationships to work and adolescence. In Pedro's case, the absence of a father caused a household economic insecurity that compelled him to drop out of school after *primaria* and begin working full-time at the age of eleven. Although he had friends who worked, they possessed both parents and were able to use their earnings on leisure, going out to have fun; in some cases, their parents even gave them money. Alternatively, Pedro would hand over all of his earnings to his mother for use for household expenses. These responsibilities, not only of work, but also of contributing to the household, as well as an absence of leisure led to his feeling that others were experiencing longer periods of adolescence than he was.

Pedro: I think that they [my friends in Mexico] have had more of an adolescence, because they had their parents, and well, some did work during the day, but they paid them and they went out to have fun, and I did not. For me, sometimes I go out, but they had more money, their parents gave them money and not me. I worked, and I gave everything to my mama, and she gave from that, what I needed, but not much.

Creo que ellos han tenido mas adolescencia, porque tienen sus papas, y bueno algunos si trabajan en el día, pero que les pagan y salen para divertirse, y yo no. A mí, alguna vez, salgo, pero ellos tenían mas dinero, les daban sus papas, y yo no. Yo trabajaba, y yo le daba todo a mi mama, y ella me daba de eso, lo que se necesitaba, pero no mucho.

In the minds of rural Mexican youth, their households' economic health and their relationships to full-time and/or strenuous work, continue to create distinctions between youth's experiences of adolescence. When asked whether or not their adolescences were similar or different from that of their friends, several youth mentioned similar or different experiences attributed to whether or not they or their friends worked, (particularly in the fields).

Julio, a fourteen year old premigration male had been working full-time since discontinuing his studies after his *primaria* completion. Julio believed that his experience of adolescence was similar to that of his friends because like him, they too had begun working. Other rural Mexican premigration males also drew upon work experiences to characterize

adolescence in rural Mexico. For example, I submit the case of Erik, a thirteen year old premigration youth who went to the fields with his parents every day during the summer months, as well as during the school year, along with the case of Kristian, a thirteen year old premigration male from San Pedro whose work responsibilities were limited to helping his grandfather at the town's *panaderia*. Both youth believed that their experiences of adolescence were similar or different from that of their friend, based on their relationships to working in the fields.

In the case of Erik, he believed that because he worked in the fields, his adolescence was different from those of his friends who were able to remain in the town, going to the fields every once in awhile. He worked more than they did and, as such, experienced a different adolescence from theirs, one with greater responsibilities and more work. Alternatively, Kristian's father had immigrated to New York and was sending money home so that he could attend a *secundaria* normal in *San Benito de los Lagos*. In addition, his grandfather owned the town's *panaderia*, and his uncle, Don Blas, was a teacher. His households' economic situation was not nearly as precarious as other youth, like Erik and Julio. He too believed that his adolescence was different from other youth in San Pedro because his work consisted of helping his grandfather in the *panaderia* while his friends worked in the fields.

Other post migration youth drew distinctions between adolescence in rural Mexico and adolescence in New York City. Jose Luis, a seventeen year old post immigration youth from San Pedro believed that the main difference between the lives of youth in his hometown and adolescents in New York was the vast amount of responsibility that Mexican youth held at early ages. Erasing distinctions between adolescents and adults, Jose Luis believed that youth in Mexico are given the same responsibilities as adults, unlike adolescents in the United States who are able to live their lives relatively free from such concerns.

Jose Luis: For example, adolescence for youth, let's say, that it isn't mostly to go goof off, because over there, from a certain age of fourteen, thirteen years old, you already have responsibilities, they give you the responsibilities of adults, eh, and here, well here no, here they have an adolescence that the youth, for example, they leave their houses, they arrive late, they do not have responsibilities...

Por ejemplo, la adolescencia para los jóvenes, supongamos, que, no es mucho de irse a echar relajo, porque allá de cierta edad de los catorce, trece años, ya tienes responsabilidades, por le da responsabilidades de adultos, eh, y aquí, pues aquí no, aquí tienen una adolescencia que los chavos, por ejemplo, se salen de sus casas, llegan tarde, no tienen responsabilidades...

Living in marginalized communities and households, rural Mexican youth experience life course experiences that are replete with work. Among rural Mexican youth, the presence of both parents and/or higher levels of economic security enable some youth to avoid work, or if they enter into the labor market, they work fewer hours in less strenuous jobs and use their earnings for fun. Most of the rural youth who either planned to, or were working in New York City, were obliged to work in the fields or other strenuous jobs at early ages to contribute both their labor and their earnings to the household. As a result, these youth expressed feelings of shortened adolescences in which leisure has little or no place. Socialized to work, and actually working at early ages, it is highly likely that the youth will carry forward to New York City these concepts of work they first held as teenagers, when they were helping to support their rural households and either working full-time or engaging in other strenuous employment. Once in New York, rural Mexican immigrant youth are able to further observe contrasts between their experiences of adolescence and others, including the experiences of United States adolescents, where work and responsibility hold lesser importance.

Experiencing abbreviated life course categories that were comprised mostly of work at early ages without carefree leisure led some rural Mexican youth to feel that they were becoming adults at early ages. Judith, a sixteen year old premigration female in *San Valentin*, Puebla

discussed how working in her parents' plant nurseries since she was "little," preventing her from passing her time on the streets with her friends and hanging out.

Judith: [Mmm, well, my parents got us accustomed to that, to work, we were always there, since we were little, and well, because, well, I see, I feel a little more like an adult, well, because I am working and then they [my friends] do not do anything. They are only in the streets, or like that, without doing anything.]

Mmm, bueno, mis papas nos acostumbraron a eso, a trabajar, estábamos siempre allí, desde que estábamos chiquitos...y pues, porque, pues, yo veo, me siento poquito mas como un adulto, bueno, estoy trabajando y luego ellos [mis amigos] no hacen nada. Solo están en las calles, o sea, así, sin hacer nada...

The youth's conceptualizations of their life course categories, and the sorts of behaviors and practices they believe are appropriate for their life course stage, are not developed in a vacuum. Instead, these understandings are developed through their interactions with the resources and social institutions found in their communities where economically bleak conditions not only drive youth to adopt practices that reinforce their futures as *campesinos* if they remain in their home communities, but also reinforce their prospects as unskilled laborers if they enter the transnational labor queue. The youth's early interactions with the labor market are only preparing them to continue to work at early ages in the United States, regardless of what age norms are there. The idea that hard work begins in childhood and accelerates into adolescence is practice that youth learn is normative, a practice that is believed to help their households, and an orientation that they will carry with them into the United States. Since birth, youth learn that their primary activity is labor, a practice that is to continue as they age.

To understand how these ideas become internalized before immigration to the United State, I now examine the particular manifestations of social institutions found in their communities.

Rural Households

Theories and studies of social reproduction have centralized the household as the primary socializing agent which shapes youth's worldviews and influence their future orientations. In the case of rural youth, several family factors may shape their ideas about immigrating and staying outside of schooling in New York City. These factors include generational economic (in) security, their households' configuration, and the educational and occupational status of their parents and guardians.

In 2006, a quarter of all Mexican citizens lived in rural Mexico, but approximately 75% of Mexico's poor lived in rural areas (Cevallos, 2007; World Bank, 2005). Although only 25% of Mexico's population lives in rural areas, 60.7% of her extremely poor and 46.1% of the moderately poor live in these areas.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, almost half, or 45.6% of all Mexican 10-15 year olds live in rural areas, suggesting that almost half of Mexico's young runs a high risk of being at least moderately poor (UNESCO, 2010).¹⁰⁹

In the cases of the rural study youth, especially those who planned to work after immigrating, or who were working in New York City, household insecurity had persisted over generations. Their grandparents, and then their parents/guardians had experienced household financial difficulties which translated into limited funds for schooling when they were school-age themselves, just as their own children do today. The majority of the parents of the youth I interviewed had educational levels ranging from no schooling at all to primaria incompleción, with only one father possessing completed university studies prior to immigrating to the United

¹⁰⁸ According to SEDESOL, or the Secretariat of Social Development (Secretaria del Desarrollo Social), extremely poor refers to individuals whose income level is below the food poverty line and is defined by insufficient daily dietary intake (less than \$4/day) ; moderately poor refers to those below the assets poverty line (Burstein, 2007; World Bank, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ Some scholars believe that aside from rural/urban differences in poverty, more significant are regional differences in poverty, or the income inequalities that exist between northern and southern Mexico. Whereas 12% of northern Mexican households are designated as living in extreme poverty, approximately 47% of southern Mexicans live in extreme poverty. All of the rural study youth hailed from southern Mexico

States.¹¹⁰ On average, however, the rural Mexican youth's parents and/or guardians had secured incomplete levels of *primaria*. Several youth gave reasons similar to their own as to why their parents had been unable to attain higher levels of education. Faced with economic hardship in their own families, many of the youth's parents had to leave school to help their own parents (the youth's grandparents). Believing that their own experiences would motivate their children, several of the parents used their own cases as examples so that their children would appreciate their parents' financial sacrifices so that they would take advantage of current educational opportunities, opportunities they themselves had not enjoyed.

Jose Luis, recalled that his father did not continue his studies beyond *primaria* because his grandparents not only did not have the money to pay for his studies, but they could also not afford to be without his labor. His father had dropped out of *primaria* before his thirteenth birthday to help his household.

Jose Luis: My father only got to, he finished *primaria*, and due to a lack of resources, he had to leave school and help my grandfather in the fields.

Mi papa llego solamente, termino la *primaria*, y por falta de recursos, tenía que dejar la escuela y ayudar a mi abuelito en el campo.

Likewise, Armando, a seventeen year old post-immigration male who ended up dropping out of *secundaria* in Mexico discussed how his father could not attend school beyond *primaria* due to his family's economic insecurity. Relegated to doing fieldwork and driving a taxi, his father hoped that Armando would do better and become a professional.

Armando: He wanted me to have a profession. [How do you know that's what he wanted?] Because he would tell me. Like he would tell me that he did not have the benefits that I had today. Like in the past, he had to leave school to help his father, and he worked a lot, and how he did not have the privileges like the ones I have.

El quería que yo tuviera una profesión. [Y como sabias que eso era lo que él quería?] Porque me decía. Como él me decía que el no tuve los beneficios que yo tengo hoy. Como en el pasado, el tenía que dejar la escuela para ayudar a su papa, and él trabajaba mucho, y como él no tenía los privilegios como los que yo tengo.

¹¹⁰ This father was now working as a dishwasher in New York City.

Although his father's messages were intended to motivate Armando to commit to his studies, his household's economic needs prevented him from granting his father's wishes. Armando knew that his parents struggled, and he oftentimes felt like he was wasting his time in school; rather, he believed that he should have been working full-time to help the family instead of going to school. Although he would go further than his father in school, Armando would eventually dropout prior to completing *secundaria* studies.

Although economic and educational reforms such as PROGRESA had been implemented to address the effects of household insecurity on school-going, the reforms simply were not sufficient to prevent dropping out at early ages (Sawyer, et al.,2009). Like their parents before them, rural Mexican youth's parents, especially those unable to count on *migradolares*, struggled even to keep their children in school up to the minimum legal level. Instead, rural youth's parents and guardians engaged in various strategies so that their children could continue with their studies, including borrowing money from other family members, selling livestock, seeking more employment, and making special payment arrangements with school officials. In the case of Esmeralda, for example, her parents had difficulty paying for her schooling, and sometimes borrowed money so that they could pay for her educational expenses.

Esmeralda: Well yes, sometimes they got it, that they did not have any money, and they had to pay, well it was, and they had to borrow/get the money because I already had to go to school.

Pues sí, a veces se agarraban así, que no tenían nada de dinero, y tenían que pagar pues había, y tenían que conseguir el dinero porque ya se presentaba yo en la escuela.

Marco Antonio also discussed how his parents had difficulties paying for some of the *cooperaciones* that the school asked for. His parents also borrowed money to pay for these fees, usually turning to his grandmother.

Marco Antonio: First, when they had cooperation [maintenance] fees for something, I do not remember what, they said that they could not, that it was difficult, but my grandmother loaned it to them.

Primero cuando tenían *cooperaciones* para algo, no recuerdo que, dijeron que no podrían, que si se ponía difícil, pero se prestaron de mi abuelita.

Other parents were forced to sell livestock whenever the youth needed to pay school expenses. Julio recalls how his unemployed mother experienced difficulties in paying the school fees. When this occurred, she would sell one of the animals that had been given to her as a Christmas present.

Julio: Mmm,. Well she told me that, yes, it was difficult because she did not work, and alone, well, sometimes there was an animal that she had to sell to pay for school, and like that, she had, she had some animals that they gave her at Christmas and she had sold them...

Mmm, bueno ella me decía que si era difícil porque ella no trabajaba, y solo bueno, a veces había un animal que tenía que venderlo para pagar por la escuela, y así, tenía que, tenía ahí unos animales que le dieron en Christmas y había vendiendo.

In many cases, youth could not pay schooling fees without someone, either their parents or themselves engaging in extra work to earn additional wages to pay for school. Some youth recalled overhearing difficulties in paying the school fees with some families looked for work in the fields to meet school expenses.

Rosa: [Okay, talk to me about paying for *secundaria*.] Well, we lacked some things, because I was going to continue studying in school. [And how did they gather money so you could go?] Well, they went to the fields.

[Okay platicame sobre pagar por la *secundaria*.] Pues faltaba cosas, porque iba a seguir que estudiara yo en la escuela. [Y como lo hicieron para juntar dinero para que ibas?] Pues iban ‘pal campo.

In addition to general school fees, the youth were expected to pay for activities that are generally free in other schools, including public schools in the United States.

Jenni also discussed other strategies her parents engaged in so that she could continue her schooling. She discussed how her *secundaria* charged the students fifteen extra pesos a week to take computing classes. Unable to afford this extra financial burden, her mother spoke with the

secundaria school director to see if he could lower the fees. The director allowed Jenni to take computer classes; she would pay only eight pesos a week.

Jenni: Well yes, my mother did not pay it, and then she went to speak with the director to see if he could give us a discount, because it was a lot, and he did give us a discount, eight pesos was what I had to pay, but the rest said they were in agreement with the fifteen pesos, they continued to pay, but I just paid eight, each time that we entered, I paid eight pesos.

Pues sí, mi mama no lo paso, y luego fue para hablar con el director para ver si podría darnos una rebaja, porque era mucho, y si nos dio una rebaja, ocho pesos era lo que tenía que pagar, pero los demás dijeron que si eran de acuerdo con pagar 15 pesos, si siguieron pagando, pero yo no mas pagaba ocho, cada vez que entrabamos, ocho pesos pagara.

Aside from the general economic insecurity that prevailed in rural regions, some youth's household's financial straits were compounded by the absence of one or both parents. While many rural Mexican youth lived with both biological parents, an equal number lived in either single parent homes or with grandparents due to the absence or deaths of one or both parents. While economic insecurity existed in two-parent households, it was in grandparent-led and single-parent households that financial needs seemed the most extreme, requiring additional economic strategies. One such strategy included relying on the youth, either for their household or field labor or wages earned outside of the home, to help keep the households afloat.

Carolina recalled how creative her single mother had to be to keep her and her sisters fed, clothed and attending school. Without a husband or a consistent job, her mother relied on Carolina's grandmother, aunt and uncle's collective resources such as livestock and poultry to run her household. Carolina admired her resourcefulness, and believed that observing this contributed to her own resourcefulness as an unaccompanied teenage Mexican immigrant in New York.

Carolina: We got to the point at that time that it was horrible, I remember really well, because this even included a time that I did not have a single peso in the pocket, zero pesos in the pocket, the only thing that we counted on was eggs that the chickens laid, and nothing more...what did my mom do at that time? I remember very well, she went to exchange the eggs with the neighbor, on the side, for a kilo of tortillas so that we could

eat...at that point we arrived at...that there was not, there was not a single peso in the pocket, and it was there that I had my fear that I would not be able to continue with my education and I felt trapped, that I did not have another possibility.

Llegamos al punto de que en ese tiempo fue horrible, me recuerdo muy bien, porque incluso llego al tiempo que no tenia ningún peso en la bolsa, cero pesos en la bolsa, lo único de que contábamos era con huevos que bajaban las gallinas, y nada mas...que hizo mi mama en ese tiempo? Yo recuerdo muy bien...fue a intercambiar los huevos con la vecina, del lado, por un kilo de tortillas para que nosotros podíamos comer...a esa punto llegábamos...que no había, no había ningún peso en la bolsa, y fue ahí mi miedo de que no iba poder continuar con mi educación, y yo sentí trepado, de que no tengo otro posibilidad...

Manuel also grew up in a single parent household, with his mother, in Cuatlacco, Guerrero. His father left his mother before his birth and left her with little money to raise their children. As early as age six, his mother told him that he would have to work because of his father's absence.

At this age, he began to work with her in the fields to help the household.

Manuel: Well, my house, how do I tell you, I, when I, because since I was like five years old, I began to think, no, that I do not have a father, but I have to think of me...and I always asked my mama, and why don't you send me there to play, and she told me because you do not have a papa and you have to pay more attention and work and like that, always, and my mama always cultivating the fields there, there, a plot/land big like that, always cultivating, and I told her and I always was going to be there too, and she told me that yes, because you do not have your papa, you have to work for me, I am going to help you, and like that, and my mama told me, you have to learn [to be a man], you have to work...[And how old were you?] Like six, seven years old...

Bueno, mi casa, como te diré, yo, cuando yo, porque ya desde yo tenía como cinco años, yo empecé de pensar, no, que yo no tengo papa, pero tengo que pensar en mí....y yo siempre preguntaba a mi mama, y yo porque no me mandan al allá a jugar, y ella me decía, porque tú no tienes papa y tú tienes que poner mas atención y trabajar y ya, siempre, y mi mama siempre cultivando las tierras allá, allí en un terreno grande así, siempre cultivando, y yo dije y yo siempre voy estar ahí también, y ella me dije que sí, porque tú no tienes tu papa, tú tienes que trabajar para mí, yo te voy ayudar, y ya, y mi mama me decía, tú tienes que aprender [ser hombre], tú tienes que trabajar...[y cuantos años tenias tu?] Como seis, siete años...

Households in which one or both parents were absent due to immigration largely did not experience these levels of economic insecurity, as remittances were flowing into the home to pay for the children's education, as well as other costs. Youth who belonged to households with one or both parents in the United States actually reported fewer concerns with educational expenses, and appeared to be able to continue their studies and obtain higher levels of education and

generally remain outside of the labor market, informal or formal. In some cases, however, remittances were inconsistent and did not provide the economic panacea that one would think could occur in a remittance-receiving household. Milagros expressed difficulties paying for her educational expenses in spite of her father and older siblings working in New York. Due to her father's sporadic sending of monies, Milagros said, her mother did not have money to pay for her schooling expenses and had to make arrangements with school officials so that they could wait to pay until her father's money arrived. Likewise, in spite of her father and sisters in New York City, Concha still felt the pressure to work because remittances were inconsistent.

This study's rural youth belonged to households with high levels of economic insecurity. These types of economic insecurity, it seemed were generational, as their parents and grandparents had not only been raised in these communities, but had, over time, been unable to improve their household economic conditions due to the structural features of the communities in which they lived. Considering the economic and labor opportunities available to them in their hometowns, as well as their low levels of education, as they grew into adulthood, the youth's parents were ill-equipped to do little more than unskilled work. With only low and no-wage occupations found in rural Mexico: farming for males and housework for females, there was little opportunity to obtain employment that could change the households' financial circumstances.¹¹¹ Extenuating circumstances such as single parenthood only compounded the youth's households economic insecurity, leaving female and grandparent households most vulnerable. To further explore their parents' labor market experiences, and these rural youth's

¹¹¹ Interestingly enough, most youth whose reported wanting to go to school upon immigration or who were enrolled in schools in New York possessed at least one immigrant parent while still living in Mexico. These parents also worked in unskilled occupations in New York City, in restaurants, factories and as housewives.

orientations towards work in rural Mexico, I turn to a discussion of the labor market field and how rural youth begin to conceptualize their place in it (or out of it).

Fields in Rural Mexico: Labor Markets

In spite of modernization efforts, subsistence farming continued to dominate the economic activities in the rural areas of Mexico from which the study youth hailed.¹¹² From young ages, the youth observe an agriculture-based economy and labor market. At early ages, they learn that their local labor market is undesirable, providing little in the ways of economic capital or skills, under poor conditions. Many youth observe their parents and other adults participating in these fields, particular to their rural context, but they themselves enter and participate in these fields at early ages. Although socialized to enter these fields at early ages and perhaps expected to continue in them, the increasing difficulties associated with creating a livelihood from subsistence farming due to economic policies – coupled with the introduction of knowledge, stories, and evidence about other labor market fields, namely in the United States from kin and friends abroad – serve to reorient the youth away from the labor market in Mexico.

To keep a transnational economic engine based on immigrant labor functional, however, much is gained by the youth's early participation in these fields. Youth learn how to work hard under difficult conditions a lesson which will only make them "better," pliable workers in the United States. In addition, by observing and participating in these fields, they develop a dual frame of reference that they can draw upon once working [or going to school] in the United States. Intimately knowledgeable about work conditions in Mexico, working for little pay and bent over in the hot sun, these youth compare this with better pay and [by their assessments] better work in New York City.

¹¹² According to Burnstein (2007) increasing diversification and modernization of rural economies have decreased the percentage of rural monetary income attributed to agricultural activities. Instead, other income sources such as international and domestic remittances, cash-transfers, and non-farm wage activities have increased to reduce the impact of agricultural economic activities in rural Mexico.

Growing up in rural Mexico, youth not only engage in strenuous work at young ages, but they also learn that there are few, unvaried and undesirable employment opportunities. Work in rural Mexico is still dominated by subsistence farming conducted by mostly men on *ejido* family plots; women continue to work in the home.¹¹³ Passed down through generations, families own plots of land on which they grow and harvest not only foods for the household, but also for sale. Farmers grew and cultivated Mexican staples such as corn and beans, as well as raised cattle, primarily for their own consumption, and then for sale. People supplemented their incomes by selling portions of their harvest in the market, sometimes daily, and sometimes on weekends, as well as by selling livestock when needed.

Additionally, the particular region where I conducted fieldwork, el Valle de *San Benito de los Lagos*, was also home to a lucrative gladiola flower industry, with some youth assisting their parents in the fields during harvest, and then accompanying them on weekends on the almost two hour trip to Mexico City to sell the flowers there.

On any given afternoon, around five o'clock, one could see the flatbeds of trucks filled with large stalks of beautiful orange, white and yellow flowers coming into the town to be unloaded for sale in the subsequent days. Leaving in the early morning, Jorge would return in the evenings, and I could see him unloading the trucks—this lasted over an hour. (Field Notes, Jorge, July 28, 2006).

In some cases, this work acted as a deterrent to dropping out of school in Mexico. Undesirable, this work was physically challenging due both to the strenuousness of the work, as well as to its location in the searing sun outside. It was difficult and in the youth's words, "*pesado*" or heavy. Several youth remarked that they did not want to work in such unfavorable

¹¹³ Borne of agrarian laws implemented after the end of the Mexican Revolution, *ejidos* are communal landholdings which are divided into plots and passed down through the generations from father to son, and are not available for sale. In addition to *ejidos*, communal and private land holdings exist, the latter which can be bought and sold. Communal lands are property of municipalities and can be worked by individuals in the communities (Lewis, 1960; Whetten, 1948). San Pedro, the site from which a vast majority of the study youth hailed, was a major beneficiary in the granting of *ejidal* lands (Moore, 1950). Interestingly enough, the set age for eligibility to inherit lands was age sixteen (Whetten, 1948).

conditions and in some cases, reported continuing their studies to avoid full-time employment in this hard work. Marco Antonio, a sixteen year old premigration male from San Pedro actually attributed work conditions in the fields to his completion of *secundaria*.

Marco Antonio: Well, because I never liked to go to the fields to work, that is why I have continued to study...in the fields it is an extremely hot, and my nose bleeds...

Pues, porque nunca me gusto ir al campo a trabajar, por eso ha seguido estudiando. En el campo hace calorón y se sangre mi nariz...

Likewise, Alejandro attributed his enrollment in *Bachiller* to the alternative of undesirable work conditions. Alejandro was a slight, sixteen year old male who walked with a noticeable limp. Although he had worked part-time since the age of ten, when it appeared as if they did not have enough money for him to enroll into *Bachiller*, he began to work full-time in the fields. After three months working, however, he deemed the work too difficult. After much discussion, his uncle stepped forward and offered to help pay for him to continue his studies. This money, in addition to monies he earned working after school, during the summer, and on weekends in a plant nursery, enabled him to continue his high school studies.

Alejandro: [Why did you return to your studies?] Because first, I cannot work, like in hard jobs.

[Porque regresaste a tus estudios?] Pues porque primero, yo no puedo trabajar, como en trabajos pesados...

In the case of some rural Mexican youth, their knowledge of the labor market and actual field conditions acts as a motivator for them to stay in school. Acting as a short-term strategy, these youth continue their studies, not so that they can obtain higher credentials to turn into economic capital, but to remain out of the difficult work conditions that exist in their communities.

In addition to the challenging conditions that comprise work in rural Mexico, people mostly work to subsist, not to profit. To pay for needs other than food, adults sell their foodstuffs in the marketplace for very little money. Other individuals who do not own plots and

who want to earn extra monies, including some of the study youth, may work on other people's plots as *peones*, or unskilled farm workers. Low paying, rural youth estimated that adults working in the fields would earn approximately \$2000 pesos a month, or the approximate equivalent of \$200 USD. If only one adult in the nuclear household worked in the fields, household earnings would be quite low, causing economic hardship for families. Rather, as discussed later, this income would leave little beyond basic household necessities, so that education, especially beyond *secundaria*, simply became unaffordable. As a result, youth would often be required to enter the labor market themselves, to supplement the household income, and in some cases, pay for their own schooling.

Milagros: A typical person who works there in the fields, and earns a maximum of \$100 pesos, daily in the fields, um, if they work in the fields, which is more than twelve hours, works very, very, very laboriously, the salary is \$100 pesos, if you are young, it is \$80 pesos, but less laborious, but we are talking about the fields, a person who is working in the fields, the fields, if you work six days its \$600 pesos, but the majority is \$500 pesos...those \$500 pesos have to be very well managed by the women to be able to buy the necessary food, and for education which is where the least is invested...[they] do not have enough sufficient money to invest in education because [you] barely have enough to eat and to have things there in the house...

Una típica persona que trabaja ahí en el campo, y gana máximo \$100 pesos, diario en el campo...este, si trabaja en el campo, que es mas de 12 horas, trabaja muy muy muy laboroso, el salario es \$100 pesos, si eres joven es \$80 pesos, pero es menos laborales, pero estamos hablando del campo, una persona está trabajando en el campo, el campo, si trabaja seis días es \$600, pero la mayoría es \$500 pesos de la semana...esos \$500 pesos tienen que estar muy buenos manejados por la mujer para poder comprar el necesario de la comida, y para la educación que es donde menos se invierten...no tiene suficiente dinero para invertir en la educación porque apenas si se alcanza para comer y poder tener de cositas ahí en la casa...

Aside from learning that local work conditions are challenging and unfavorable, youth are quite aware of the wages that can be earned by working in the *campos*, and know that, to run a household, these wages do not go very far beyond meeting the costs of basic necessities. Lacking the credentials to enter into better paid or less strenuous work, the youth avoid engaging in difficult agricultural work and turn to school as their refuge, at least until they reach an age

where they may entertain the idea of unaccompanied immigration. As will be discussed, informed of other labor market fields, youth “do the math” and opt to try their luck away from agriculture.

Gender Division of Labor in Rural Mexico

Whereas the rural Mexican youth grow up learning that the primary labor industry in their communities is agriculture, this truism is true only for adult men and youth, not adult women. Rather, rural Mexican females, if they remain in their communities can look forward to a life of difficult domestic work in which their labors, unpaid, are performed primarily in the household. Although many females engaged in field work, this most often occurred when in need of alternative economic strategies. All of the youth, both pre and post migration, shared this gendered division of labor in their interviews, that men worked in the fields and women worked in the home.

Jesus: “The women, they are housewives, some, because some work as well, and they work in the fields, but very few work in the fields. “

Las mujeres son amas de casa, algunas, porque algunas trabajan también, y ellas trabajan en el campo, pero muy pocos trabajan en el campo.

The idea that housework is challenging and also unfavorable was shared mostly by female youth whose futures were most likely to include it as a primary activity. Housework is difficult, and Esmeralda, a premigration sixteen year old from San Pedro who both worked in the fields and helped her mother at home, believed that housework is wrought with more responsibilities than those undertaken by men. Unlike men whose sole responsibility was working in the fields, women in rural Mexico were devoted to conducting multiple tasks, including cooking, taking care of her husband and children, washing, ironing, etc.

Esmeralda: Women dedicate themselves to preparing food, preparing tortillas, taking care of their husbands, besides, I think that women have more responsibilities than their husbands, why? *Because* the women have to take care of children, which is one, take care

of the house, take care of the house besides, if they live with their husband's parents, the woman has to take care of her husband's parents, who are her in-laws, as well as cook, wash, iron, and uh, and besides that help with her husband's work, those are the majority of the responsibilities of a woman there...

Las mujeres se dedica a preparar la comida, preparar tortillas, cuidar al marido, aparte, yo creo que las mujeres tienen mas responsabilidades que los maridos, porque? Porque las mujeres tienen que cuidar sus niños, que es una, tomar cuidado de la casa, tomar cuidado aparte, si viven con las papas de su esposo, la mujer tiene que tomar cuidado de los papas de su esposo, que son los suegros, este en otra tiene que cocinar, lavar, planchar, este, y aparte ayudar a los labores del marido, esos son la mayoría de las responsabilidades de una mujer aquí...

Whereas one could interpret the youth's responses as true of their mother and grandmother's generations, other females reported that it was very likely that they could inherit these roles.

Carolina, a nineteen year old post-migration female from San Pedro characterized the lack opportunities back home for women. Even for women in her generation, the predominant activities that women who stayed in San Pedro engaged in included staying at home and taking care of their remaining family members.

Carolina: Those who stayed in Mexico, some, are single, but they have taken charge of the family which is to take care of the mother, take care of the grandmother, of the children, but they work in the home harder than the mother...

Los que quedaron en México, algunas son solteras, pero están tomando cargo de la familia que es de cuidar a la mama, cuidan a la abuela, cuidan a los niños, pero trabajan en la casa mas que la mama.

In fact, Carolina had been encouraged to follow such a route by her mother while she was still living in San Pedro and wanted to continue her studies. An example of not only the lack of varied opportunities for females in rural Mexico, but also of her family's ideas about appropriate activities for females of her age and class, Carolina was encouraged to learn how to manage a household and find a husband. She felt trapped without any other thing to do.

Carolina: I don't have any other thing to do, so to speak, or, do what my mama says, learn how to make tortillas, learn how to cook really well, learn how to be a housewife, and find a husband who could support me, which is typical of being a women there (in San Pedro)...

No tengo otra cosa de hacer de decir, ósea, hacer lo que dice mi mama, aprende de hacer tortillas, aprender de cocinar muy bien, aprender de ser una mujer de casa, y buscar un marido que me mantenga que es el típico ahí de una mujer...

The idea that females grew and became housewives and mothers was echoed during one of my first walks with teenage girls in San Pedro. After the *secundaria* graduation, I was walking back to Carola's house with a group of girls who had just completed their second year of *secundaria* and were continuing to the third and final year. They were teasing and joking with each other, which I did as well, in an attempt to fit in and build trust. I decided to playfully ask them some questions about what they wanted to be when they grew up.

While the girls and I were talking about what they were going to pursue as careers, they jokingly pointed to one another saying that they were studying to be 'madres.' I jokingly asked whether or not they meant nuns or mothers of children. Jenni said she wanted to be a nun so that everyone would kiss her hand, to which Jessica replied that she would never become Mother Superior. When I asked if lots of girls wanted to become mothers, Jenni offered that lots of girls their age were already mothers. I asked why they didn't want to be mothers yet, to which Milagros answered no, that she could not stand when babies cry. There did not appear to be much interest in motherhood right now, but they said that maybe later. (Field Notes, 7.7.2006)

The only other labor that women were known to engage in was selling goods in the market. Several of the youth stated that their mothers or grandmothers would take surplus crops and travel to the nearest town to sell the goods in the market. Clementina's grandmother sold tomatoes every day in *San Benito de los Lagos*, while Jenni reported that she and her mother would go to *San Benito de los Lagos* on weekends and sell whatever they were not going to use for eating **(Field notes, 7.18.2006).**

Youth live in rural communities where two types of labor predominate: agricultural and domestic. The majority of adults in the youth's communities are not engaging in waged labor, in which their labor is directly exchanged for economic capital that then reenters the market, but rather in subsistence labor, where individuals' labor is devoted to maintaining the family's household needs/food needs, with surplus exchanged for economic capital which is then used to pay for goods and services to support the household, including the youth's educational expenses.

For most families, adult males harvest crops from fields primarily for subsistence while adult females both maintain the household and exchange surplus crops for money in markets outside of their communities. It is here, outside of the community, that most families obtain economic capital, exchanging their goods for money.¹¹⁴

The youth have an understanding that the types of occupations that exist in their hometowns are agricultural in nature, with the majority of people working as farmers. Youth largely believe that these are the only opportunities available to them if they remain in their hometowns. Only a couple of youth responded that few, but some, professionals existed in their hometowns. Even if they know about professional careers, however, professionals they knew of were few and mostly lived outside of their hometowns and such careers seemed out of reach, especially for the children of farm workers.

Youth Labor Opportunities

In his discussion of Kabyle peasants living in rural Algeria, Bourdieu writes that for them, “Work is neither an end in itself nor a virtue per se. What is valued is not action directed

¹¹⁴ In few instances, rural Mexican youth could name adults who resided in their towns who were professionals. In the words of most of the rural youth, “*casi nadie*/hardly no one” was a professional in their towns, and of those who they knew, they were mostly teachers who came in from surrounding cities. For example, in San Pedro, Kristian’s uncle was a history teacher, currently completing his Master’s thesis, while his father had been a teacher who had completed university studies prior to his own immigration to New York City. Kristian’s grandfather owned the town’s *panaderia* which other family members including uncles and aunts helped run. Don Blas also helped, but he was primarily employed as a teacher at one of the junior high schools in *San Benito de los Lagos*, the next largest town. At the time of my fieldwork, he was a Master’s student at the BUAP, and X was helping him complete his thesis. Izel, Concha and Carola also discussed knowing a female lawyer in town. Upon further inquiry, I found that she was a law student at the BUAP in Puebla, commuting every day to the capital. Already in her early twenties, she encouraged some of the other young girls in town not to drop out and to complete their studies. The fact remained however, that hardly any professionals lived in the towns in which the youth grew up. In more instances, youth named teachers who resided in other towns as the professionals they had contact with. Herminda remembers her sixth grade teacher fondly, as a role model, but she commuted every day from the capital. Manuel also recalled being close with one of his teachers. It was with him that Manuel would talk and share his wishes to become a teacher. This teacher, however, told him about the corruption and nepotism that has often plagued the SNTE (*Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de Educacion*), or the teacher’s union, which controlled placement of teachers, thus casting doubt on Manuel’s ability to, as the son of farmers, become a teacher. Rather, the teacher’s narrative sheds light on difficulties associated with the rural poor to become a professional. According to Manuel’s teacher, becoming a professional, in this case, a teacher, was based on who you knew and how much you could pay for a good placement.

towards an economic goal, but activity in itself, regardless of its economic function and merely on condition that it has a social function” (Bourdieu, 1979). This understanding about work is learned early and swiftly transmitted to young household members. All members of the household worked in some capacity, whether it was in the household or in the fields, and their work not only ensured the functioning of their households, but also seemed to define and be defined by the ages, gender and relationships the household members had with each other.

To prepare their children for life and future work in Mexico, rural Mexican families include child labor as part of the socialization process for rural Mexican youth (Carey, Jr, 2004). As soon as they are physically able, rural Mexican youth especially those living in households experiencing economic insecurity, are expected to provide “*ayuda*” or help to the households, either in the form of their own labor or wages from their labors (Magazine and Ramirez Sanchez, 2007). Characterized by early forays into paid and unpaid labor, the rural Mexican youth learn and believe at early ages that work is a normal part of their childhood, and will continue to emerge as a primary component of their lives as they age. As they grow older, the youth continue to believe that they are responsible for working and contributing to the households. Although, by age seven, school becomes a competing activity to work, in most cases, the youth continue to work before and after school, as well as on weekends, with work never relinquishing its position in youth’s lives as a central activity. As they complete school, work resumes its position as the primary activity around which their lives will revolve. This idea about work, perhaps originally meant to be performed in Mexico, manifests in New York City upon immigration.

These same conditions have persisted for generations. In his 1951 study of a rural Mexican village, Lewis also discussed the village youth’s early preparation for work. As he writes,

“As children grow older they are put under more pressure to be obedient in preparation for their future work. At about five they [children] are given such small chores as

carrying corn in a little can when going with the mother or older sister to the mill, borrowing things from a neighbor or a relative, feeding the chickens or taking care of a younger sibling” (Lewis, 1951).

Over fifty years later, little has changed in rural Mexico. When asked about the ages at which youth begin to engage in labor in their rural communities, Carolina reported that individuals are expected to work as soon as they physically appear able to work. For rural Mexican youth, this is measured by a youth’s ability to walk and talk, around age four. Carolina, now working as a nanny in New York City, contrasted these expectations with those of similarly-aged middle class youth in New York City.

Carolina: Ummm, that is partly cultural, obviously, when you are a baby, you are a lump, you are a little lump there and you cannot help in any of the adult labor, but once you start to walk, they begin to give you a few responsibilities, in my case, like a girl, who begins to talk and communicate with the adults, to have more equilibrium, I began to have an individual identity, which is that of a girl, who is not useless, who is not going to be taught like in typical societies, like here, the Americans, we are talking about middle class Americans, who do not read me a book, who no longer give me food in my mouth when I already start to communicate, begin to walk, already when I am already more conscious of what adults do, um, they start to include me, here, take this, because we are talking about the fields, go to cut little weeds, go to pick some corn, for example, do the little bit of work that you can, or take care here, another baby, for example, me, my little sister, so that nothing happens to her, while my mother is working in the fields...(At what age?) We’re talking about between four years, between four and five years, that they are beginning to give responsibilities, they begin to take into account that you can do something...

Ummm, eso es parte cultural, obvio cuando eres un bebe, eres un bulto, eres un bultito ahí y no puedes ayudar en ningún labor adulta, pero una vez que ya empieza a caminar, ya te empieza dar unos poquitos de responsabilidades, en mi caso, como niña, que empieza que hablar y comunicar con los adultos, de tener mas equilibrios, me daba la identidad de ser una individua, que es una niña, que no es una inútil, que no se van a enseñar como típicas sociedades, como aquí Americanas, estamos hablando de las clases media Americanas de que no se me leen libro, que ya no se me dan a comer en la boca ya cuando ya empieza a tener comunicación, empiezo a caminar, ya cuando tengo mas consciencia de lo que hacen los adultos, este, empiezan a incluirme, mira, lleva esto, porque estamos hablando del campo, ve a cortar estas hierbitas, empieza a sacar unos elotes, por ejemplo, este, haz un poquito de trabajo lo que puedes, o cuida aquí, otro bebe, por ejemplo, yo mi hermanita, que no le pasa nada, mientras mi mama está en el labor del campo...(A que edad?) Estamos hablando entre los cuatro anos, entre cuatro y cinco anos, que están empezando a darte responsabilidades, ya empiezan tomar en cuenta de que te puedes hacer algo,

This “early” start to working life reflects an idea of the life course that, as Carolina stated, diverges from that of the ideas of the life course in the United States. At early ages, youth are viewed and evaluated for the abilities to perform labor more than anything else, including educational achievement. Rewarded not only by wages, but also by fulfilling their obligations to the family, youth are provided an early orientation towards work and earnings that will most likely continue as they grow older. This early orientation, particularly towards physically prepares them to enter into unskilled jobs in New York City, especially those that require hard manual labor or housework.

Milagros shared Carolina’s views:

Milagros: The problem is that many children, they are not considered only as children, they are viewed for how/what they can contribute, what can they contribute to the labors, with the labors of adults, like between eight and nine years, they begin to help their parents, with their labors, with the labors of the field, and the girls, with the housework, preparing food, washing clothes, helping the mother, including, taking care of younger children...

“El problema es que muchos niños no son considerados no mas como niños, pero se ven como pueden contribuir, que pueden contribuir a los labores, con los labores de los adultos, y como muchos, como entre los ocho o nueve años, empiezan ayudar a sus papas, a sus labores, a los labores del campo, y las niñas, a los labores de la casa, preparando comida, lavando la ropa, ayudando la mama, incluyendo, cuidando los niños mas pequeños.”

Mirroring the gender segregation of labor market found in their communities, young girls learn and perform domestic skills at early ages, including cooking, sewing, cleaning and ironing. Several scholars argue that females are expected to engage in labor at earlier ages than males (Carey, Jr, 2004; Lewis, 1960). While the young girls are being prepared to perform the same acts as their mothers and grandmothers before them in rural Mexican households, these skills will also transfer into the labor market fields in New York City, if/when they join a gender-segregated unskilled service industry, namely housekeeping or child care.

Herminda: A little girl who is eight, nine, ten years, eleven, twelve, thirteen years, she gets bigger for the act of knowing how to make tortillas, that is super important, so then

knowing how to cook awaits her, like that, just about the majority of the, if there is still a grandmother in the family, the grandchildren get along with the grandmother a lot, more than with the mother, so then you learn a lot from the grandmother, to make *atoles*, that is another thing too, the *atoles*, you have to know how to make *atoles*, you have to know how to stew, um, wash, um, iron, well, not so much ironing because there are still not many families who have electricity, well, there are already, well at that time there were families who did not have electricity, well now there are, well, at that time, there were families who did not have electricity, and where were you going to iron? So then you have to clean the house...a girl between her six years already had to do those types of labors, she already starts to contribute to the house...like in between her five and six years, that is when you start to factor in beginning to contribute, beginning to help, and since they are growing, the little girls take more responsibilities in the house, including more than the mother.

Una chiquilla de ocho, nueve, diez años, once doce, trece años, se le engrandece por el hecho de saber como hacer tortillas, eso es súper importante, entonces se espera de saber cocinar, ahí, casi la mayoría de los, si todavía abuela en la familia, los nietos convivían bastante con que la abuela, mas con la madre...entonces aprendes mucho de la abuela, hacer las *atoles*, que es otra cosa también, los *atoles*, tienes que saber como hacer los *atoles*, tienes que saber guisar, este, lavar, este, planchar, bueno, planchar no mucho porque todavía no hay muchas familias que tienen electricidad, bueno ya hay, bueno en ese entonces había familias que no tenía electricidad, y donde ibas a planchar? Entonces tienes que limpiar la casa...una niña entre sus seis años ya tiene empieza hacer esos tipos de labores, ya empieza a contribuir en la casa...como entre sus cinco y seis años, ya es cuando empieza tomar en cuenta empezar a contribuir, empezar ayudar, y como se va creciendo, las niñas toman mas responsabilidades de la casa, incluso mas que la madre...

Carolina, Milagros and Herminda all discuss the ages at which youth in their communities begin to engage in work. From very early ages, rural youth are not considered as children in the modern sense, as helpless and dependent who should be kept from engaging in labor activities, but rather, they are evaluated early on for the household labors they can assist with. From early ages youth believe that unskilled work is a normal part of children's daily activities that makes up most of their days. This age-based ideology prevails in their communities, and has come to shape youth's life experiences during their early years and, as seen in Chapter 7, upon their immigration to New York City. Integrated into their habitus, youth may learn to expect that their lives are mostly devoted to unskilled working, as labor is the primary activity in their lives from early ages, only to become a (temporary) secondary activity, perhaps, with the youth's enrollment in school. After school completion and/or exit, however, as

well as during vacations, work resumes its primary status. Like their parents before them, these youth learn they should be engaging in work, and specifically, unskilled work, at early ages and for most of their days.

Own Labor Experiences

At ages as young as five years old, rural Mexican youth reported engaging in house and fieldwork themselves, performing this work primarily to assist their families with their farming or maintenance of the household. While unpaid, this work translated into not only sustenance of the home, but in some cases, the ability to generate income through the sales of surplus harvest that would go towards of the payment of their educational expenses as well as other needs. In any case, early forays into the world of work allow youth to obtain skills at early ages that could be transferable into the labor market fields in New York City. Through their early experiences, then, rural Mexican youth learn that unskilled work is the type of labor they can engage in, but they also learn skills that make them into the ideal workers for exploited unskilled labor niches in New York City, including withstanding harsh work conditions, working long hours, engaging in strenuous physical work, and earning little pay.

Carolina began engaging in extensive housework as early as four or five in her home. At early ages, Carolina was expected to share in the household responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, grinding corn for tortillas, making tortillas, and other chores, oftentimes before and after going to school. She recounts having to wake up very early to grind her corn, and then returning home to make tortillas for the family, all before going to school. After school, she was required to help with dinner and dishes in addition to completing her own schoolwork, all starting again early the next morning. One could argue that this could also prepare her to balance school and work.

Carolina: This man had this mill and he opened it at five in the morning, so then our obligation was that of my aunt, me, and my cousin, living there, three women living there,

because my mama's obligation was to cook, so then the obligation of the three was for us to take turns, um, one week, each one of us, of going to the mill, so then, or we would go together, the three of us went, so then at five o'clock in the morning we had to be there at the mill, by six o'clock we had to return with the dough, and depending on whose turn it was, since we took turns each one of us, we made tortillas for a little, since I entered school at 7:30 in the morning, and sometimes I did not do it, my aunt did it in that week, or my aunt ground it during the week and my cousin and I did it on the weekends, so then that was the way, and leave the house swept, make up the beds and then we could go to school. So then, after school, arrive, we had to wash our uniforms, do our homework, and cook the dinner, cook the dinner for grandmother, once again, all of us together, wash the dishes, our obligation was to wash the dishes and go to bed.

Este señor tenía este molino y lo habría a las cinco de la mañana, entonces nuestra obligación era de mi tía, yo y mi prima, viviendo ahí, tres mujeres viviendo ahí, porque la obligación de mi mamá era de cocinar, entonces, la obligación de las tres era de tornarnos, este, una semana, cada una de nosotras, de ir al molino, entonces, o nos acompañábamos, íbamos los tres, entonces a las cinco de la mañana teníamos que estar ahí en el molino, a las seis de la mañana, ya teníamos que regresar con esta masa, y dependiendo en quien lo tocaba, como tornábamos cada de nosotros, hacemos tortillas por un poquito, como yo entraba a las 7:30 de la mañana de la escuela, y a veces yo no lo hacía, lo hacía mi tía en la semana, o mi tía se molía entre la semana, y mi prima y yo nos tocaba los fines de la semana, entonces, ese era en la mañana, y dejar barrido la casa, tendía las camas y ya, podríamos irnos a la escuela. Entonces, después de la escuela, llegarnos, teníamos lavar nuestras uniformes, hacer la tareas, y cocinar la cena, cocinar la cena para la abuela, otra vez todos reunidos, lavar las trastes, nuestra obligación era de lavar los trastes, y irnos a dormir.

Esmeralda, a premigration sixteen year old from San Pedro, Puebla, recalled beginning to go out into the fields to work with her parents when she was five years old, something she continues to do so to this day. During the school year, Esmeralda described working three or four hours a day after school. She would arrive home from school at two o'clock, leave to work at three o'clock and return home around six or seven o'clock. During vacations, the family would spend up to nine hours a day in the fields.

Esmeralda: Well, since I was five years old, because since we had fields/plots, and well, my father would take us to the fields to work, even if they were simple jobs, because I was small. We would go sometimes very early in the morning and we would not return until like around five o'clock in the afternoon. We would go to harvest peanuts or to plant some seeds.

Pues, desde los cinco años, porque como nosotros tenemos campos, pues mi papá nos llevaba al campo a trabajar, aunque eran trabajos sencillos, porque estaba chiquita. A veces nos íbamos muy temprano en la mañana y nos regresábamos como las cinco de la tarde. Íbamos para cosechar cacahuates o sembrar alguna siembra.

The entire family including her father, mother and two younger brothers, ages twelve and seven, would go together to the fields. She described how all of the children, even the youngest, learned how to hold a (sharp) scythe and strip the peanut plants.

Esmeralda: Well, ahh, yes you go to the fields, you learn to do things that you have never done, umm, well of our family of five, um, you cannot do anything more than scrape the peanuts, my father, and now the three of us [children] are learning, the three of us are already with the scythe, scraping the plants...

Pues, ahh, si hasta campo vas, aprendes hacer cosas que nunca hayas hecho, esta pues de los cinco que somos de mi familia, este, nada mas puede rascar el cacahuete mi papa, y ahora estamos aprendiendo los tres, ya estamos los tres con el garabato, rascando las matas...

Lalo, a non school-going eighteen year old post-migration male from San Tomas, Puebla also reported contributing his labor to the family at a young age. By age eight, Lalo was working in the fields. During harvest time, Lalo would work after school, five hours a day, five days a week. Likewise, Jorge began working in the fields with his family since the age of eight. His family relied on his assistance at a young age to harvest their gladiolas. This work, occurring every day after school and all-day on Saturdays included the processes that were needed to take flowers from harvest to sale in the marketplace.

Jorge: [At what age did you begin to work?] At eight years old. [Why did you begin to work?] To help my parents because they have too much work. [And what type of work did you do?] Everything that is cultivating flowers, taking them down, pulling them out... [Talk to me about how you managed your time, going to school and working?] Go to school first, and then, leaving, go to the fields.

[A que edad empezaste a trabajar?] A los ocho anos. [Porque empezaste a trabajar?] Para ayudar a mis padres, porque tenían demasiado trabajo. [Y que tipo de trabajo hiciste?] Todo que es el cultivo al flor, descargar, arrancar. [Plátame como manejaste tu tiempo de ir a la escuela y trabajar?] Ir a la escuela primero, y ya saliendo, ir al campo...

Roberto, a seventeen year old post immigration youth was another individual who began working for money prior to the age of ten. After seeing other men go to the fields to work, at age nine, Roberto and his friends went around asking for work and began to go into the fields,

working nine hours a day, three days a week. He discussed doing strenuous work, learning how to plant corn and cane.

Roberto: I was like nine years old, and what we would do was to plant corn and cana, that is what we would do, we went to plant, we would go to scrape and plant cane in the earth, and the corns...

Tenía como nueve años, y lo que hacíamos era de sembrar maíz y canas, eso es lo que hacíamos, íbamos a sembrar, nosotros nos mandábamos para rascar, y plantar cana en la tierra, y las maíces...

For other youth, waged labor began two years later, by age ten or eleven years old, as youth looked for ways to economically help their households and share the burden of their educational expenses. In rural areas, most youth engaged in fieldwork for pay, while others worked in restaurants and stores around their communities or in the next closest town. Demonstrating high levels of initiative as they seek to obtain employment, the youth seek jobs on their own and move from job to job, seeking better wages or work conditions.

Types of Employment/Labor in Rural Mexico

Overall, 90% of working rural youth report that the primary industry in which they work is agriculture (Bacon, 1997; Carey, Jr., 2004). This was also true for the study youth including Jesus, a school-going post-immigration seventeen year old. He reported working in a string of part-time jobs in his hometown, Pacuacco, Morelos by the time he had reached fifteen. Starting at age eight or nine, he worked in the fields and then spent over two years working as a truck mechanic's assistant. He was working at his last job, in a plant nursery before leaving for New York City to work.

Jesus: Well, first I worked in the [plant] nurseries, from there I was in the fields, and I was working there three years, four years in the fields, from there I looked for another job as a mechanic, a diesel mechanic, and from there I also dedicated some years too, from there I left, and I left to work in the [plant] nurseries, and from there, another year I returned to the mechanic which was my last year in Mexico.

Pues primero trabajaba yo en viveros, de ahí estaba en campo, y yo estaba ahí trabajando tres años, cuatro años en el campo, de ahí busque otro trabajo de mecánica, mecánica de diesel, y ahí

dedique unos años también, de ahí me salí, y me salí para trabajar en los viveros, y de ahí, otro año regreso a la mecánica que fue mi último año en México.

Julio, a non-school going seventeen year old post migration male also discussed working a string of jobs so that he could pay for school expenses, including cooperation fees and supplies. Although Julio reported that from early ages he had helped out at home with chores, including cutting and bringing firewood home and taking care of their livestock, at age ten, he began working for pay in his mother's friend's field, and by age thirteen he was working on weekends and during vacations, over twelve hours a day, installing glass windows in cars. For his work, he received fifty pesos a day, or approximately five dollars.

Julio: First I went to work with the [car] windows. [And at what age did you work at this job?] Like thirteen years. [And how did you get this job?] Well I knew a man. When I was looking for work, I saw that this man was there, working. I asked him for a job, if he had a job that he would give me, to work because I was looking for a job, and he told me yes, and I stayed there in that moment and I began to work. [

Primero fui a trabajar a los vidrios...[Y que edad tenías tu de trabajar ese trabajo?] Como thirteen años. [Y como fue que conseguiste ese trabajo?] Pues yo conocí un señor. Cuando yo estaba buscando trabajo yo vi que ese señor estaba ahí, trabajando. Yo le pedí un trabajo, si tenía el un trabajo que me lo diera, para trabajar porque yo estaba buscando trabajo, y él me dijo que si, y yo me quedaba en ese momento y empecé a trabajar.

Herminda also reported starting her waged career at the age of thirteen. Already in *secundaria*, she began to work in the fields after school, earning sixty pesos a day for six hours of work. Like other youth whose first work experiences were in the fields, she would go to work after school, returning home until eight o'clock at night.

Herminda: To work, to work, to work in the fields in Mexico? I was in *secundaria*, I was like thirteen years old. [And how much did they pay you?] Like sixty pesos a day. And I worked only four days out of the week...leaving school, after school, I would leave school like at one in the afternoon, I would go in [to work] at two, and I would leave at eight o'clock at night.

A trabajar, a trabajar, a trabajar, en el campo en México? Yo estaba en *secundaria*, yo tenía como trece años...[Y que tanto te pagaba?] Como setenta pesos al día...Y trabajaba solamente cuatro días de la semana...saliendo de la escuela, después de la escuela...salía de la escuela como a la una de la tarde, entraba como a las dos, y me iba a las ocho de la noche.

Other rural Mexican youth did not report working outside of their home or family until they had definitely discontinued their studies. Youth who discontinued their studies, either prior to the completion of *secundaria* or after, obtained full-time, low-paying employment at ages illegal both in Mexico and the United States.

Pedro a seventeen year old post migration male from San Luis de Coyotl, Guerrero was able to find full-time employment after completing *primaria*. Violating Mexican child labor laws, a candy store owner hired him to work for twelve hours a day, stocking her shelves. After two years working at the store, he left the candy store because his boss was very demanding, or *exigente*. He quickly found employment at a hardware store, but would return back to the candy store for improved pay.

Pedro: Well, when I was eleven years old, we left there [San Luis de Coyotl] and when we went to Tamaulipas, I began to work. I went to Tamaulipas with my mother and my sisters and I began to work, I only worked—me and my other sister. I worked in a candy store, stocking the candies.

Bueno, cuando tuve once años, nos salimos de allí [San Luis de Coyotl] y fuimos a Tamaulipas, empecé a trabajar. Y yo fui a Tamaulipas con mi mamá y mis hermanos, y yo empecé a trabajar, y pues trabajaba nada más—trabajaba yo y mi otra hermana. Trabajé en una dulcería, acomodando dulces.

Clementina did not work for wages until she had completed her *secundaria* studies. Obtaining her first job at age fifteen, Clementina found work as a cook in a small restaurant in San Benito de los Lagos. Exiting from *secundaria*, Clementina wished to also assert her financial independence from her grandparents and sister by working. She no longer wanted to depend on others for money.

Clementina: I began to work at fifteen years of age, I was already outside of school. I began to work because I felt like I did not want to ask my sister or my grandmother for my things, what I wanted was to work.

Empezó a trabajar a los 15 años, yo ya estaba afuera de la escuela. Empezó a trabajar porque sentía que yo no quería pedir a mi hermana o abuela para mis cosas, lo que quería era trabajar.

Likewise, although she had worked part-time in the fields, after dropping out of her first year of *Bachiller*, Carolina sought and obtained employment in a clothing factory. Reflective of a general permissiveness about age and labor, Carolina shared that “there you had to be sixteen years of age, but they let me enter into work/ahi tenias que tener diez y seis anos, pero me dejaron entrar a trabajar.” At this site, Carolina worked eleven hours a day and five days a week, folding manufactured clothes and placing inspection stickers on these items. If she made her quota, she could earn approximately \$350 pesos a week.

Obtaining Skills in the Rural Mexican Labor Market

Aside from providing labor and/or earning money that they could give to their parents or use on their own expenses, several of the youth reported learning various skills while working. While skills such as being responsible, getting along with people and finishing what one starts are intangible and not directly exchangeable as a skill in the labor market, these learned traits do make youth “good” workers, able to hold employment and produce results in the workplace. In addition, youth discussed learning marketable skills, such as knowing how to cook, how to install car windows, how to farm, and knowing how to lay bricks, all skills that the youth could promote as they sought employment, not only in the labor market fields in their communities, but also in the labor market fields in New York City.

These cultural and human capital could be exchanged for different amounts of economic capital upon immigration if the youth would be allowed into the labor market in New York, as well as local niches in which these skills are valued/necessary. For example, Manuel, while taking care of goats, learned how to “**do things rapidly, not to be slow, and to do things, do them well**”/hacer rapido las cosas, no ser lento, y de hacer las cosas, sacarlas bien,” all skills that would deem someone a good worker. Other youth reported that they learned to be

responsible, a trait that would help them on the job. This trait could be learned in the household or in the fields, as youth were held responsible for completed tasks that would either help households run smoothly or help fieldworkers finish planting and/or harvesting the amount of crops assigned to them.

Roberto: [Do you think you learned valuable skills in your jobs?] I think that yes, because it helps you learn how to be responsible, to do, finish things you start.

[Y piensas que aprendiste habilidades valerosas en tus trabajos?] Yo creo que sí, porque te ayuda aprender como ser responsable, hacer, acabar las cosas que empiezas...

Other youth reported learning more tangible skills that may be valuable to obtain better paid employment than field work. For example, some youth worked in construction and they believed that they learned valuable skills in these jobs. One such youth, Julio, believed that his most valuable skills were learned while he worked in his construction. These skills, including identifying tools and preparing, laying and removing bricks, could be used in any other construction job he could obtain, either in Mexico or in the United States.

Julio: [And in your jobs, do you think that you learned any valuable skills?] Yes, like in construction, um, to prepare the materials that bricklayers use. The tools that they ask of me, I can give them to them. Um, in these jobs, I learned how to put them all, I learned how to put them, take them off...

[Y en tus trabajos, crees que aprendiste habilidades valores?] Si, como en construcción, este de preparar las materiales que ocupan los albañiles. La herramienta que ellos me piden, yo les puedo dar. Este, en los trabajos, yo aprendí como a ponerlos todos, aprendí como ponerlos, como quitarlos...

Concha had spent several years working as a nanny for families both in San Benito de los Lagos and in San Pedro prior to our interview. When asked whether or not she had learned valuable skills during her work experiences, she believed that she learned much about the alimentation of children, knowledge that she could use as she looked for work with employment agencies or private employers. Well documented as an occupational niche in which young, immigrant women are able to obtain employment, in New York City and other

postindustrial/global cities, employment opportunities in childcare would be available to Concha upon her immigration. Due to her prior employment experiences in Mexico, she possessed valuable human capital that she could exchange for pay in New York City.

The Exchange of School Skills in the Labor Market

In most cases, rural Mexican youth did not believe that they were learning skills in school that they used in the labor market. A few youth, especially those who used mathematics in their jobs in rural Mexico, believed that the mathematics skills that they learned in schools were useful.

Julio worked in construction and believed that he had learned skills in school that had helped him work. Knowing how to take and calculate measurements helped him measure materials/wood on the construction site, materials that the construction workers needed.

Julio: Okay, yes. Well, like construction, like counting the measurements of the materials that they want, mmm, make some accounts that maybe they cannot, I would help them.

Okay, sí. Bueno, como construcción, como contar las medidas de las materiales que ellos quieren, mmm, hacer algunas cuentas que a la mejor ellos no podían, yo les ayudaba.

In the case of Esmeralda, she believed that it was not the skills that she learned, but rather the credentials provided by school completion that were necessary to obtain a job in San Benito de los Lagos. She knew this because she had seen others ask for jobs in San Benito de los Lagos and be told that they needed proof that they completed *secundaria*.

Esmeralda: [And do you think that there are benefits to completing secundaria in Mexico?] I think so because if you go to San Benito de los Lagos to look for work, if you don't have secundaria, then they do not give it to you. [And do you have to show something that you finished secundaria?] Yes, your papers, you have to show them so that they can give you work. [All types of jobs or just some jobs?] Some. [Like which ones?] Well like in the shoe stores, they ask for your papers, that you studied, and if you do not have them, well they tell you that they need someone who has capabilities.

[Y crees que hay beneficios de cumplir secundaria en Mexico?] Creo que sí porque si vas a San Benito de los Lagos para buscar un trabajo, si no tienes secundaria, pues no te dan.[Y tienes que enseñar algo que cumpliste secundaria?] Sí, tus papeles, tienes que enseñarlos para que se den trabajo. [Todos tipos de trabajos o no mas algunos?] Algunos. [Como cuales?] Pues como en las zapaterías, piden tus papeles, de que estudiaste, y si no los tienes, pues te dicen que necesitan una persona que tiene capacidad.

Aside from observing community adults and their parents working long hours in unskilled work, paid and unpaid, the early participation of Mexican youth in unskilled labor reinforces the idea that their lives will be filled with unskilled work for many years to come. Engaging at such work at early ages prepares the youth to not only re-enact them in other settings, but also to learn other traits that will be important in unskilled jobs, including being responsible, being able to speak with others, as well as how to *aguantar*, or put up with difficult manual work from early on. Eluding to class and race-based differences among youth, Jose Luis, maintains that middle class, Western children are spared from obligatory work, especially difficult or strenuous work for long periods, while rural Mexican youth are exposed to it early and are expected to perform it for household purposes. Working only in agricultural and unskilled labor niches, rural Mexican youth learn that their primary labor activities will be corporal, not intellectual, as unskilled workers. These youth believe then that it is perfectly acceptable to engage in difficult labor not only as youth, but also as they age as adults. As youth immigrate then, they find it perfectly normal to work in predominantly unskilled manual jobs that are characterized by harsh, illegal conditions, at their young ages and even earlier. These youth are preconditioned to be “good” workers in unskilled labor and they also possess traits and tangible skills that can be exchanged in the United States labor market for employment.

Learning to leave to work: Internal Migration

As documented in Sawyer, et. al (2009), the lack of local employment opportunities filled the youth with hopelessness about their own lives in their hometowns, both in the present and the future. They were filled with doubt about whether or not they could stay and find employment. Manuel was one such youth who was pessimistic about the availability of employment opportunities in his community. There simply are no jobs in his town.

Manuel: I don't know, I don't want to be here, I told him, because many are, and at the end, I say, there isn't even work...

No sé, yo no quiero estar aquí, le dije, porque muchos están y a la ultima, yo digo, ni hay trabajo...

Prior to his departure around age fifteen, Felipe's days were filled with boredom. He spent all day in the house, and frustrated due to the absence of work in the area. While work for adults existed, no work for youth existed. If it did, he would seek it and engage in it. This inability to earn money in was a direct consequence of the absence of work in his hometown, which, in turn, led to frustration and boredom.

Felipe: I would wake at eight o'clock in the morning, I would go give to the animals, arriving at home, there was nothing to do, I would get bored from being in the house. There were no jobs, because of that I had to be at home, and then I would go to the street to see the animals, there is not anything to do, if you need to eat something, there isn't anywhere to get money from because there aren't jobs to work, all day at home... I was only in the house, with nothing to do, like since there are no jobs there, there is work for the parents, but for youth, no...

Despertaba a las ocho de la mañana, iba dar a los animales, llegando a la casa, no había nada que hacer, me aburro de estar en la casa, porque no había trabajos, por eso tenía que estar en la casa, y luego iba yo a la calle para ver a los animales, no hay cosa que hacer, si necesita comer algo, no hay para donde para agarrar dinero porque no hay trabajo para trabajar, todo el día en la casa... No mas estaba yo en la casa, con nada que hacer, como no hay trabajos allá, hay trabajos para los papas, pero para los niños, no...

Youth, however, learn at early ages that employment opportunities exist in other towns, some close by and others further away. With little employment in their hometowns, the youth learn that adults often leave their rural hometowns for more lucrative employment (Davis, et al., 2002). Although the most-of discussed destination for improved labor has been dominated by immigration to the United States, some rural Mexican youth know that adults engage in internal migration as well. Rural Mexican youth reported watching as (mostly) men left their towns to search for employment in larger towns and cities in Mexico, not the United States. Youth knew about these practices in which adults, including their own parents, found better wages and work conditions, either in their home states, or by crossing state borders. The distances adults would

travel for work internally varied, from a few towns over from which adults could return nightly, to those cases which were much further. Adults engaged in internal labor migration, where they would leave their families for long periods of time to work. In larger cities, individuals could obtain more lucrative jobs as sellers, factory workers or construction workers. Jesus spoke of knowing that labor opportunities existed outside of his hometown.

Jesus: Jobs, in my community, there are none, but in the state there are...you can go somewhere else and there are central [spaces?], plazas, commercial centers...

Empleos, en mi comunidad, no hay, pero en el estado si...puedes ir a otro lugar y hay centrales a vasco, plazas, comerciales...

Likewise, Lalo, spoke of larger cities, these further away from his hometown, in which men could find employment. In these cities, men could find agricultural as well as other types of work.

Lalo: [And the men from your town, what types of jobs do they have?] The same [agriculture] or they go to work in other towns...they work in Mexico, Cuernavaca, they would go over there to work...

[Y los hombres del pueblo, que tipos de trabajos tienen ellos?] Igual [agricultura], o iban a trabajar en otros pueblos...trabajar en México, Cuernavaca, para allá iban a trabajar...

The impact of scarce local employment opportunities personally impacted the youth's households. Both Luis and Pedro's own parents participated in internal labor migration for better employment and economic opportunities. In Luis' case, his father would engage in internal circular migration, spending several months working in different jobs in Mexico City, including construction, and then returning to Oaxaca for several months to tend to his fields. Previously, Luis had been unable to accompany him because he was attending school. Now, after dropping out, Luis accompanied him on his seasonal trip to DF and although he remained outside of the labor market, he observed his father's work.

Luis: [Well, I would accompany him [to DF] to go look for something [work] more, not there, we stayed a good time there [DF], he found work in construction there, he was there,

since way before, he was there while I was in school...I couldn't accompany him before because I was in school...

[Pues yo le acompañaba para que podría buscar algo mas, no allí, nos quedábamos un buen tiempo allí, el encontré trabajo en construcción allá...el estuve allí, mucho antes, el estuve ahí mientras yo estaba en la escuela...yo no podría acompañarlo antes porque yo estaba en la escuela

Pedro's single mother uprooted her entire family to a town with improved employment opportunities. Unable to find work in her own small town, Pedro's mother found work in La Guadalupe where she cleaned other people's homes and took in other families' laundry to wash. Here, even Pedro found employment at the age of eleven.

Pedro: [And why did you go to La Guadalupe?] Well, because, because there were more work opportunities, living in the city, well, it is not so big as a city, but there is more work...

[Y porque fueron a La Guadalupe?] Pues por este, porque ósea había mas oportunidades para trabajo, vivir en una ciudad, bueno, no están tan grande la ciudad, pero hay mas trabajo...

Living in areas with few opportunities to earn a living and scarce employment, youth were learning at early ages that it was highly likely that they would have to seek employment elsewhere. Whereas they saw some community and family members continue to work in the fields and households, others felt that they were left with little choice but to uproot and seek employment in other towns and cities in Mexico, both within their own states or outside of them. Other youth know of adults/individuals who engage in internal labor migration, uprooting themselves and families to seek out employment opportunities, either within a reasonable distance from their homes, within their home state, or at further distances. In the face of little or unappealing employment opportunities, labor migration becomes part of their schemata for being in the world, a fact of life for these youth, even at early ages.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ All of the rural youth knew community members and possessed family members who had immigrated to the United States in search of employment. Rural Mexican youth learned early that immigrating due to both scarcity, as well as improved work conditions, including pay, was a wholly acceptable strategy to employ to create better futures for themselves. At early ages, youth received messages about better employment opportunities in the United States, a theme I will explore in Chapter Six.

Rural youth are raised to begin working from the age they show the first signs of independence. Unpaid at first, rural youth then move onto paid employment, to both contribute to the family as well as to lighten their own burdens on the household. These youth work in unstable, low-paying, jobs which although do not provide youth with “tangible” transferable skills that can be exchanged for higher positions jobs, they are learning how to be good workers, in conditions that will provide them a dual frame reference for other undesirable jobs. In few cases however, working in these jobs kept youth in school, as they hoped that their extended schooling would prevent their long-term employment in such work. Observing adults who leave their hometowns, both for work inside the Mexican Republic, as well as beyond her borders, the youth come to terms at early ages, that desirable work exists elsewhere, outside of their hometowns.

Fields in Rural Mexico: Education

While the dominant classes would lead some to believe that these low levels of education are a result of the educational aspirations of the community members themselves, Bourdieu (1984) argues that schools are the instruments that contribute to the reproduction of power relations, i.e., the continued domination of the higher classes over the subordinate lower classes. This rings true not only within the nation-state borders of Mexico and in the United States, considered separately, but also in relationship to each other, across nation-state borders. On average, not only do the upper classes of Mexican society, mostly located in cities, possess much higher levels of education than their rural counterparts, but also, on average, United States residents possess much higher levels of education than the rural Mexican classes whose labor they have long depended upon (Padilla, 2006). In the case of rural Mexico, these inequalities have persisted for generations with little respite. Unlike the practices discussed by other scholars in

discussions of education and social reproduction such as hidden codes of communication and practices in the classroom (Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2000), the means used in Mexico are even less concealed. In many rural Mexican communities, formal schooling, at the level of *secundaria* and *Bachiller*, has only recently been made available. Without the expansion of educational institutions, rural Mexicans cannot even attempt to obtain educational credentials that are necessary for more desirable employment, much less learn skills in school that would prepare them for any type of work other than agricultural work.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Mexican government only recently extended its legal obligation to provide education beyond *primaria* in 1993. In 1993, the government mandated, under ANMEB, obligatory schooling up to the level of *secundaria* completion. This act not only obligated youth to attend school up to this level, it also obligated the government to provide schools up to this level. In many of the communities that the youth resided in, it was only recently that *telesecundarias* had been constructed in their communities; in much fewer cases, the youth reported the recent construction of a *Bachiller*. Unequal school coverage has been the primary way in which the dominant classes have prevented the rural Mexican classes and communities, from obtaining even slightly higher levels of cultural/educational capital. So, whereas in current-day United States, social reproduction has been facilitated predominantly by the differential practices within and across schools, in Mexico, many rural youth have not even been provided access to *any* schools beyond *primaria*. In the rural Mexican case, then, practices within schools that enable social reproduction, as discussed by Heath (1983) and Lareau (2000) become moot points.

Rural Mexican youth grow up in communities in which educational opportunities and attainment have been elusive for generations. In these areas, for generations, as educational

resources have trickled into the communities, educational levels have also inched upwards. Over at least three generations, these gains have been slight and frankly, not enough to provide youth with the skills and credentials needed to obtain higher skilled occupations/positions. Rural Mexican youth remain largely unprepared (and uncredentialed) for anything but either agricultural work, or unskilled, low-paying work. As seen at various moments of United States history, many argue that the dearth of schools beyond primaria has been purposeful, as the availability of an uneducated, surplus, unskilled labor pool only available for employment in the United States only serves United States' corporate interests.¹¹⁶

In the schools that do exist, most of the youth reported many conditions which further challenge the idea that the country and the communities are committed to the education and positive development of rural Mexican youth. Similar to findings discussed by Sawyer, et. al (2009) in their study of Tlacotepec, Oaxaca, the rural study youth reported that their schools experienced high levels of teacher absenteeism as well as truancy, as well as exorbitant schooling fees which during their educational careers, severely impacted many of the youth's ability to continue their studies. In spite of fees, resources were scarce, with many of the youth reporting little access to computers and individual textbooks.¹¹⁷

Average Levels of Rural School Completion

In exploring cultural and social reproduction, special attention is paid to the ideas about educational completion in the surrounding milieu. Rural Mexico is characterized by low levels of educational completion that have persisted for generations. Whereas individuals between the

¹¹⁶ Various scholars have discussed how immigration has actually served as a safety valve for Mexico and for rural Mexicans (Whetten, 1948). Concentration of such large numbers of undereducated, unskilled youth and adults without employment opportunities would create a crisis situation, possible conditions for political revolt. The United States' dependence on this labor has, in fact, helped Mexico prevent, some say, class revolution.

¹¹⁷ The Mexican government is to provide free textbooks to students up to *secundaria*. Perhaps an indication to the country/community's commitment to educating youth beyond *secundaria*, *Bachiller* students reported having to share one textbook among five students. This would occur in classrooms which had less than twenty students.

ages of 25 and 59 completed levels of schooling averaging 6.1 years in 2006, youth between the ages of 15 and 24 completed, on average, 8.5 years of schooling (ECLAC, 2007). Although these increases are slight to the naked eye, these differences comprise the intergenerational educational mobility that has been occurring in rural regions of Mexico for the past three generations. Rural Mexican youth were well aware of this phenomenon. When asked about educational attainment in their hometowns, the youth were sure to distinguish between three generations' average levels of educational attainment. The youth believed that their grandparents' generation of residents possessed an average level of schooling that included *primaria*, but not necessarily completion. Individuals belonging to their parents' generation possessed slightly more education, completing *primaria* and perhaps enrolling in *secundaria*, but not completing *secundaria*. Lastly, the youth believed that the majority of the youth in their own generation were completing *secundaria* and enrolling, but not completing, *preparatoria*.¹¹⁸

Herminda: Well, the majority of adults, and adults, I think of my mama, the majority of the people just arrived to the middle of *primaria*, or, there, you only learn how to count, write and read [in the third year?] Yes, approximately in between the third year and the fourth year of *primaria*, that is something that is considered sufficient there in that society to develop, after, exactly, but there is one, there is, there is a big minority who do not know how to read or write, who are in the third generation [senior citizens] who are between there fifty and seventy years, and they do not know how to read or write, and they are, they tend to participate less in political things, they tend to participate less, because of the same, because these people do not understand much. From my generation in its minority, we continue studying, from my generation, in the minority, that is like 30% of 100% of the youth in my generation [class], Bueno, la mayoría de adultos, en adultos, recuerdo a mi mama, la mayoría de la gente no mas llevo al punto medio de *primaria*, ósea que, ahí, solo aprendías saber como contar, escribir y leer, [Y este es el tercer año?] Si, aproximadamente entre el tercer año y cuarto año de *primaria*, eso es algo que considera suficiente ahí en ese sociedad de desarrollarse después, exacto, pero este alguno si hay, hay una gran minoría que no saben como

¹¹⁸ According to the overall, the demand for enrollment at the upper *secundaria* level declined in FY 2010 (El Universal, July 6, 2010). As is, reports indicate that only 64% of eligible youth are enrolled in *Bachiller*. Rates of enrollment are much lower in rural areas ; In DF, however, the city has recently launched a new campaign, "Prepa Si" that provides scholarships to eligible youth to enroll and complete high school (El Universal, July 9, 2010). Linked to high grades (US equivalent to As), the first generation of 5,000 youth in DF received 700 pesos monthly to support their studies. While some youth reported using the money for such things as Internet cafes so that they could complete assignments for school, others reported using the money for the purchase of alcohol and entertainment.

leer y escribir, que están en la tercer generación que están entre sus ah, cincuenta anos y sesenta anos, y no saben como leer o escribir, y están muy, tiende menos a cooperar con cosas políticas, tienden menos a participar, por lo mismo, porque esta gente no entiende mucho,; De mi generación en su minoría, seguimos estudiando, de mi generación, en su minoría, que será como 30% de los 100% de los jóvenes de mi generación.

Likewise, Baltazar responded the following way:

Baltazar: Particularly the older people have very low [levels] of education, they only obtained a *primaria* [education], and over there, there are some who did not even finish, they only learned to read, to write, to count, and that is all of the schooling for them, already, the youth, they already have a more advanced education, they can get to *Bachillerato*, or have careers in *secundaria*, nothing more, but they don't just stay in *primaria* anymore, they leave.

Particularmente los señores tienen una educación muy bajadas, nada mas llegaron hasta la *primaria*, y allá hay algunos que ni terminaron, solo aprendieron a leer, a escribir, a contar, y ese es todo la escuela para ellos, ya él, los jóvenes, ya tienen una educación mas avanzada, pueden llegar al *Bachillerato*, o unos tienen carreras en la *secundaria* nada mas, pero ya no se quedan en la *primaria*...salen...

Within rural Mexican communities, youth are aware that the eldest adults possess the lowest levels of education, and that incremental improvements in education have occurred in their communities. No longer as low, youth are observing that education in their communities is changing, and that educational norms are creeping higher. Although “much” improved by the study youth’s generation, average educational levels remain much lower than even those of marginalized youth in the United States. Living in communities where current low levels of education are possessed by the majority, but framed as a vast improvement over previous generations, rural Mexican youth internalize the idea that complete schooling after the completion of *secundaria* is an acceptable – by some measures even huge – accomplishment.

School Coverage in Rural Mexico

Intergenerational educational mobility has mirrored the historical changes in rural education that the Mexican government has adopted over the years. These changes, facilitated by increased school coverage, have arrived slowly, incrementally, and insufficiently. Rural Mexico

has long been characterized by limited access to formal schooling in their communities, with some communities' highest level of schooling being *primarias*. The majority of the rural youth reported having no more than four schools in their home communities: a pre-school, a kindergarten, and elementary school and a *secundaria*, and in several cases, the *secundaria* had only been constructed within the previous five years.¹¹⁹ This presence or absence of schools in rural communities explains the lower levels of educational attainment found in these communities, as the rural youth explained that with without a *secundaria* or a *Bachiller*, many youth opt to discontinue their studies. Attending schools outside of their communities meant incurring additional expenses including transportation or food, expenses that often strained their families' incomes.

For some youth, insufficient school coverage is problematic as early as their entrance into *secundaria*, and seriously puts in doubt youth's chances of schooling beyond *primaria* completion. Pedro discusses the absence of a *secundaria* in his home community, and the proximity of the next closest *secundaria*. Although buses existed in the town to transport youth to school, many youth, himself included, did not have the money to pay for daily round-trip transportation to the *secundaria*. He attributes the distance of the *secundaria* from his home community, as well as the costs associated with attending school, as the reason why he and so many youth did not want to continue studying beyond *primaria*. Schools were not sympathetic to this reality, oftentimes locking their doors and not allowing late students entry into the school, no matter how far they lived from the school

¹¹⁹The absence of the *secundarias* in rural communities may be explained by its optional status until the early 1990s. In spite of the establishment of *secundarias* in 1923, it was not until 1993 that *secundaria* attendance was deemed mandatory (Levinson, 2001). According to Levinson (2001), only until recently, *secundaria* attendance was perceived as a stepping stone only for those students, usually urban, who were interested in pursuing professional studies at urban-area *preparatorias*.

Pedro: Well, there, where I lived, there was a *primaria*, but the *secundaria*, there was not one, you had to go to (inaudible) because of that, so many people, many youth did not want to study, it was far...[And how far was the *secundaria* from where you lived?] Well, walking, like, like an hour and a half, one hour, maybe one hour...

Pedro: Bueno, allí, donde vivía yo, había *primaria*, pero la *secundaria*, no había, tenía que irse hasta (inaudible), por eso había muchas personas, muchos jóvenes que no querían estudiar, estaba lejos...[Y que tan lejos era la *secundaria* de donde vivía tu?] Bueno caminando, como, como una hora y media...una hora o una hora...

Although other youth discussed the positive effects of recent openings of *secundarias* in their communities, they learned that, in spite of its presence, changes in levels of educational attainment would take time. In Cuatlacco, where both Julio and Manuel were from, while the community had possessed a *primaria* for over twenty years, the *secundaria* had been constructed in just the past eight years. Despite its presence, however, many youth had grown accustomed to *primaria* completion as the highest level of schooling provided (and needed) and did not attend *secundaria*. One could argue that because the communities had existed so many years with only a *primaria* in its midst, community members had internalized the idea that this level is sufficient enough for their needs.

Manuel: Well, the majority almost, the ones who I know, [have gone to school] until *primaria*. Because before, there wasn't a *secundaria*, it is until just recently that the *secundaria* came out, and now the majority are taking *secundaria*, but just about *primaria* [is what most people attend]...

Bueno, la mayoría casi, casi los que yo conozco, hasta la *primaria*. Porque antes ni había *secundaria*, es apenas que salió la *secundaria*, y ahorita ya como la mayoría están agarrando *secundaria*, pero casi la *primaria*...

This was also the case of the *secundaria* in San Pedro. The result of an effort by one of the *primaria* teachers, the *secundaria*, *Escuela Dolores Jimenez y Muro*, was founded only eight years prior, or two years before Herminda left the community. At its start, only five students were enrolled in classes being held in an abandoned clinica in the community. By the time I conducted data collection in the community, the total school population was 43 students: 15 students in the first generation, 16 students in the second class, and 12 in the last class (**Field**

Notes, 7.6.2006). Herminda discusses the school's inception, as well as how it grew with each generation that joined it. Herminda describes the school and its start as a small unincorporated school, unrecognized by the federal government.

Herminda: Well, because a year before, they opened this little place, this small *secundaria* that a teacher began, who is Fernando, Fernando Leon Lopez, so then he founded this school, and um, there were only a few, like five students, but with five students he started the school, it was a *telesecundaria*, and well he counted with a television, and with the explanation of the teacher...But we're talking about a school that was beginning, that does not require hardly anything, because it was waiting, waiting for the help from the government.

Bueno, porque un año antes, se iba abierto este lugarcito, esta *secundaria* pequeño que se empezó un maestro, que se llama Oscar, Oscar Reyes Castillo, entonces él se funda esta escuela y este, solamente habían como pocas, unas cinco estudiantes, pero con cinco estudiantes se empezó esa escuela, era una *telesecundaria*...y pues contaba con televisión, y con la explicación del maestro..... Pero estamos hablando de una escuela que está empezando, que no requiere casi nada, porque estaba en espera, espera de ayuda del gobierno.

This was only further exemplified in discussions about *Bachillers*, or high schools. Even fewer youth reported living in communities which possessed *Bachillers*. In communities that possessed only up to *secundaria* (and probably had possessed these *secundarias* for several years), but no *Bachiller*, the average level of schooling mirrored what was available to them: *secundaria* completion. Instead, the absence of a high school within reasonable and affordable distance of the youth's hometowns explained the particular average levels of schooling found there. Julio rationalizes – much as Pedro rationalized low levels of *secundaria* attendance – that the absence of a high school in his hometown, and the costs of travel and attendance of a high school in another town, kept few people from Pacucco from obtaining higher than a *secundaria* education. Acquiring high school level schooling would require additional costs that youth in these communities, frankly, could not afford.

Julio: There, the majority have up to *secundaria*, no more. Because already school, to continue studying (in High School), you have to leave there...and to leave, you have to pay rent, food, mmm, transportation...

Julio: Allá, la mayoría tienen hasta la *secundaria*, nada más. Porque ya la escuela, por seguir estudiando, tienen que salir de ahí...y para salir, tienes que pagar renta, comida...mmm, y transporte...

In *San Valentin*, the *secundaria* had existed in the town for at least ten years, but the town *Bachiller* had only opened the fall before, located on the outskirts of town. Reflecting how the people of *San Valentin* had become accustomed to the highest level of schooling their town provided, one of the youth reported that the average level of education in *San Valentin* was up to *secundaria*.

Judith: Hmmm, the majority reach just *secundaria*, very little to high school...

Mmm, la mayoría llegan no mas a la *secundaria*, muy pocos al *Bachiller*...

In fact, the student enrollment at the newly opened *Bachiller*, totaled only 28 students, with a graduating class of 7 students. Other students, however, because of an absence of local high schools were forced to attend schools out of town. The costs, however, associated with having to attend a school outside of the community were, for some, too much to bear.¹²⁰ Not only was schooling at the *Bachiller* level not free, but youth were now responsible for more expenses, including travel, purchasing meals, and their own textbooks. Youth who would eventually leave the high schools cited the additional cost as the main reason for dropping out. Many of the youth reported possessing doubts about their ability to afford all of the costs associated with attending high school as early as the summer before matriculations, but they somehow managed to raise the money to enroll into *Bachillers* outside of their communities. Eventually, however, the youth would finally dropout, their families unable to assist in their schooling, and the youth unable to raise the funds on their own. Arguably, if *Bachillers* had existed in their hometowns, the youth

¹²⁰ Of all of the rural high school-going youth, six were from *San Valentin*, which possessed its own high school. The other three were postmigration youth, all attending high schools in other towns than their hometown. They all dropped out prior to completion.

would not have incurred the additional fees associated with travel and food, and perhaps would have remained in school.

Regardless of level, the mere availability of educational institutions in a community has both the potential to establish understandings and expectations for accepted levels of educational completion and provide access for youth who otherwise may not be able to continue their studies. Rather, the introduction of a new institution may shift the expectations and the practices over a period of time.¹²¹ If a *secundaria* does not exist in the community, it is more likely that youth, as well as other community members, do not perceive that a *secundaria* education is necessary or even suitable for them. Likewise, if a high school does not exist, the youth may not believe that a high school education is essential for them. Rather, the mere presence of an accessible school, *secundaria* or high school, in the community transmits the message that some youth, if not all youth, are supposed to continue onto higher levels of schooling, and actually facilitates the expansion of the practice of high school-going. Alternatively, its absence from a community not only effectively prevents community youth from attending, but also suggests that these youth are not expected to continue onto these levels. Thus, the presence or the absence of a particular level of education shapes the youth's perceptions and practices of the highest level of education desirable and attainable.

An additional consideration is how the absence of particular levels of schooling prohibits the transmission of cultural capital generally awarded in schools, including credentials. In communities where a particular level school does not exist, or has been constructed only recently, youth still do not or cannot obtain educational credentials imparted to youth in better resourced communities. This sets the rural youth at a disadvantageous position, lacking cultural

¹²¹ Levinson (2001) also documents that the accessibility of schools, in addition to a labor market that rewards *secundaria* completion, extended the popularity of *secundaria* studies by the 1970s and after.

capital which could be exchanged to improve their positions in fields such as education or the labor market in Mexico or the United States.¹²²

Cost of Schooling in Rural Mexico

Although recent school expansion has effectively raised the average levels of educational attainment in rural Mexican communities, other institutional factors (besides limited school coverage) remain that hinder the number of years of schooling obtained by rural Mexican youth. The most significant factor identified by rural study youth as affecting their school-going in Mexico were fees charged by the “supposedly” free public schools. Although touted as complimentary, rural Mexican schools charge many educational fees and expenses that make school-going financially difficult, and in some cases, impossible for rural Mexican youth. Unfortunately, in spite of recent school expansion, significant numbers of rural youth expressed difficulties in school attendance due to educational expenses. In extreme cases, youth either did not enroll or dropped out prior to the completion of *secundaria* because of these expenses.

Herminda pointed out the contradiction in Mexican public schooling that was supposedly free.

Herminda: We are talking about public schools, but public schools imply expenses, personal expenses, of the parents, or the student’s family...

Estamos hablando de escuelas públicas, pero escuelas públicas implica gastos, gastos personales, propios de los padres, o la familia de la estudiante.

School officials are well aware that the fees they charge prevent some community youth from attending their schools. After a long day of data collection, I found myself riding the bus back to Puebla with one of the teachers at the *secundaria* in San Pedro, Maestro Martinez. Maestro

¹²² Several formal educational programs targeting Mexicans in New York City require high school completion, in Mexico or elsewhere. One such program for restaurant workers, sponsored by CUNY and the Mexican Consulate required high school completion as a prerequisite (http://www.citytech.cuny.edu/aboutus/newsevents/2010sp/hosp_mex/index.shtml).

Martinez offered his ideas about the youth's low levels of educational attainment in spite of the recent construction of a *secundaria* in San Pedro.

There are a total of 11 third generation kids. Profe Martinez would tell me at the bus station that of 50 kids who graduated from 6to in Primaria, they would capture 20, 10 would dropout, and 20 would go to schools in San Benito de los Lagos for whatever reason. He thought one reason why was that because the school was very new, and only had three salones, or classrooms, and that parents may have thought that they would ask them for more things, including money, to help expand the school. Another reason, he offered, was because the director of the primaria and his director no se congenierion bien [got along]. (Field Notes, 6.27.2006)

Carolina also attributed high dropout rates after *primaria* completion to the costs associated with continuing with education. In her estimation, only one in three youth continued studying after *primaria* completion. Those who could continue studying, especially outside of the community, could do so because they were receiving funds from immigrant parents who were in the United States.¹²³

Carolina: Of my generation, the minority continues to study, of my generation, in the minority, which is 30% of 100% of the youth in my generation, some of them there in San Pedro, one of the reasons, that their parents had the economic means, who are my mom's generation, that these men or women immigrated to the United States to help their families, and for their daughters, those girls of this generation could continue studying...

De mi generación en su minoría, seguimos estudiando, de mi generación, en su minoría, que será como 30% de los 100% de los jóvenes de mi generación, algunos de ellos ahí en San Pedro, unas de las razones, que los padres de ellas tenían las medias económicas que a su vez es la generación de mi mamá, que estos señores o señoras inmigraron aquí a los EU para ayudar a sus familias, y para que sus hijas, estas chicas de esta generación, podría seguir estudiando...

In fact, none of the rural youth disclosed that their schools were free, but reported mandatory fees for various services including registration and *cooperaciones*, or fees used by the school for its necessities. In addition, some schools required uniforms, and of course, youth were asked for different school supplies for class.

¹²³ There is debate regarding the impact of remittances on the school-going of Mexican youth. While some scholars conclude that remittances assist in the payment of fees associated with school-going, including at higher levels, other scholars conclude that the lure of immigration led to early school departure. Believing that their investment in education

According to the youth, registration fees totaled between 100 and 200 pesos for the enrollment of each child in *primaria*. Obviously, for families with more children, school enrollment was more expensive. For families with more children, these fees would accumulate and cause financial stress for families. Alejandro reported thinking about dropping out of school as early as his fifth year of *primaria* when he became aware not only of the amount of money his mother would have to pay for his enrollment, but when he considered the costs associated with the enrollment of his brothers and sisters.

Alejandro: Well, I got the idea [of dropping out] because one of my brothers was in kinder [garten]. My two sisters were in the first. My little brother had not yet entered into school, other brother was in the second or third year of *primaria* when I got to *secundaria*. When I was in the fifth year, when [we] went to my registration, I remembered that it would be 200 pesos, or in the *primaria* she was going to pay 400 [pesos], since then, I think that my mama did not have a good job, where they paid her sufficiently, and that was the idea that maybe I was not going to continue studying.

Pues me dio la idea porque unos de mis hermanos estaban en el kinder. Mis dos hermanas en el primer. Mi hermanito todavía no entraba a la escuela, mi otro hermano iba en la *primaria* en el segundo o tercero cuando yo llego a la *secundaria*. Yo cuando iba al quinto, cuando fui a la inscripción, me dio recuerdo que iba ser 200 pesos, ósea en la *primaria* iba a pagar 400 [pesos], desde entonces, me parece mi mama no tenia buen trabajo, donde le pagaron suficientemente, y eso fue el idea que a la mejor no iba seguir estudiando.

Registration fees and *cooperaciones* (miscellaneous fees used for school needs) both caused financial stress to youth's families. *Cooperaciones* varied by school and year, with amounts unset. Rather, school officials would ask for these fees for needs that arose, including maintenance, to build additions/wings to the school buildings, or for cultural celebrations and parties that the teachers wanted to hold. Youth discussed that the amounts of the fees largely depended on the conditions of the schools. If schools lacked particular infrastructures, parents would be depended on to pay for the building of those infrastructures. Esmeralda recalled that during her time in *primaria*, the schools asked all of the students' parents for *cooperaciones* to

build a kitchen so that they could make hot breakfasts. Alejandro also recalled that school officials asked for *cooperaciones* to pay to add on to the school or to fix up classrooms.

Alejandro: Like, how do you say, to put an example? If the school is in good conditions, well, that it lacks some benches or something like that, well, you put 150 or 200 pesos, well it depends on the conditions, if a wing is lacking, or a classroom is already very ugly, they charge more, like they charged us 600 pesos.

Como, se puede decir, que ponen en ejemplo. Si la escuela está en buenas condiciones pues, que falta unas bancas o algo así, pues pones 150 o 200 pesos, pues depende en las condiciones, si se faltan aula, o falta, un salón ya está muy feo, llegan a cobrar mas, como nos cobraron 600 pesos.

Herminda recalled how school administrators would ask up to \$100 pesos a week to pay for meetings, events and celebrations put on at the school. If families were unable to pay these fees, they would face no other option but to remove their child from school.

Herminda: In *primaria*, what is, in *primaria*, I think especially, when one has to do with cultural things, because parents have to buy not only school supplies, um, but also contribute with school things or what the professors organize, that is where you have to cooperate, we are talking that at that time, in my case, it was like fifty pesos...like if there were two meetings in a week, it required \$100 pesos a week. [And what happened if a family could not pay the \$100 pesos?] They took their children out of school...

En la *primaria*, lo que, en la *primaria*, yo creo que especialmente cuando tiene que ser con cosas culturales, porque papas tienen que comprar no mas útiles, este pero también contribuir con cositas que las escuelas o que las profesoras organizan, así es donde tienen que cooperar estamos hablando de en ese entonces, en mi caso era como cincuenta pesos...como si era dos juntas en una semana, requerían \$100 pesos a la semana...[Y que pasaba si una familia no podría pagar esos \$100 pesos?] Se sacaba sus hijos de la escuela...

In addition to these institutional fees, families had to pay for uniforms and school supplies for each one of their children attending school. On average, the youth reported that uniform costs totaled approximately six hundred pesos every two years. Some youth reported not being able to pay for more than one uniform. These youths had to wash it every day after school so that they could wear it the next day. Lastly, youth were responsible for materials they would need in

school. These materials ranged from supplementary books that would further assist/support their learning to items needed to conduct laboratory experiments.¹²⁴

These costs, sometimes incurring every month could add up to approximately one hundred and fifty pesos per need. Some youth reported not being able to keep up with paying for all of the school supplies that they were asked to bring. In the case of Diego, by *secundaria*, he was unable to purchase school supplies for his science courses and began to skip classes to avoid embarrassment and penalty. Due to his poor attendance, his grades lowered and he would have to repeat the course the following school year. He would opt to drop out instead.

Diego: Well, already after, when I arrived to *secundaria* I put like two years there, I did not like it, they asked for supplies, bring this, pay for that, things that I could not get sometimes, and like that, I did not like to do it like that, like that I could not...[Like what types of things?] They asked us like that, like that, you know, like for a *secundaria*, things to do, to have a laboratory, to do that, no, they asked you to bring that to do an experiment, many things they asked [for], many things, no, that really I could not get, you did not get it, and for me, it was uncomfortable, because all of my classmates got them, and for me it was very uncomfortable. Already after, [my grades] began to lower, and after, we go and that's it, and when I could, I left.

Bueno, ya después, cuando yo llegue a la *secundaria*, yo puse como dos años allí, no me gusto, me pidieron útiles, que traer esto, pagar por esto, cosas que yo no podría conseguir a veces, y así, no me gusto hacer así, así no podría... [Como que tipos de cosas?] Nos pidan así, como así, tu sabes, como para una *secundaria*, cosas para hacer, tener un laboratorio, para hacer eso, no, te pidieron que te traía eso para hacer un experimento, muchas cosas que te pedían, muchas cosas, no, que en la verdad yo no podría conseguir, no te conseguías, y para mí, era incomodo, porque todos mis compañeros les consiguieron, y para mí era muy incomodo. Ya después empezó a bajar, y después vamos y ya, y ya cuando se pudo, me salí...

As discussed in the section on rural households, economic insecurity impacted the ability for youth's parents to pay these fees, and ultimately, in the worst case, whether or not the youth could continue with their studies. Rural youth disclosed that their parents would often struggle to pay these fees, and in some cases were simply unable to afford the costs associated with their children's schooling. Rural youth were well aware of the financial burden that their school-

¹²⁴ Although general textbooks used in *educación básica* were free, supplementary textbooks were sold to the youth so that their subject matter comprehension could improve. At the high school level, however, general textbooks were no longer free and youth had to incur the costs themselves.

going placed on their families, and they began to disengage from school so that they could drop out and ease their families' financial pressures.

Oportunidades/ProgresA

A discussion of the costs of school attendance would be remiss without a discussion of PROGRESA/Oportunidades, the government-sponsored program designed to alleviate the financial burdens placed on poor families as a result of youth school-going. The idea of PROGRESA/Oportunidades, the cash-transfer incentive program to enable the school-going of marginalized rural and urban youth was to not only provide funds to families to pay for school expenses, but to also compensate for labor lost due to the youth's absence from the home. PROGRESA was meant to alleviate the economic losses associated with sending a child to school so that parents would not suffer greater economic insecurity by spending household monies on school, but also so that they would not miss the income generated by the youth if they remained at home and labored. These cash payments increased with each year of school completed, but the costs of school-going also increased. As a result, for some youth, the *percentage* of expenses covered by PROGRESA declined as they continued with their studies, especially as they reached high school.

Most of the study youth reported receiving these cash payments, but they also reported that they were simply not enough to pay for costs associated with school-going.¹²⁵ Julio, a *primaria* dropout recalled that hardly any monies were left over for any household expenses that would have been provided for with the child's labor, such as food and other household expenses.

Julio: [But how is PROGRESA? They send money, no?] Well yes, eh, well PROGRESA just gives enough like the sufficient to pay supplies or registration fees, but until sixth [grade], it was eight hundred and fifty [pesos]...[And was that sufficient for all of your

¹²⁵ In San Pedro, approximately three hundred women received Oportunidades payments of \$380 pesos or approximately \$38, bimonthly for their children's educational needs and their household needs (Manjarrez Rosas, 2007).

expenses] No, because um, then it would run out, and the *cooperaciones* and the supplies, and only about one hundred and fifty stayed.[But if this money was for all of what you needed for school, why did you need the one hundred and fifty?] To pay the house, food, but it was not sufficient...

[Pero como es PROGRESA? Te mandaron dinero, no?] Pues si, eh, pues de PROGRESA no mas daba como suficiente para pagar útiles o inscripciones, pero hasta el sexto, era ocho cincuenta.[Y era suficiente para todos tus gastos?] No, porque este, luego se acaba, y los *cooperaciones* y los útiles, y no mas quedaba como ciento cincuenta...[Pero si este dinero era para todo de la escuela, para que necesitaba el ciento cincuenta?] Para pagar en la casa, comida, pero no era suficiente...

Although Oportunidades/Progresá was introduced to compensate not only for the labor lost with youth enrollment, but to offset the fees charged by schools, the payments are simply not enough to avoid financial strain to the youth's families. In most cases, these payments were only enough to pay schooling costs, but not to counteract whatever income was lost from the absence of their children's labor in the marketplace.

In this way, while providing higher levels of schooling in rural communities and cash-transfer payments that are meant to guarantee school-going, the effects of increased access and cash-payments are minimized by expanding schooling only to a minimal level of education and permitting the continued, unregulated collection of fees by school officials for administration of the school. Through these actions, rural youth are able to obtain slight generational mobility in terms of educational levels, but the advances are simply not enough to prepare youth for employment much beyond farming or unskilled labor.

In fact, the controlled school expansion, in addition to the schooling expenses, limit the number of years of school-going that rural youth would most likely obtain only up to the completion of *secundaria* (if the youth are lucky). Although achieving higher levels of education than their parents and grandparents and appearing as if they are making significant gains in education, rural youth are still unable to significantly raise themselves out of their class positions as farm workers. Although attaining a *secundaria* diploma qualifies youth for a wider

range of unskilled jobs in surrounding cities, many of the rural study youth, as a result of the lag between expenses associated with school-going, and if granted, cash-transfer payments, are not completing *secundaria*, and as a result, remain ineligible for much employment beyond farming. Through these recent improvements, an illusion of marked social mobility is created, but in all actuality, these advancements made in school-going are limited by countering school practices that make significant school completion, i.e., completion of enough years that would enable youth to obtain better paying jobs with improved conditions, ineffectual. Even when access to schooling is extended, expenses associated with school-going place higher levels of education, especially at the level of *Bachiller*, out of reach for many rural Mexican youth. In spite of the popular idea that lower levels of schooling are free in Mexico, school-going in rural Mexico is wrought with institutional and individual fees that are overwhelming to families, leading to youth dropping out of school early.

Quality of Schooling

In addition to the aforementioned challenges of limited school access and high costs, rural youth are subject to poor school conditions which impact the quality of education that the youth are able to receive, including inadequate resources and teachers who exhibit high levels of absenteeism and truancy (Sawyer, et al., 2009; Schmelkes, 1994). In the case of resources, rural youth attended schools that were poorly resourced, possessing too few books and computers. Both libraries and computer rooms at rural schools were not fully accessible to students, with their uses tightly restricted due to the school's inability to hire staff that could supervise these areas full-time. With schools unable to purchase and stock many additional books aside from those used for direct classroom use, rural youth described both access to and selection of books as meager. This was also true for the computers intended for student use, regarding both their

access and numbers. Students were not granted access to computers until *secundaria*, and even then, instruction was inconsistent, infrequent, and costly. In spite of being charged for the courses mandated by the schools, youth reported being taught computing by poorly trained teachers, if at all.

The majority of the youth reported attending *primarias* that were not equipped with computers. By *secundaria*, youth were granted limited access to computers, but rural schools experienced difficulties staffing computer classes. In most cases, even though the school mandated the classroom time devoted to computing, youth were subject to additional fees to pay for computer instruction. Classes were usually offered only once a week for an hour, during which time youth learned basic computing skills, including instruction to turn the computer on and off, how to use a mouse, and word processing. These classrooms, however, did not have access to internet, so students were not able to learn how to navigate the web, or conduct research on the web.

Problems, however, seemed to plague the use of computers in rural regions. In San Pedro, computing classes had been placed on hiatus for over a year and a half because nine computers had been stolen from the school, and they had only recently been able to recover several of them. In *San Valentin* and other rural areas, youth disclosed that the *secundaria* schools were unable to staff their computing classes. Eventually in *San Valentin*, the *secundaria* employed two former students to teach current students, but, according to Judith, the women taught the same thing over and over again, and left after two months. During her years at *secundaria*, she, like most of the other rural youth never had consistent computer classes. At the high school level, access to computers remained elusive. At *San Valentin*, although the school technically had nine computers, only two worked. School officials were unable to hire a teacher

who could teach all three computing classes, so first year students were not offered computing classes. Computing classes would begin during their second year, but only for one semester a year, not nearly enough to prepare for any significant future work with computers.

In addition, access to libraries in *primarias* and *secundarias* was strictly restricted and the book selection was poor. More often than not, these libraries were under-resourced, understaffed and disorganized. Not only did these libraries have too few books, but schools did not have funds designated to hire someone specifically for library services. Youth reported having to ask the school directors to open the libraries so that they could go in and find books. These sorts of conditions would carry into their *secundarias* where the youth also reported that while their schools possessed libraries, they had to inform their directors that they wished to check out a book, after which the director would unlock the library and allow the student to retrieve the book. In neither case did the youth report that the libraries had many books, but rather that there were hardly any books, or “*casi no hay muchos libros.*”

High schools in rural areas also possessed too few books. In *San Valentin*, the high school had only opened the September before and sorely lacked many resources. Alejandro disclosed that one of the most significant needs of the school was adequate textbooks for the students. School officials at the high school avoided passing the costs of textbooks onto students, but as a result, twenty students had to share the four textbooks their director was able to obtain from the SEP. Students had to work in teams to complete assignments, and eventually, pay for Xerox copies of the books.

Outside of rural communities, the possession of digital literacies and reading skills may improve youth's employment opportunities. Rural schools are not adequately providing youth these skills, crippling their chances to obtain other jobs besides agricultural and other unskilled

work. By denying meaningful development of literacy skills outside of the classroom, youth's skills are de facto limited to those useful for performing unskilled and/or agricultural work.

The lack of resources was only compounded by disengaged and too few teachers. Rural youth reported observing teachers engaging in unprofessional behaviors that reduced their instruction time in the classroom. Several of the youth reported being taught by teachers who would arrive late to class, leave class and not return for long periods of time, be present but not lead class, or simply fail to show up.

When teachers did not show up, rural youth were largely not provided with substitute teachers. Instead, other teachers were expected to lead their classrooms as well as the unstaffed one, oftentimes running between the two. In these instances, the youth mostly did not learn anything, but rather spent much time in their classrooms alone. The rural youth spent months goofing off, hardly doing any of their lessons. In San Pedro, one of the three *secundaria* teachers was involved in an automobile accident during the school year and missed many days prior to returning. During this time, another teacher supervised his own and the additional classroom, with the result that both classrooms suffered neglect. Even when the injured teacher returned, he failed to lead the class adequately. His chronic absenteeism and relaxed attitude when he was in the classroom led one youth to feel like she had wasted an entire year.

Jenni: No, well it was a little like vacation, I didn't learn anything...[And what did you do during this time?] Ah, yes, goofing off [laughing], sometimes we looked at the lessons, when the other teachers went, but hardly not...

No, pues fue poco como vacaciones, no aprendió nada.[Y que hicieron durante este tiempo?] Ah, si, echando relajo [Laughing] a veces veamos los lecciones, cuando iban los otros maestros, pero casi no...

Supervising two classrooms at once was a not so uncommon practice in rural schools. Although several youth reported being in overcrowded schools at least once in their educational careers, a better characterization was not that too many students were in the classrooms, but rather that the

schools were understaffed. Luis discussed a time in which he was a student in one of two classrooms taught at the same time by the same teacher.

Luis: Well there, yes, there they had, there were too many students there, sometimes it could not be, sometimes the teachers attended two classrooms, things that you couldn't do.

Pues allá, sí, allá tenían, sobrepasaron los alumnos allá, muchos alumnos en la escuela, con uno solo maestro, a veces no se pude, a veces los maestros atendieron a dos salones, cosas que no se pude.

In other instances, teachers would either arrive on time, leaving students alone in their classrooms for long periods of time so that they could socialize with other teachers, smoke or eat, or arrive late. Students were left alone to do work in their classrooms, although this usually led to much goofing off and wasted class time. Although school officials were aware of these practices, they did little to bring a halt to them.

Clementina: In middle school, I had two teachers, one male and one female. They both taught well, but the female teacher would leave us alone in the classroom. She would leave to go eat at the food stand by the middle school. The director would see her and not say anything. [So would you say that teachers in your schools were just with you?] In general they were just, but they would leave us alone in the classrooms sometimes. Sometimes they would leave, would go to eat, there was one male teacher who never taught us.

En la secundaria, tuve dos maestros, un hombre y una señora. Nos enseñaron bien, pero la señora siempre nos dejábamos solos en el salón. Ella no más iba para comer en el puesto al lado de la *secundaria*. El director lo veía y nunca la dije nada. [Y decías tú que tus maestros eran justos con ustedes?] En general, si eran justos, no más a veces nos dejábamos solos en los salones. A veces no más se salían, a ir a comer, había un maestro quien nunca nos enseno.

School Resources

Rural youth are subject to instruction and resources which are insufficient to prepare them for employment which could raise them out of poverty. In rural schools, youth have little access to reading materials outside of textbooks, and they are provided inadequate access to computing instruction. Additionally, the youth are instructed by teachers who are either disengaged, or outright absent. As a result, rural youth experience extended periods of time in which meaningful instruction does not occur. Receiving incomplete educations, the skills that

the youth obtain, and perhaps more importantly, do not obtain during their schooling further hinders their ability to raise their occupational status, in or outside of their rural communities.

School Choice

Remittance monies provide rural youth with the economic capital to leave their towns and attend better schools outside of their communities. Those rural youth who possessed at least one parent working in the United States who consistently sent remittances home were able to attend *secundarias* outside of their communities, and/or *Bachiller*. These *secundarias* tended to be *tecnicas* or *normales*, and, according to the youth, were better resourced and staffed. Immigrant parents would send remittance monies home that could pay for their children's enrollment and attendance in schools that were better resourced and more expensive, as well as pay for the other costs associated with attending schools outside of their hometowns, including transportation and food. Those youth able to attend better schools and without the financial stress related to their school-going, reported better schooling experiences, as well as higher educational aspirations.

Carolina, although enrolled in her town's *secundaria*, knew of the educational advantages elsewhere and observed her friends, who because of remittances sent by their parents, attended *secundarias* in *San Benito de los Lagos*.

Carolina: Some of them there in San Pedro, one of the reasons that their parents have economic means that sometimes of my mom's generation, that these men or women immigrated to the US to help their families, and so that their daughters, these girls of my generation, could continue studying. [Where?] In *San Benito de los Lagos*.

Algunos de ellos ahí en San Pedro, unas de las razones, que los padres de ellas tenían las medias económicas que a sus veces es la generación de mi mama, que estos señores o señores inmigraron aquí a los EU para ayudar a sus familias, y para que sus hijas, estas chicas de esta generación, podrían seguir estudiando. [Dónde?] En *San Benito de los Lagos*.

Jose Luis' mother used remittances sent home by his father to pay for his *secundaria* attendance in *San Benito de los Lagos*. Jose Luis' parents believed that the *secundaria* in San Pedro would

be less rigorous than the *secundarias* in *San Benito de los Lagos*, and used the monies his father sent home from New York City to enroll him in a school that was more demanding, and where he could meet people from other regions of the valley. Although he could not pass the entrance exam at the first *secundaria*, he took and passed the exam at another *secundaria* in *San Benito de los Lagos* and remained there until he left for New York City. Although in this case, Jose Luis did eventually leave schooling because he wanted to immigrate, he had been able to attend a better managed and more diverse school for a brief period of time.

Jose Luis: Um, my parents decided...since my sister studied, I was in two *secundarias*. In the first, I, they took me out because no one passed the exam and I had to change [from] the *secundaria*...[It was a *secundaria* in *San Benito de los Lagos*, too, or another?] In *San Benito de los Lagos*, in *San Benito de los Lagos*...it was the first where I studied, I was going to go, but I had to change because I had not passed the exam, there were not sufficient points for me to stay there, so I had one week in that school, then they had to pass me to another, and there was where I passed the exam and I stayed there...[Okay, but why didn't you stay at the *secundaria* in San Pedro? Why did you go to *San Benito de los Lagos*?] It was my parent's decision...[And what was the reason they sent you there?] They thought that there was going to be more goofing off in the classroom...[In San Pedro?] Yes, because everyone was from the same town, we could say...in *San Benito de los Lagos*, you were going to meet different people, from different towns, from different cities.

Um, mis papas' decidieron...como mi hermana estudio, yo estuve en dos *secundarias*...en la primera, yo, me sacaron porque nadie pasaba el examen y me tenían que cambiar de *secundaria*...[Era una *secundaria* en *San Benito de los Lagos* también, o otro?] En *San Benito de los Lagos*, en *San Benito de los Lagos*...era el primero donde yo estudio, iba ir, pero me tenían que cambiar porque no había probado el examen, no eran los puntos suficientes para que yo me quedaba ahí, solo tuve una semana en esa escuela, luego me tenían que pasar a otra, y ahí fue donde yo probé el examen, y me quede ahí...[Okay, pero porque no quedaste en la *secundaria* de San Pedro? Porque fuiste hasta *San Benito de los Lagos*?] Fue decisión de mis papas...[Y que fue su razón para mandarte para allá?] Ellos pensaban que iba ser como un poquito más de relajo en el salón...[En San Pedro?] Si, por ser todos del mismo pueblo, podemos decir...en *San Benito de los Lagos*, ibas a conocer gente diferentes, de diferentes pueblos, diferentes ciudades.

Baltazar was also the beneficiary of his parents' remittance monies and was able to attend a *secundaria* in *San Benito de los Lagos* that, in his words, "could count on resources/contaba con recursos." This school had an enrollment of approximately a thousand students and provided much more than the *secundaria* in *San Benito de los Lagos* in terms of curriculum,

computers, sports activities, and other amenities. His only complaint was that he wished that the school offered more course offerings in computing because everyone wanted to enroll in the computer workshop/curricular strand.

Baltazar: In *secundaria*, I went to a school that counted with resources, of workshops, it had basket (ball), it had sports activities...the school was large, it had three floors, each floor approximately six classrooms, like a thousand students.[And in the *secundaria*, do you think you had sufficient computers, workshops?] In the *secundaria*, I say that it lacked more workshops because students made the decisions about workshops, like how everyone wanted to attend the one of computers and there were only approximately thirty computers...the students who did not stay in the workshops went to other workshops, which were electricity, carpentry, connections...

En la *secundaria*, yo fui a una escuela que contaba con recursos, de talleres, tenía ganchas, tenía actividades deportivas...era grande la escuela, tenía tres pisos, cada piso aproximadamente seis salones, como mil estudiantes. [Y en la *secundaria*, piensas tú que eran suficientes, computadoras, talleres?] En la *secundaria*, yo digo que faltaba mas talleres porque la decisión de los talleres fue como de los alumnos, como que querían todos a asistir a la de computadores y solo contaba con aproximadamente treinta computadoras...los estudiantes que no quedaban en los talleres se iban a otros talleres, que era electricidad, carpintería, conexiones...

In the case of Kristian, a thirteen year old premigration male from San Pedro, his father was working at a restaurant in New York City and sent money home so that he could attend a *secundaria* tecnica in *San Benito de los Lagos*. He did not believe that his mother had any trouble paying for his schooling, nor had he heard her express difficulties. At this *secundaria*, Kristian took a wide variety of courses, including computer classes. This was a vast difference from his friends who attended school in San Pedro, as he now took computer classes for two hours a day, four days a week, in which he learned how to use the internet, to research, and to create presentations. Kristian was not only provided with consistent, concentrated computer training, but he was also being taught skills that were far more advanced than those being taught at the *secundaria* in his hometown. When asked about his career aspirations, Kristian replied that he was interested in electronics, or becoming an inventor.

Prior research has shown the positive effects of remittances on school-going as they not only permit more years of school-going, but they also release youth from low-quality schools whose practices reinforce poverty/class inequalities in rural Mexico. Perhaps circumventing social reproduction, their parents have become unskilled transnational workers, sending money home with the idea of preventing their children's participation in their hometowns' labor markets or of the transnational labor market where the youth would become unskilled workers in the United States. No longer restricted to the employment opportunities in their hometowns or in nearby towns or in the United States, these children of immigrants may actually be able to exchange the human and cultural capital and obtain more desirable employment anywhere.

Community Messages about school-going

In addition to observing a lack of institutional support for higher levels of education in their communities, several of the rural youth discussed receiving mixed messages from community members about school-going. Youth reported that many community members did not believe that education was the most efficient vehicle to obtain social mobility. Rather, community members with whom the youth came into contact, including neighbors and extended family members, believed that going to school had little utility. Considering the lack of opportunities and failing to understand the benefits of schooling, i.e., the exchange of educational credentials for economic capital or status, it was no surprise that many of the community residents believed this.

Herminda attributes this specifically to rural areas. **"In these rural zones,"** she said, **"education is seen like a waste of time/En esas zonas rurales, la educación esta visto como una pérdida de tiempo."** Luis also shared this view:

Luis: For very few, for many people, the majority of the people think that it [schooling] is not important, many of the people...the majority say, for what? You study, and you study,

and you don't see anything, for many people, I don't know...there they told me that...you study and study and nothing...

Para muy poco, para mucha gente, la mayoría de la gente piensa que no es importante, mucha de la gente...la mayoría dicen, para que? Estudias y estudias y no ves nada, para mucha gente, no se...allá me dijo eso...estudias y estudias y nada...

Likewise, Manuel discussed how community members did not believe that schooling was worth either the time or the money that some had invested. These people who had terminated their studies earlier than others saw little difference between the living conditions they enjoyed and those experienced by those who had attended school for longer periods of time. In some cases, they even enjoyed a better standard of living. They believed going to school for longer periods of time was a waste.

Manuel: Well, some of these people think that to study is the same, no? Because studying, there are people who only study and they don't arrive at achieving anything, so these people think that it's the same if you don't study...There are some who only study, to whatever grade, and there they arrive and don't do anything, better yet they dedicate themselves to worse things, so then these people think this one studies, and (he) lives just about the same as I do, or I live better than he does. It's that those people arrive at thinking, because also, you being in school has its costs, you spend and everything, well they think, he spends, and all of that for nothing, and I don't spend, and I am much better than he is, that is why I see in the minds of those people...

Bueno, algunas de esas gentes personas piensan que estudiar es lo mismo, no? Porque estudiar hay gente que no mas estudie y estudia y no llegas a lograr nada, entonces esta gente piensan que dar el mismo que no estudia...Hay unos que nada mas estudie, a tal grado, y allí llegan y no hacen nada, mejor dedican a hacer cosas peores todavía, entonces esta gente piensan este tal estudio y vive casi segundo mismo, o casi vivo mejor que él, es que esa gente llega a pensar, porque también, tú en la escuela haces unos gastos, gastas y todo, bueno ellos piensan, el se gasto, y todo eso para nada, y yo no gasto, pues yo estoy mucho mejor que él, eso es que yo veo en la mente de esa gente...

Many of the youth have internalized these community messages and begin to believe it themselves. Julio attributes the lack of importance/value of schooling in his hometown to the absence of opportunities to use the skills learned there. To live in the towns from which these youth arrive, one does not need the skills that are traditionally passed on with formal schooling. Rather, the cultural capital and human capital one could obtain from rural schooling is

unexchangeable in their hometowns. Hinting that other settings possess fields where this capital may be exchanged, Julio states that when one leaves their hometowns, capital may be activated and exchanged.

Julio: Because being over there, in the same town, it is not very important, because you don't go, you don't read, you do not do accounts...and leaving there from the town, you have to make accounts, you have to read, or it helps you a lot...to read a map if you get lost, or if they send you to buy something, and then you don't know how to read or write, all of that is very important...

Julio: Porque estar allá, en el mismo pueblo, no es muy importante, porque no vas, no lees, no haces cuentas...y saliendo ahí del pueblo, tienes que hacer cuentas, tienes que leer, o te ayuda mucho...a leer una mapa si te pierdas, o luego te Mandan a comprar algo, y luego no saben de leer o no saben escribir, es todo muy importante...

In rural communities, opportunity structures that would reward extended school-going are absent. In communities where a majority of men are farmers and women are housewives, most community members have observed that the skills that one would learn in formal schooling go unused. In the absence of a labor market that rewards securing educational credentials, many people believe then, that going to school is useless, with skills learned in school unable to be converted into visible economic capital. Additionally, without a return on monies invested [and labor lost] after school completion, schooling is viewed as merely a waste of money. As community members observe this, they form ideas about the utility of schooling and pass these ideas to the young people they see going to school. With these ideas internalized, youth also begin to believe that schooling is useless and that it will not provide equal or greater returns to their families' financial investments. These messages from community members, then, may only further encourage ideas about school-leaving at early ages.

Likewise, when asked about community leaders publicly supporting their school-going, many of the youth said that they did not believe that they cared much about their educations. Without public messages from leaders emphasizing the importance of education, the pessimistic

views of other community members were not countered. Instead, rural youth were further convinced that formal education was not all that important.

Jose Luis: I think that the community was not important in terms of school attendance, because the people there, the president [of the town], they did not care if the youth went to school or arrived at becoming someone in life...there were not people who you saw or that helped the youth to tell them to go to school, or to motivate them that they could continue with school...

Yo pienso que la comunidad no tenía ninguna importancia sobre asistir a la escuela en ese pueblo, porque en la gente de ahí, el presidente, no se importaba si los jóvenes se iban a la escuela o si iban a llegar hacer alguien en la vida...no habían personas que visitaron o que ayudaban a los jóvenes a decirlos que se iban a la escuela o darlos animo que podrian seguir a la escuela...

Youth held similar sentiments in other rural Mexican towns. In *San Valentin*, youth were not convinced that the community leaders supported the education of the young people in their town either. According to several youth, the leaders did not invest their time or monies into improving youth education.

Alejandro: Well, I'll repeat the word, well, lamentably, here, those people who have more power do not help the youth...they do not help the youth...Or well, they don't take the trouble to go to the school, give conferences, um, none of that...

Pues, repito la palabra, pues, lamentablemente, aquí esas personas que tienen mas poder no ayudan a las jóvenes...no ayudan a los jóvenes...Ósea, no toma la molestia de ir a la escuela, dar una conferencia, este, nada de eso...

Rural Mexican youth observe a noticeable lack of support for their educations from community members representing all levels of society, from town officials to ordinary community members and neighbors. In addition to a lack of institutional support via school coverage and quality curricula, youth are also experiencing dissuasion from the community to complete their studies. From their own observations and experiences, the study youth maintain that educational credentials have no fields where they can be exchanged in their hometowns, and in some cases, education does not result in a higher standard of living. Community members tell the youth not to waste their time and monies by obtaining higher levels of education/staying in school. Rural

youth begin to believe their older community members, and then become disillusioned with their own investments in education. If they begin to believe that continuing their studies provides little value, they may drop out, even prior to *secundaria* completion.

In addition, within their communities, youth saw few examples where education was held up as an important endeavor. People who held positions of power, such as municipal presidents and other community leaders were not visibly promoting school-going. Youth were aware of this and interpreted their acts, or lack of them, to mean that community leaders did not think that youth, or their futures were important. Perhaps well aware of the limitations of their own communities, both in terms of educational institutions, or ways in which educational capital could be converted, or perhaps merely uninterested, these leaders were not transmitting the message to youth that schooling was important. True to the adage that silence speaks volumes, rural youth may interpret this silence as yet another message that school-going may not be all that important.

Some individuals did attempt to offset these negative messages in the community. Some youth reported knowing professionals who had experiences in other towns where their education was useful. Whereas their own communities are organized in ways where low levels of schooling are sufficient for the available jobs, it is outside of their communities that their low levels of cultural capital are insufficient for the types of employment available in these areas. In these areas, rather, other types of jobs existed that would dignify and demand higher levels of educational attainment.

Other individuals who have experiences in other communities where the local labor markets rewards higher levels of schooling share this knowledge with the youth. These individuals encourage youth to continue studying up to higher levels so that they would not

suffer the same fates as they had when they leave their communities and participate in other environs. Instead, they relay the message that when they leave these local areas for other areas that higher educational credentials and cultural knowledge learned in school will be rewarded.

Lalo reported knowing teachers and nurses who shared this knowledge with him.

Lalo: Because in the town, there are teachers, there are nurses too, well they told us to study, they invited us to continue studying, that it was very important...because they left the town, and they suffered...because schooling was very important...because they told us that when they, their parents, would leave to the city, and then they cheated them for whatever thing, and so that we do not follow doing the same thing...better that we study...

Porque en el pueblo, hay maestros, hay enfermeras también, bueno nos decían que estudiábamos, nos invitaban de seguir estudiando, que era muy importante...porque ellos salieron de allí del pueblo, y ellos sufrieron para estudiar...porque era muy importante la escuela...porque ellos nos dice que cuando ellos, sus papas, salían [de la ciudad], y los engañaron por cualquier cosa, y porque nosotros no siguiéramos subiendo/hacienda eso,...mejor estudiábamos...

Likewise, Manuel knew of better labor opportunities outside of his hometown that required additional schooling.

Manuel: Right now, the majority of people, of age, like the ones that already have children, they prefer that we study until *Bachiller* so we don't end up like this, like the same, over there [Mexico] when you go to *Bachiller*, you know about computers, almost computing right now, you know about computers in *Bachiller*, you are not going to be working in like the same, but you would work in a company, you can work there like a cashier, they pay them well, no, or you could I don't know, be a manager, whatever, if you have good grades, to manage...

Ahorita, la mayoría de la gente, como de edad, como los que ya tienen hijos, ellos prefieren que estudiamos hasta Colegio al *Bachiller* para que ya no seguimos salir así, como los mismos, allá cuando vas al Colegio de *Bachilleres*, sabes de computación, casi la computación ahorita, sabes de computación del los *Bachilleres*, no vas a trabajar como los mismos, pero vas a trabajar como en una empresa, tu puedes trabajar ahí como cajero, pagan a ellos bien, no, o puedes no sé, ser gerente, lo que sea, si llevas calificaciones buenas, para administrar...

Positive messages to stay in school come from community members who possess first-hand knowledge and experience of life outside of their communities, in spaces where opportunities structures that reward greater amounts of educational capital exist. With only low levels of educational capital from their home communities, these youth found that they can work, in turn, at only a low level once they leave their home communities. Compared to their own hometowns,

where low levels of educational capital are sufficient to function, in these new spaces, these levels are deficient. The rural youth are warned, however, of these realities through their social contacts with professionals who either live or work in outside communities. It is these individuals who provide messages that counter those promoted by other community members that downplay the importance of formal schooling.

The community members' positive and negative messages about school-going may reflect a division in community members: those who have intimate knowledge of other, more developed environs, and those who do not. Community members use their own experiences to either encourage or discourage youth to invest more time and money into their studies. Those who only know of the opportunity structures in their own communities, where more advanced schooling cannot be converted into more economic capital, often advise youth not to continue schooling. For those who have seen how other, more developed communities are organized, as well as experiencing other fields where greater amounts of cultural capital are required to prosper, they advise the students to stay in school. Both sets of messages are absorbed into the circuitry of youth's habitus, influencing their orientations towards continuing their schooling or discontinuing their schooling.

Continued Participation in Rural Mexican Educational Fields

Among the rural study youth, decisions about continuing or discontinuing their studies were made at various moments in their educational careers: after completing *primaria*, during *secundaria*, after completing *secundaria* and during the first year of *Bachiller*.¹²⁶ When and

¹²⁶ The Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean categorizes points at dropout as “did not enter educational system,” “early dropouts (during the primary cycle),” “dropouts at end of primary cycle,” “dropouts in lower secondary cycle,” and “dropouts at end of lower secondary or during upper secondary cycle.” In their categorizations, those who terminate *secundaria* and do not continue their studies and those who discontinue their studies after entering into *Bachiller* studies are counted together. For this study, I distinguish between the two statuses.

whether or not rural youth would continue or discontinue their studies was largely dependent on age, youth's household economic (in) security, and youth's interest. Although questions and doubts about remaining in school emerged as early as prior to the completion of *primaria*, most youth and families were committed to the youth remaining in school until reaching *secundaria*.

In some cases, the decision to continue or exit their towns' educational fields was determined by age. Rural youths' parents possessed ideas about the age at which one should exit their town's educational fields, and by default, enter into their labor market fields. For youth who studied beyond *primaria* but had considered leaving school during it or after graduation, many followed their parents' lead in deciding what those appropriate ages were. Several youth's parents believed that they were still too young to enter into the full-time labor market field, or to work full-time and undertake the physical responsibilities associated with work available in the community. In the case of Jenni, her father told her that she was still too young to leave school and to work full-time for pay.

Jenni: And why did you continue to study in *secundaria*?] Well because my father told me that to work, I was still very young, and I would not be able to work, and better that I went to school to learn things.

[Y porque continuaste a estudiar en la *secundaria*?] Bueno porque mi papa me dijo que para trabajar, yo todavía estaba muy chica, y no iba poder trabajar, y mejor que fuera a la escuela para aprender otras cosas.

In Julio's home, it was consideration of his *chronological* age at the end of *primaria* that led to his family considering it an inappropriate time to participate in the labor market. Instead, his family believed that his age at the completion of *secundaria* was an appropriate to when he could enter into and withstand the labor market full-time. By then, they reasoned, he could decide for himself whether or not he wanted to continue participating in the educational field or labor market field. The decision to continue or discontinue his studies would be solely his decision, and his responsibility.

Julio: Mmmm, well, they tell me to continue studying because I was not going to work the entire day, and they told me, “study, because you still can’t go to work the entire day.” You will not stand to work in the fields, nor in construction, other activities which are heavy, better that you continue studying. [they told me] when you finish *secundaria*, you can do what you want, if you want to work, if you want to study, and like that...I had thought [I would] study, but without resources, I could not study.

Mmm, bueno me decían que sigue estudiando porque yo no iba a trabajar todo el día, y me decían, “estudia, porque tu todavía no puedes ir a trabajar todo el día.” No aguantes de trabajar en el campo, no en la construcción, otros actividades son pesados, mejor sigues a estudiar...[Me decían] ya cuando terminas *secundaria*, ya puedes hacer lo que tú quieras, si tú quieras trabajar, quieras estudiar, y ya...Yo tenía pensado estudiar, pero sin recursos, yo no puedo estudiar.

By the time they reached *secundaria*, some rural youth along with their parents believed they were of the age to make their own decisions about their futures, or the fields in which they could/should participate. Whereas their parents were responsible for dictating their decisions about attending *primaria*, as youth reached *secundaria*, they began to make their own decisions about continuing or discontinuing their participation in the educational fields.

Lalo: [And how did you (pl) make the decision to attend *primaria* and *secundaria*?] Well, my parents. [And *secundaria*?] That, I decided.

[Y como tomaron la decisión de asistir a la escuela de *primaria* y *secundaria*?] Pues mis padres. [Y de *secundaria*?] Eso yo lo decidi.

In some cases, the youth’s household insecurity was offset by the intervention and financial contributions of others in their social networks, including adult family members, friends and teachers. In the cases of Alejandro and Herminda, the youth had decided that they would not continue onto *Bachiller* in light of their households’ economic insecurity, and instead proceed to work. In both cases, however, the youth were able to exchange their social capital for economic capital as other adults intervened and urged the parents to allow them to continue their studies into *Bachiller*. In the case of Alejandro, he had temporarily discontinued his studies due to his mother’s economic situation. With younger siblings in school, Alejandro believed he would sacrifice his studies so that his mother could more easily pay for his younger siblings’ education.

Before too long, his uncle came forward and offered to pay his fees to attend *Bachiller*. These funds, in addition to his labor earnings, enabled his continued studies.

In Herminda's case, after she completed *primaria*, her mother did not believe that any additional studies were important and she was not going to enroll her into a *secundaria*, either in San Pedro or elsewhere. One of her *primaria* teachers believed that Herminda had a bright future ahead of her and convinced her mother to allow her to attend the *telesecundaria* in town, *Escuela Dolores Jimenez y Muro*. Located in an abandoned health clinic, Herminda enjoyed her years at the *telesecundaria* and would continue to study for nearly one year of *Bachiller* in *San Benito de los Lagos*, but this time out of her own earnings.

Herminda: But, at that time [after *primaria*], my mama told me, I'm sure that it was not important to her, I think, that studying was important did not pass through her head, but, um, my teacher, this lady who I just finished talking about, convinced my mama that some of the steps, to send me to school because she saw that I was going to have a brilliant future, so then my mama told me that we were going to send you to a school, and well I was content because I thought maybe I was going to be in the city.

Pero, en ese tiempo [después de *primaria*] mi mama dijo, de hecho a ella no se importo, yo creo, no le paso a la cabeza de que seguir estudiando es importante, pero, este, mi maestra, esta señora, la maestra de que yo acabe de hablar, convencí a mi mama de que unos de los paseos, que me mandaba a la escuela porque se veía que voy a tener uno futuro brillante, entonces, mi mama me dijo que vamos a mandarte a una escuela, y pues yo me quedaba contenta porque yo pensaba que a la mejor, iba estar en la ciudad...

Of all rural youth, those who possessed at least one parent in the United States appeared to be in the best position to continue their studies past *secundaria*. With one parent in the United States, it was more likely that the youth's household received remittance monies that went towards paying their educational expenses. Most of the youth whose parent (s) were in the United States were enrolled in schools, including *secundaria* and *Bachiller*, and did not express any difficulties in paying for their studies. Monies were sent home on a regular basis to fund their children's schooling. Esteban, one such youth whose mother was in New York City was able to continue his studies into *Bachiller*. When it came time to decide whether or not he was going to continue

studying at the *Bachiller* level, his mother called and asked whether or not he wanted to continue his studies and where. He wanted to continue because he liked to learn new things. He also wanted to go to college to become a mechanical engineer.

Rural youth's continued participation in the education field in their hometowns and out were largely dependent on the age at which the question to continue or not continue one's studies emerged. Rather, participation in the linked education and labor market fields are age-driven, with youth attributing their continued participation in educational fields beyond *primaria* to their being too young to enter into the towns' labor market field full-time. By the end of *primaria*, youth were still too young to enter into the labor market field, so they continued their participation in the education field. By *secundaria*, however, youth were of the age where they could decide for themselves, whether or not they wanted to exit or continue participation in the educational fields and/or enter into labor market fields full-time. Here, reasons for continued studies become economic, with, in some cases, financial benefactors stepping in to ensure the youth's continued studies. In other cases, parents in the United States send remittances home to guarantee their children's continued studies.

Exiting Educational Fields in Rural Mexico

Whereas all of the rural youth surpassed their parents' educational levels, most of the rural youth who were working in New York City, and some who had yet to immigrate exited the Mexican educational field prior to their immigration. While all of the rural study youth who would end up working in New York City had at least completed *primaria* before leaving their studies, several youth reached as high as their first year of *Bachiller* studies, before dropping out. The majority of the rural study youth, however, simply ended their studies either before or upon completing *secundaria*. As discussed previously, the cost of school-going effectively propels

rural youth from continued participation in educational fields. Possessing too little economic capital to ensure their continued schooling in Mexico, as well as inadequate access to schooling, rural youth must often exit the educational fields prior to their completion of, in some cases, legal obligatory education, or in others, just after its fulfillment. Told either by their parents that they must exit, or having made the decision by themselves, the youth leave the education field with little capital that can be exchanged in other fields, including the local labor market for decent wages. Rather, as discussed in Chapter 6, they find that the low levels of human and cultural capital that they do possess have a greater value in labor market fields found in New York City.

Reasons for discontinuing their participation in the Mexican educational fields were predominantly economic, with most youth explaining that their parents' did not possess sufficient economic capital to continue their participation. Even in the cases of rural youth who expressed lack of interest as the primary reason for their school departure, declining interest often intersected with limited economic capital. Among youth fortunate enough to continue their studies past *secundaria* and enroll in *Bachiller*, the increased costs associated with high school attendance would mount, eventually disqualifying them from continued participation in the education field. In valiant attempts to continue their studies and take on the costs, these youth took additional jobs to pay for their schooling, but in the end, the youth simply could not afford educational expenses on their own and dropped out.

As discussed in the section on rural households, most rural youth begin to think about discontinuing their studies under one of two possible scenarios. In some cases, youth were simply informed by their parents that they would be unable to continue paying for their schooling and they discontinued their studies. In other cases, the youth discussed feeling guilty

that their parents struggled to pay their schooling and they wanted to end the economic burden on their parents by leaving school and working. At this point, some rural youth would begin to engage in behaviors so that they would have valid reasons for school departure, such as skipping classes, misbehaving, and eventually, failing courses. At this point, the youth disclosed that they had weighed whether to tell their parents, as early as age twelve or thirteen that they would not be continuing their studies.

Felipe ended his studies after his mother told him that they did not have enough money for him to continue studying past *primaria*. With few income-generating opportunities in his town where his parents could earn money, he had little choice but not to enter into *secundaria*. When asked whose decision it was to leave school, Felipe took responsibility and stated that it was his idea to discontinue his studies.

Felipe: I did not continue because my father did not have the money to help me study...because of that, I left, and then I was in the house, and then I came over here. I left, in *primaria*, because I was already going to study in *secundaria*, but since my mama and my papa did not have money to help me, my town's county, to enter there, because of that, I did not continue studying. I wanted to study, but she [mama] told me no, that [they] did not have money, because they did not know where they were going to get the money because there was not any work. [And was the decision yours or your parents?] Yes, it was mine.

Ya no seguí porque mi papa no tenía dinero para ayudarme a estudiar...por eso me salí, y luego estaba en la casa, y luego vino para acá. Me salí, en *primaria*, porque yo ya iba a estudiar en la *secundaria*, pero como mi mama y mi papa no tenía dinero para ayudarme, al condado de mi pueblo, para entrar ahí, por eso no seguí estudiando. Yo quería estudiar, pero ella [mama] me dijo que no, que no tenían dinero, porque no sabían donde iban agarrar dinero porque no había para trabajar. [Y la decisión fue tuya o de tus papas?] Si, fue mía.

In order to dispel any illusions about future continued studies, some youth were told that they would not be able to continue their studies beyond certain levels of educational attainment years before they could even raise their hopes about continued schooling. Jenni was informed even prior to the start of her third year of *secundaria* that she would not be able to continue her studies beyond there. Although she expressed a desire to continue her studies to become either a hair

stylist or a secretary, it was a moot point. Unable to finance her education beyond *secundaria*, her mother told her that continuing her studies was simply out of the question.

Jenni: Well yes, one day I was talking with my mama and I was telling her that I wanted to continue studying to be a [hair] stylist. And she told me no, that I was going to do nothing more than complete *secundaria*, that [they] would not be able to help to study more, and she told me, well already, that I [should] forget about school, to continue studying.

Pues si, un día estaba platicando con mi mama y yo le estaba diciendo que yo quería seguir estudiando para hacer estilista. Y ella me dijo que no, que nada mas iba cumplir *secundaria*, que se que no iba a poder ayudar para estudiar mas, y me dijo, pues ya, que me olvidaba de la escuela, de seguir estudiando.

Other youth were never explicitly told that they had to leave school, but instead began to consider discontinuing their studies once they become aware of their households' financial situations. Aware of the hardship that school-going brings to their families, these youth wanted to help alleviate their households' economic burden by not incurring the costs associated with school-going, as well as by contributing their labors to the family. In some cases, youth go against their parents' expressed wishes and make the decisions themselves.

At age thirteen, Concha opted not to continue her studies beyond *primaria* after taking notice of her household's economic situation. Although her father and older siblings were in New York, they did not send much money home and her mother was struggling to make ends meet. Although her mother wanted her to attend *secundaria*, she felt that she needed to help the household. To hide her real reason for her dropping out, Concha told her mother that she merely did not like school. Instead, in a selfless act, she discontinued her studies to financially help her household.

Concha: My mom wanted to send me to the school here, here in the clinic [Escuela Dolores Jimenez y Muro], but I saw how we were in the house, and I saw that we did not have money, and well I thought how was I going to continue studying if we could not? And how I saw it, and I told her that I was not going to study and she asked me why not, and I told her because I don't like it, but I did want to continue studying, nothing more than because of the money...

Mi mama quería mandarme a la escuela acá, aquí de la clínica, pero yo veía como éramos en la casa, y yo veía que no teníamos dinero, y pues yo pensaba como iba seguir estudiando si no nos pueden? Y yo como lo veía, yo le dije que yo no iba estudiar, y ella me pregunte porque no, y le dije que porque no me gusta, pero si yo quería seguir estudiando, nada mas por la economía...

Pedro also reported discontinuing his schooling after his mom encouraged him to go onto *secundaria*. Although he and his sister were both passing onto *secundaria*, his mama only had money for one of them to attend. Because the school was far, she supported Pedro continuing his studies, not his sister. Regardless, Pedro saw how hard his mother worked and wanted to alleviate the financial burdens from her.

Pedro: But me, how, I saw that my mother worked, and she would arrive home very tired, well I said that no, better thinking that I do not go [to *secundaria*]...

Pero yo como, yo veía que mi mama trabajaba, y muy cansada llegaba, bueno dijo que no, mejor pensé no irme...

Armando also discussed seeing that his parents economically struggled, but he also was simply not that interested in school anymore. Although Armando's parents wanted him to continue his studies to eventually have a profession, Armando observed the toll hard work was taking on his father and he wanted to lighten his father's financial and labor load. During his second year of *secundaria*, at age fourteen, he began to think about dropping out. Three months later, he took matters into his own hands and acted out in school to provoke expulsion. Although he was disinterested in school, he also attributed his dropping out to wanting to financially help his family.

Armando: My parents wanted that I would become someone, but I noticed sometimes that I carried all of the weight on me, and that the truth was that school was not important to me. I, uh, I talked to them to take me out of school so that I could help them, and my father did not want that, and so I took the decision myself, trying to get myself expelled. In middle school, I had already lost, I didn't go with the motivation, I did not have it anymore, I just went out of obligation. [Ok, why?] I didn't, I didn't I would look at my father and how he was jaded already, like already very beaten.

Mis papás querían que yo llegara a ser alguien, pero yo hizo caso que llevaba todo el peso conmigo y la verdad fue que la escuela no era importante de mí. Yo, pues, hablé con ellos para echarme de la escuela para ayudarles y mi papá no lo quería, y entonces hice la decisión tratando

de expulsarme de la escuela. En la secundaria todavía ha perdido, no iba con la motivación, ya no lo tenía, sólo iba de obligación. [OK, ¿Por qué?] Yo no, no, veía a mi papá y como hastiado era, como todavía muy agotado.

In few cases, some rural youth desire to continue on to high school, and take full responsibility in fulfilling their studies on their own. Not only is tuition for *Bachiller* attendance not free, but for rural youth, most *Bachillers* are located outside of their communities and the youth must incur travel, food and in some cases, due to the distance, housing costs, to attend these schools. These expenses are in addition to the costs of supplies, uniforms and *cooperaciones* that persist. Given only a summer to try to earn enough money to attend *Bachiller*, some rural youth fall short and abandon their plans or drop out after their money runs out.

In the case of Julio, he wanted to continue to study at the *Bachiller* level, but the nearest *Bachiller* was located approximately one hour and a half away. After graduating from *secundaria*, he believed that if he worked all summer, he would be able to afford continuing his studies, which, because of the distance, would include rent and food. As the dates of enrollment came and passed, he knew that he simply could not afford all of the costs associated with attending a *Bachiller* in another town. In spite of his mom's encouragement, it simply was not fiscally possible.

Julio: Well, she told me to study, but I told her yes, I was going to study but when I got out [of *secundaria*], I was going to continue, to study, and I got out for my vacation, and I said that yes, that I was going to return to school, I told her yes, but first I missed fifteen days, and then I already told her that no, that I was not going to study because I would not have enough to pay rent, to pay for transportation, food...

Bueno, ella me decía que estudiaba, pero yo la decía que si, iba a estudiar pero cuando yo salí, ya iba yo a seguir, a estudiar, y salí en mis vacaciones, y dijo que si, yo que iba a regresar a la escuela, yo le dije que si pero primero faltaba quince días, y la dije que ya no, que yo no iba estudiar porque yo no iba alcanzar con pagar renta, para pagar transporte, comida...

Other youth thought about not continuing school because they saw that their parents had a lot of work at home and they wanted to stay home and help them with household labor. Rosa was one

such youth who sometimes felt that she did not belong in school, and that her time would be better spent doing something else. This primarily included staying at home to help her mother with her housework.

In the cases of some youth, it appeared as if the economic difficulties associated with their school-going may have dampened their motivations and aspirations to continue their studies. Although some youth discussed the economic hardships of their parents as the motivating force for ending their studies, they would largely attribute their school leaving to their diminished interests in school. Her grandparents had already told her that they could not and would not support her studies beyond middle school. Knowing it would have little bearing on her future school-going, Clementina began to act out during her last year in *telesecundaria*.

Clementina: By the time I was in middle school, I was very disastrous. We would always leave class, go paint...the *secundaria* was not fenced, and the teachers would let us do whatever we wanted to do. They would put us out of class for nothing, for an hour, for just talking with our friends, so we would decide, well, let's just go home or go play by the river. Or sometimes we would just decide to get our things together and leave the classroom.

En cuanto era en la secundaria fue muy desastrosa. Salíamos de clase, íbamos a pintar... la secundaria no tenía una valla (alambrada) y los maestros nos permitían a hacer lo que queríamos. Nos echaban de clase por nada, por una hora, por sólo hablando con nuestros amigos, entonces decidíamos, pues vamos a regresar a casa o jugar al lado del río. O a veces nos decidíamos a poner nuestras cosas en orden y salíamos del salón.

Little by little, Clementina began to lose interest in school and by the end of *secundaria*, she had no desire to continue her studies. Although she seemed to find herself in trouble in school, it did not appear as if teachers nor the school director cared much to change her pathway; she, and other students, were left to do whatever they wanted. In this sort of setting, it is no surprise then, that she did not want to continue her studies past *secundaria*.

Clementina: No more, I don't know, I didn't have any more interest in continuing, I knew that I would be at a loss [without continued schooling] later, but I just did not have any more interest.

No más, yo no sé, no tenía ganas de continuar, yo sé que será con pérdida [sin continuar en la escuela] después, pero solamente ya no tiene interés.

Diego's educational career had been promising in *primaria*. By the sixth grade, Diego was the best student in his class, chosen to compete in academic contests in other towns. By *secundaria*, however, Diego lost interest in school and his grades began to drop. After the end of his second year, he was informed that he would have to repeat the grade, something he did not want to do. He attributed his diminished performance, however, not merely to his lack of interest, but also to his inability to bring supplies that were asked of the students. Embarrassed and unprepared for classes, Diego began to cut classes, which led to his failing grades. Rather than repeat, he chose to drop out of *secundaria*.

Diego: Well, already after, when I arrived to *secundaria*, I put like two years there, I did not like it, they asked me for supplies, bring this, pay for this, things that I could not get sometimes, and like that, I did not like being like that, it couldn't like that...

Bueno, ya después, cuando yo llegue a la *secundaria*, yo puse como dos años ahí, no me gusto, me pidieron útiles, que traer esto, pagar por esto, cosas que yo no podría conseguir a veces, y así, no me gusto hacer así, así no se podría...

In the majority of cases of rural youth, their ability and decisions to discontinue their studies are predicated on their households' economic insecurity, which, according to many of the study youth, was high. Growing up in poor households, even with the receipt of cash-transfers, many rural youth still cannot continue their studies beyond, for most, *secundaria*. It is their households' economic situations, as well as their ages, that warrant their exit out of educational fields.

In the case of rural youth, many factors converge to create a class of undereducated youth. Their educational histories are predicated upon the unavailability of accessible, adequate school coverage and the inability for their parents, even with cash-transfers, to pay for their schooling costs. In many rural communities, access to lower *secundaria* studies is recent, with upper *secundaria* usually located in other towns further away. In many cases, rural youth's

education ends after *secundaria* completion because they simply cannot afford continuing on afterwards. Told by their parents, youth either attempt to pay for their continued their schooling themselves, or end their studies.

The rural youth also receive little encouragement to continue their studies. They receive little support in their school endeavors by their communities and teachers. Hearing from community members that school was a waste of time, they begin to believe that schooling cannot and will not positively affect wages. Faced with economic insecurity, the youth simply have little faith that more schooling will benefit them in the long run. Without evidence that financial sacrifices will pay off in the short or long run, most of the rural youth will drop out before completing Mexican high school studies.

Section II: Urban Youth

Communities

Most of the urban youth who reported growing up in urban areas had been raised in extensions of Distrito Federal, which, in some cases, eventually split off into their own municipal areas.¹²⁷ The three areas in which most of the urban respondents were born and raised, *Valle del Cabeza de Vaca*, *Xochitlapa*, and *Panchatohuil*, also exhibited high incidences of poverty and

¹²⁷ These areas, located just outside of Mexico City in the Valle de Mexico, began as unincorporated extensions of Distrito Federal to which people moved so that they could stake out and buy their own lots of land. Described as “gritty,” the municipality of Panchatohuil was organized in 1963, with Ciudad Panchatohuil as its head. Twenty five years after its official incorporation, in 1988, the city was overcrowded, with less than satisfactory public services and half of its road remained unpaved. An unofficial characterization of the area at the time declared it as a “ghetto where men go to prison and the women go into houses of prostitution.”(Rohter,1988). By the 21st century, the city remains overcrowded and according to the 2004 New York Times article discussing Neza immigration to New York, “so poor that trash is still collected by a donkey cart.” (Kugel, 2004). Valle de Cabeza de Vaca is also a separate municipal town which was officially incorporated in 1994 after almost twenty years of unincorporated expansion. Residents had long moved their homes to this area, but were without potable water, drainage, schools, etc. The area is still considered to be poorly maintained by the federal and state governments as exemplified most recently by the February 2010 floods. It is also ranked as one of the poorest and most densely populated areas in the country for the past thirteen years. (Opus Dei) Lastly, considered a “borough” of Distrito Federal, Xochitlapa is located in the eastern part of the city and is considered one of the most crime-ridden areas of Mexico City (Reuters, 2007). These areas continue to be characterized as violent, crime-ridden, and in most cases, lack government funds for basic municipal services.

low incomes. In these areas, the average income of the heads of household ranged between \$2,765 and \$3,541 a year (CELADE, 2000). Xochitlapa possessed the highest percentage of the population living in overcrowded conditions, between 24.83 and 39.46%, as well as the highest percentage of teenage mothers of all three areas, between 12.7% and 17.6%. Panchatohuil had slightly higher percentage of households than Valle de la Cabeza that were deemed as overcrowded, between 20.62% to 24.83% and between 16.44 to 20.62% respectively (CELADE, 2000).

Many of the urban youth reported living in these three communities that exhibited signs of underdevelopment and poverty, also made evident by a lack of municipal and household investments. The underdevelopment may also be explained by these areas' unincorporated status until recently, with one area, *Valle de la Cabeza de Vaca*, incorporated as late as 1994. In spite of the absence of a full range of functional services, like their rural counterparts, urban youth were also optimistic about their communities' modernization efforts. Whereas before, they were underdeveloped, by the time they left, their communities were developing, expanding and providing basic services to more and more homes and residents.

Gabriel grew up in Panchatohuil, or what some refer to as PanchaYork, due to the high levels of outmigration to New York City (Kugel, 2004; Smith, 2006). He described living in a neighborhood that was still expanding when he left. When he and his family first arrived to live there, few municipal services existed. He described how they were forced to resort to unconventional ways to secure electricity in their homes.

Gabriel: Like, for example, my parents were the first ones who went, they had to pull electricity with a cable, from far away...

Como por ejemplo mis papas eran los primero que fueron, tenían que jalar electricidad con un cable, de muy lejos...

Over time, however, conditions in his community improved. Like several of the rural youth, Gabriel used the example of streets having been paved to demonstrate progress in his community:

Gabriel: Before it was uglier, before, there were not any paved streets, all of them were made of dirt, and then they put coals, little by little paved, now they are paved...

Antes era más feo, antes casi no había calles pavimentadas, todas eran de tierra, y luego pusieron charcos, poco a poco pavimentados...ahora están pavimentados...

Additionally, Gabriel recalled that when he lived in Valle de Cabeza, some people were still living in homes made of carton, or cardboard. Likewise, Samuel had witnessed the growth of his community prior to his departure.

Samuel: Before, before it was like a little town, small, there were not any freeways, just five years ago, it is like here...

Antes, antes iba como pueblito, chiquito, no había carreteras...apenas cinco años, es como aquí...

Like Samuel, Solomon and Julieta also describe living in areas in Mexico that they believed were much like New York City. Solomon and Julieta now both lived in Brooklyn which, in their eyes, was a lot like their home communities in Mexico.

Solomon: Well, it was like here, because I lived just about in the downtown of Distrito Federal, in Mexico, and there, there were services...

Pues, era como aquí, porque yo vivía casi en el centro de Distrito Federal...en México, y ahí, había todos los servicios...

Julieta, now a resident of Sunset Park, believed that her community was a lot like her community now in Brooklyn.

Julieta: It was like a city, it was like here, I think it's similar to Brooklyn...

Another youth, César, also grew up in Distrito Federal. Growing up there, he believed it was a large city with everything he needed. After immigrating to New York, though, he realized that he only believed it was large because he had lived there as a little boy.

César: I grew up there since I was little, it is a neighborhood that has, in particular, that it is very large, very extensive...maybe because I grew up there it seemed like I had everything there...but now I know that it was because I was there when I was little...

Yo me crie ahí de pequeño, es una colonia que tiene en particular que es muy grande, muy extensa...tal vez porque yo crie ahí, se me hacía que yo tenía todo ahí...pero ahora sé que era porque yo estuve de pequeño ahí...

Although fewer in number, some Mexican youth hail from urban areas that are much like New York City. Prior to their departure, however, the youth describe growing up in areas that were unincorporated, developing, and frankly, poor. Some youth describe seeing homes made of cardboard, and not having access to basic services.

The Intersection of the Life Course and Urban Mexico

In spite of their similarities to New York City, (or perhaps like some areas of New York City), the communities in which the youth were raised possessed few to no spaces that were specifically designated for youth, such as parks. Lacking age-segregated and specific youth spaces, most of the urban youth discussed engaging in youth activities such as playing in the streets.

Gabriel describes his community as not having enough parks to play in; instead, youth play in the streets.

Gabriel: Well, there are some guys, there are not sufficient parks, you have to play in the street...

Pues hay unos chavos, pero allá no hay suficientes parques, tienes que jugar en la calle...

Other youth whose parents worked in the market reported going to work with their parents and playing in the market with other youth. Gabriel and Samuel both recalled playing in and around their fathers' market stands. Gabriel in particular remembered having to go with his parents to work on the weekends, from seven in the morning to six in the afternoon. He was not required to work, so instead he played with other children who were there. Here, in the absence of designated spaces for play, he and his friends improvised and made their own spaces for play.

Gabriel: Ah, I would get up on the roofs, and I would jump from one roof to another, yes, I would jump on roofs, and I was already fighting with another boy, like that, we would start to play soccer, there, in a little corner that we had to play, it was a parking lot but we would start to play soccer. (And were there a lot of boys?) Well, no, not many, more or less like that, for the regular, it's that sometimes it changed, sometimes a lot of children went there, since there were machines, and that, video games well, a lot went there to play and well there, a lot went, there...

Ah, yo me subía hasta los techos, y me ponía a brincar desde un techo hasta al otro, si me ponía a brincar en los techos, o yo ya estaba peleando con otro niño, así, o poníamos a jugar futbol, ahí, en un cachito que teníamos para jugar, era un estacionamiento pero nosotros nos poníamos a jugar el futbol...(Y había muchos niños?) Pues, no, no muchos, mas o menos así, por el regular, es que a veces se cambiaron, a veces fueron muchos niños ahí, como había maquinitas, y eso, video juegos pues, hay iba muchos para jugar y pues ahí andaban muchos...ahí...

Julieta also talked about the lack of designated spaces for youth. Most days, she would either just play in her room, or go to the street and play with her friends and family. In spite of the absence of youth spaces, she still believed that youth had more spatial freedom in which to engage in leisure than in New York City.

Julieta: I would wake up, played in my room, then cleaned it up, and then I would go out into the street and play with my friends and family, it was fun, it was much more freedom than here...

Although the youth reported few designated spaces for youth to play, it appears that they did have time for play and improvised activity, turning spaces into their own play areas. The streets, as well as their parents' workplaces provided sufficient area in which to play with their friends. Compared to New York City, the youth believed that they actually had more space to play, or perhaps more freedom in which to take advantage of spaces in which to play. Ironically, the youth describe moving from spaces of spatial and individual freedom to New York City, in which spatial and personal freedoms became limited.

Intersection of the Life Course and Urban Youth

For the most part, urban youth described childhoods that were filled with few household or labor responsibilities. Instead, they described childhoods as time of leisure and Julieta

reported enjoying a childhood in Mexico that was free of significant obligations. Julieta was the only study participant whose household received regular remittances, and as a result, she appeared to experience a childhood in which she was not under pressure to work, contribute to the household economy, or carry any other worries than those of having one, then both immigrant parents. Although her parents may have missed what were considered essential moments in a parent-child relationship, they were able to provide sufficient financial remittances to flow into the household. As a result, Julieta reported that she enjoyed a childhood in which she was financially secure, and for the most part, was able to have anything (material possessions) she wanted.

Julieta: It was a pretty great childhood, I played, I went to school, I had fun with my friends, my parents were with me, not for the entire stage of childhood, but they enjoyed my first steps, and heard my first words, and pretty much gave me everything I needed...everything I wanted to have. Like, in my childhood, I was treated like a child, and I didn't have that much stress or responsibility.

Urban youth discussed the life course stage of adolescence as a time during which they began to understand their responsibilities and reflect upon their obligations. César described adolescence as the time during which he began to understand the obligations he had to his family and what courses he had to take to fulfill these obligations. As an adolescent, he believed, one begins to understand one's obligation, to the household, and how one must begin to contribute to the household. He believes, however, that although there is the knowledge of this responsibility, it is incongruent with one's abilities during this time.

César: My adolescence was really good, that is where I found out what I had to do. What more or less I had to do and I do not have to do. Because as a child, you have everything. You don't look for necessity, in adolescence is when you realize that you want to help your parents and you cannot. And that is when you take charge of the family and you see the necessity.

Mi adolescencia fue muy buena, ahí fue cuando yo supe lo que yo tenía que hacer. Lo que más o menos tengo que hacer y no tengo que hacer. Porque de niño, tienes todo. No buscas la

necesidad, en la adolescencia te das cuenta de que tú quieres ayudar a tus papas y no puedes. Y ya es cuando tú haces cargo de una familia y ves la necesidad.

Urban youth experienced adolescences during which they began to reflect and ponder upon making life-altering decisions. Occurring as early as thirteen, these descriptions of their adolescences suggest that they were conceptualizing and beginning their transition to adulthood during their early teenage years. One aspect of the transition to adulthood is making the decision whether or not to continue participating in the formal educational field. Several urban youth discussed thinking about leaving school as early as the age of thirteen, and in some cases, actually leaving their studies soon after: at age fourteen. One youth, Samuel, characterized his decision to leave school at age fourteen as his, and only his, decision, with no one advising him against it. This suggests not only independent decision-making, but independent decision-making about considerably significant life markers, i.e., the end of formal education.

Samuel: [Um, and was there someone who advised you to leave or not leave school, or was it your decision?] No, it was my decision, no one else.

[Este, y había alguien quien te consejo de dejar o no dejar la escuela, o fue tu decision?]

No, fue mi decision, nada más.

Alternatively, other urban youth discussed making their own decisions about staying in the formal educational fields in Mexico at earlier ages. Gabriel, who ended up taking English courses in New York City, recalled that after *primaria*, his parents did not send him to school. In terms of daily attendance, he himself decided to go to *secundaria*, and when it came time to go to *preparatoria*, he decided that he wanted to attend.

Gabriel: [And how did you decide to go to that school? Did you decide, your parents, or who?] In *primaria*, they sent me, no, like all of the children who do not want to go to school, so then they sent us, and then in *secundaria*, well no, in *secundaria* also, they just about did not send me, already it was because of me that I wanted to go, and already in *prepa*, I was going for/by myself.

[Y como decidiste ir a esa escuela? Decidiste tú, tus papas o quién?] En la *primaria* me mandaban, no como todos los niños que no quieren irse a la escuela, entonces nos mandaba, y

luego en la *secundaria*, pues no, en la *secundaria* también, casi no me mandaba, ya luego era por mi mismo que yo quería ir, y ya en la prepa yo iba por mí mismo.

In addition, urban youth also discussed making their decisions to enter into the labor market full-time. Although their actual participation in labor market fields [obtaining jobs] are negotiated by other, older relatives, making the decision to do so, according to the youth, is done so by themselves. Samuel recalls how he told his father that he was not only going to leave school, but also that he was going to work full-time, to which his father told him to do whatever he wanted to do. Samuel explains his decision to do so was so that he would become financially independent, or to “**depend only on myself**/para dependerme en mi mismo.”

Making these decisions by oneself: to leave school and to work full-time so that they can be [financially] independent are decisions that characterize these youth’s teenage years in their sending communities. In the cases of these youth, these were all decisions that occurred between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. For urban youth who end up immigrating to New York City before the age of nineteen, it appears that this series of decisions, reflecting markers of the transition to adulthood, are made by the youth starting at relatively early ages. At early ages, then, urban Mexican youth not only learn that particular behaviors are acceptable at early ages, but they are also invited to and participate in fields in ways which other youth may be privy to or engage in until later ages, such as departure from the educational field, or full-time entry in the labor market field.

Urban Households

The financial stability of urban youth households, much like those of rural households, depended much on the presence of both parents, and/or whether or not at least one parent was in New York City and sent financial remittances home on a regular basis. Most urban youth described growing up in households of meager means in which signs of financial insecurity often showed

themselves. This financial insecurity would impact much of the youth's lives, including timing of school departure and entry into the labor market.

Parents' Educational Levels

Like their rural counterparts, urban youth possessed parents whose average levels of educational completion were not higher than that of *primaria*. Gabriel's father completed his *preparatoria* studies, but Solomon's mother had no formal schooling at all.

Like rural youth's parents, some urban youth attributed their parent's incomplete educations to the financial situations of their grandparents' households as their parents were growing up. Julieta's father went no further than elementary school because he had to financially assist his own parents with their household expenses, including the schooling of his younger siblings.

Julieta: They [parents] would tell me that they were poor, and they wanted to go to school, but they did not have the opportunity to go. My dad only went to elementary school, because he had to go with the expenses in the house, and he had to help the others go to school. In his family, he was the oldest, he is the second oldest, so he helped them go to school.

Like their rural counterparts, low levels of education were generational: urban youth's parents possessed very low levels of formal schooling, and in some cases, none at all. Citing similar reasons as their rural counterparts, such as having to leave school early to support their own parents and siblings, there are very little differences between the two groups in terms of parental educational attainment.

Parents' Occupations

In spite of similar education levels, urban parents were able to be employed in different occupations than their rural counterparts due to their location and the availability of different opportunity structures and labor in their immediate proximity. In most cases, urban parents

engaged in unskilled labor, but not fieldwork. Urban youth's fathers or male guardians tended to be employed as vendors in the city's markets, while their mothers were housewives. In the cases where fathers were absent, the urban youth's mothers worked cleaning houses. In two cases, both parents had immigrated to New York City and were working. In these cases, their parents were also engaged in unskilled work, albeit in New York City. In the case of Julieta, her father worked laying down flooring while her mother engaged in domestic work, babysitting for her friends in the neighborhood who worked.

Financial Conditions of the Household

Household financial conditions assist in shaping ideas about whether youth should be participating in the education and labor market fields, simultaneously or singly, as well as at what ages they should enter and exit. In the case of urban youth, it appeared that not only were their households' more financially secure, but that this security allowed them to engage in educational fields without financial worries, at least until *preparatoria* enrollment, which coincided with the youth's ideas of financial independence. Additionally, the financial security of the household appeared to impact the youth's ages at which they entered into the labor market fields, both unpaid and paid, as well as the reasons for which they were participating.

One can deduce that urban youth's households were more financially secure than those of their rural counterparts can be concluded for several reasons. For one, urban youth did not report knowing or being aware of difficulties in paying for their schooling. While one youth attributed the lack of difficulties to urban schools' flexible payment plans for registration fees, urban youth households may have also had higher earnings, and in the case of one youth, financial remittances from New York City.

Additionally, while urban youth engaged in daily, regular work at ages older than those exhibited by their rural counterparts, both unpaid in the household and paid outside it, their reasons for working suggested that their households were in need of their earnings. Urban youth who worked in Mexico reported wanting to work so that they could be financially independent, as well as so that they could pay their own expenses. While they also mentioned contributing to the household economy to pay for family expenses such as food, schooling, or other household necessities, it appeared that more than their rural counterparts, urban youth worked to establish financial independence from their parents so that they could purchase extraneous goods, like clothes, or leisure items. Buying their own goods could be viewed as alleviating the household's economic burden, but their working did not appear as critical to the household economy as in the cases of rural youth.

Samuel reported wanting to work since the age of thirteen so that he could be independent from his parents, and not having to rely on them when he wanted to buy items often associated with adolescence: clothes and shoes, so he could go out with his friends. Only later, after his father died, would Samuel discuss the need to contribute his earnings to pay for his sister's education and to the household in general. Prior to his father's death, it appeared as if his earnings were not essential to the survival or maintenance of the household, but afterwards, they became more important. Samuel last discussed working and contributing money to the household in terms of honor, so that his mama could say that he was doing such.

Samuel: Because I wanted more things and I wanted, well I wanted to go out with my friends and I wanted to have money. Okay, because I wanted to buy these clothes or those shoes. And well I said, I wanted money, I wanted money.

Porque yo quería mas cosas y yo quería, pues yo quería salir con mis amigos y yo quería tener dinero. Okay, porque yo quería ya comprarme esta ropa o estos zapatos. Y pues yo decía, yo quiero dinero, yo quiero dinero...

His father ended up dying two months after he dropped out of school and it was then that he began to work in earnest. At this period in time he shared his earnings with the household. Although he still wanted to work so that he could have money to spend, he also wanted to contribute money to the household so that his family's activities would not be disrupted. His sister would continue her studies and his mother would not work. By doing so, it seemed as if there was a particular honor to his actions that not only his family, but others would observe as well.

Samuel: I wanted things for me, and well, also for my sister, I told her that I wanted her to study, and so then I put her to study. And so that my mama would not work either. [So why did you really work?] Well, one, because I liked money. Another, because I wanted to give money to my mama, and so I could feel like someone more, not only so that I could feel like her son, but rather so that they could say, “no, well he already works, he already takes care/is responsible for his own” and all of that.

Quería cosas para mi, y pues también por mi hermana, porque yo le dije que yo quería que ella estudiaba, y siempre la puse a estudiar. Y que mi mama no trabajaba tampoco. [So, porque de veras trabajaste?] Bueno, uno, porque me gustaba el dinero. Otra, porque quería dar dinero a mi mama, y apara sentirme alguien mas, no mas para sentirme como su hijo, si no para que digan, “no, pues el ya trabaja, el ya se porta con lo suyo y todo eso.”

Gabriel and César also reported working so that they could pay for their schooling beyond obligatory *secundaria*. Gabriel began to work on weekends after completing *secundaria*, but this was so that he could pay for his own *preparatoria* expenses. Like other rural youth who wanted to continue their studies into *preparatoria*, his parents were unable to meet the cost of *preparatoria* and he decided to work as a clown. Likewise, César began working at age sixteen selling chickens in a market post to support his *preparatoria* attendance

Whereas working at young ages was most characteristic of rural Mexican youth whose households were not receiving remittances, working to become independent consumers seemed to be more particular to urban youth. With their parents' higher wages securing a more financially stable household, urban youth did not appear to express an obligation to contribute to

the household economy as did rural youth. Instead, urban youth appeared to work, or at least start working, to become consumers themselves, either of leisure goods, or of higher, non-obligatory education. It would not be until later ages, or the loss of a parent, that the need to work would emerge, either to contribute to the household, or to support one's educational expenses and relieve their parents from such burdens.

Home Construction

Another way in which the wealth of the youth's household was determined was by asking about their actual homes, how many rooms they had, and what services they possessed. Most urban youth lived in small homes that were made of cement and disclosed that their homes were unfinished or with only recently completed amenities that others of greater wealth take for granted, like showers, completed kitchens and finished floors.

Gabriel: Well now, my house is made of pure *tabique*, like that, it also has already of granite/stone, and well, the patio does not have a floor yet, it does not have a floor, so it is made of earth, and well, bathroom, I have, but we just finished making it, we finished making it, and it is...well has a shower right now.

Pues ahorita, mi casa es de puro tabique, así, también tiene ya de piedra, y pues, el patio no tiene piso, todavía, no tiene piso, entonces es de tierra, y pues, baño, si tengo, pero acabamos de hacer, lo terminamos de hacer y quedo...pues es de regadera ahorita.

Urban youth whose parents were in New York City, however, had been able to send money home to improve their homes. Much like homes that I observed in rural Puebla that were receiving remittance monies, the homes of urban youth with immigrant parents who sent remittance monies home to Mexico lived in better constructed and larger homes. Julieta reported living, with her grandparents, in a two-story home that was furnished with everything—running water, telephone, and electricity. In addition to that home, Julieta discussed that not only did her parents own the home that she grew up in, but her father was constructing another home in Mexico that eventually, when they returned, he wanted to rent.

Not only were the urban youth able to either delay work or engage in work for extraneous expenses rather than contribute to the household, but they also enjoyed residing in better constructed homes than their rural counterparts. Not wealthy by any means, they did appear to enjoy a slightly better standard of living than their rural counterparts which included more certainty in their school-going and the absence of a need for youth labor.

Urban Household Composition

Urban youth's household composition, like those of their rural counterparts, also appeared to impact the homes' financial security. None of the urban youth lived in a stable two parent household. Rather, they lived in households where at least one parent was absent, either due to separation, death, or in the case of youth who would end up attending high school in New York City, immigration. Like other rural youth, the absence of one's father negatively impacts the economic stability of the household and thrusts youth more concretely into wage-earning roles, as well as to roles in which they contribute to the household. This was the case with Samuel whose father died. Although he had originally completed his schooling and began working for other reasons, the death of his father caused him to re-apply his earnings to the education of his sister and the overall financial stability of the household.

In the case of César, even though his father was sporadically present, he maintained that he lived with his grandparents. Here, he was afforded some residential stability while his parents divorced and then shuttled him back and forth between the two for several years. Relieving his grandparents from financial responsibility, César would work during the school year to pay for his own high school education. He would eventually however, drop out as his father reentered his life and needed money.

Urban youth grow up in households that, although are better off than their rural counterparts, also show signs of economic insecurity. Their parents also possess incomplete, low levels of education, and although employed, are working in low-paying unskilled positions. Although not exhibiting as high levels of economic insecurity, their households are economically fragile. Some youth are obliged to pay for their own education, and often dropout because their parents or guardians cannot assist in paying these expenses. In addition, several households experience an absence of parents, due to death or otherwise, putting significant economic pressures on the youth. Although reporting these pressures at slightly older ages, after secundaria, they were experiencing them like their rural counterparts nonetheless.

Fields in Urban Mexico: Labor Market

Urban Mexico is also plagued by high levels of unemployment and labor markets that have large sectors of unskilled employment. As of 2006, unemployment rates reached a total of 9% in urban Mexico, with males experiencing 10% of the unemployment, and women exhibiting 7.0% of unemployment. Of employed urban Mexicans, the highest percentage of were employed in unskilled, self-employed labor, working in manufacturing, construction, or commerce and services. This population totaled 16.3% of the total male urban population (ECLAC, 2007). This figure was higher for employed urban women. Slightly over 25% of urban women were employed as unskilled, self-employed workers,

In addition, high levels of schooling do not appear to ensure the highest levels of employment and economic activity. According to ECLAC, the highest levels of economic activity for urban males in 2006 were demonstrated by those who only possessed four to six years of schooling (85%). Urban males possessing over seven years of education (7-9, 10-12 and 13 and over) showed slightly lower levels of economic activity (83%, 77% and 82%). In a

sense, although only accounting for employment and not for wage differentials, this may send the message to youth that lower levels of schooling are sufficient to obtain employment, with extra years of schooling making little difference to get a job. For women, the reverse is true, as the highest level of economic activity for women exists for those women who have obtained 13 or more years of schooling (68%). Of women who possessed four to six years of schooling, only 44% were economically active. These figures, however, may also reflect an absence of women with fewer years of schooling participating in the labor market.

Like rural youth, urban youth reported living in communities where there was not only little variety in the types of jobs people could be employed in, but also few jobs available. All of the youth responded that most people in their communities worked in the construction industry, as well as associated services, such as painting. In addition, several of the youth recalled that many people in their communities, including some of the youth's parents, worked in markets.

Solomon: (And around where you live, what types of jobs were there, what did people do?) Well construction, also, more than construction, painting...

(Y al redor de donde vivías tu, que tipos de trabajos habían, que hacían la gente?) Pues construccion, tambien, mas construccion, pintura...

Likewise, Gabriel only knew of construction work in his neighborhood.

Gabriel: (What types of jobs do men do there?) Where? (There in your neighborhood). Oh, the people around here? Well the majority are in construction, like that...

[Que tipo de trabajos hacen los hombres ahí...] En donde?(Ahí en tu colonia...)Ah, la gente por ahí? Pues, la mayoria anda en construccion, asi...

Julieta and Rey recalled that the majority of jobs (for men) in their communities consisted of repair, including mechanics, and working in the market.

Julieta; It was more like mechanics, it was kind of like a marketplace, like a mercado, and their was shoe repair and mechanics and all of that.

Likewise, Rey remembered that men in his community, Lorenzo, Puebla, worked in mostly unskilled and semi-skilled labor.

Rey: Of bricklaying, carpentry, mechanics, washing cars, umm, well I say, there was a company there, I don't know what it was named, that made houses...there were also a lot of businesses...

De albañil, carpintería, mecánica, lava carros, umm, pues yo digo tenían hay una compañía, yo no sé como se llama que hizo casas...se dedican allá mucho al negocio...

While some youth reported available jobs in their immediate vicinities, other youth discussed jobs that were located in Distrito Federal, at least one hour away. To work, individuals had to commute at least two hours round trip to work. A testament to the urban development linking Distrito Federal with her surrounding communities, workers were able to obtain and retain employment while remaining in their home communities. Samuel discussed knowing that people commuted from his community in Valle de la Cabeza, a municipality located approximately one hour from what he considered downtown Distrito Federal for work. Now, he said, there were buses that the majority of people rode to get to work in the city. Those who did not work in the city, however, like rural inhabitants, worked in the fields.

Samuel: There, since it is so close to the city, it is like an hour to the city...[By highway?] Yes, by highway...but since there are buses and everything, well everyone takes those, well, the majority take those (buses) to work in the city, or those who don't have, work, in the fields

Ahí, como esta tan acerca a la ciudad, es no mas como una hora por la ciudad...[Por carretera?] Si, por carretera...pero como ahí hay buses y todo, pues todos agarran eso, pues la mayoría agarran esos (camiones) para trabajar en la ciudad, o los que no tienen trabajan, en el campo.

Regardless of whether or not the jobs were close by or within commuting distance, in toto, these jobs mirrored the types of jobs that the youth who had immigrated have seen people perform in New York City. In other words, jobs in their communities in Mexico are much like the jobs that they have observed in New York City; there is little difference.

Samuel: [And in the city, like what types of jobs do people have?] Construction, same as here [NYC], the same jobs...

[Y en la ciudad, como que tipos de trabajo tienen la gente?] Construcción, igual que aquí, los mismos trabajos...

Like their rural counterparts, most urban youth reported the same gender divisions of labor existing in their communities as existed in rural communities. Whereas the majority of men worked in construction, the majority of women were housewives. Reflecting biased ideas about the difficulties of unpaid domestic work, or perhaps the biases of men's labor, several of the urban youth, surprisingly females (unlike rural females who had engaged in this type of work themselves) described the women as "not working much."

Florinda: (Normally, what kinds of jobs do women do?) Well, there are some who normally stay in their homes...and the majority stay in their homes, to make their food...and the men work...but also, if women want to work, they can work. (But do many work in the community where you work?) No, they do not work much, they are mostly housewives...
 (Normalmente que tipos de trabajos hacen las mujeres?) Pues hay unos que normalmente quedan en sus casas...y la mayoría quedan en su casa, para hacer sus comidas...y el hombre trabaja...pero también, si las mujeres quieren trabajar, pueden trabajar...(Pero trabajan mucho la comunidad donde vivías?) No, no trabajan mucho, son mas amas de casa...

Julieta echoed her sentiments.

Julieta: It's a little difficult to remember, but I remember that they would do the harder jobs, like the most difficult, that was men, most of the women stayed at home.

Rey also recalled that women held few types of jobs, mostly being housewives.

Rey: [And the women?] There, they dedicated themselves to hairstyling, housewife, that's about it.

[Y las mujeres?] Allá, se dedica a la peluquería, ama de casa, casi es todo.

Overall, however, the youth not only reported a little variety in the jobs available in their communities, they also reported that there were few jobs in their communities to begin with.

Rey reported that very few jobs existed in his community. If you wanted a job, you had to look hard for one. Even if you found one, however, the wages were very low.

Rey: (Well, for example, what types of jobs?) Well there, there were jobs, but very few, that don't, (you) do not earn sufficiently...

(Pues por ejemplo, que tipos de trabajos?) Pues por ahí, si había trabajos, pero muy pocos, cosas que no, que no, no ganen lo suficiente...

Likewise, Gabriel, echoing other youth's responses, said that the majority of the jobs that people in his community held were in construction, but even these were not in abundance.

Gabriel: (And is there much construction there?) There isn't much, but you have to look (for them) no? You have to look (for them) and the majority of people work in construction...

(Y hay mucha construcción ahí?) No hay mucha, pero tienes que buscarla, no? Tienes que buscarle, y la mayoría de la gente trabajan en construcción...

Like the rural youth, urban youth reporting growing up in areas where the industry that dominates is one in which educational credentials hold little value. Rather, these jobs are unskilled and semi-skilled where people can be hired in spite of low levels of education. If adults have an average level of education in these communities no higher than a *primaria* education, and the majority of jobs in these communities are in construction, then it is safe to say that many of the construction workers have little more than *primaria* educations. In essence, in these communities, like the ones that rural youth grow up in, educational capital has little value in the local labor market (field). It is not operating in a market where it is converted for a higher position or higher wages.

Youth Labor Opportunities

Urban youth made very little mention of youth labor in general, and although they mentioned having a couple of friends who went to work with their parents, the early level of commitment to work demonstrated by rural youth was absent. Only César discussed having friends whose parents took them to work with them at young ages.

César: Some went to work with their parents. Another [female] friend had everything in her house, another friend, her mama worked cleaning rooms and she stayed home to make food and clean [their] house.

Algunos iban a trabajar con sus papas. Otra amiga lo tenía todo en su casa, otra amiga, su mama se dedicaba a limpiar cuartos y ella se quedaba en su casa hacer de comer y a la limpieza.

As a result, like the rural youth, for the most part, most urban youth did not describe early work expectations for themselves or other youth in their communities, regardless of their households' immigration history. Instead, they described living childhoods in which contributions to the household did not comprise up the majority of their time outside of school. Instead, they described having to work "a vez en cuando," or every once in awhile when their mothers; needed something, and besides some minor responsibilities to the household, they were free to study and play. Samuel was a nineteen year old non-school-goer in New York City whose father passed away when he was fifteen years old.

Samuel: Yes, I helped clean, water, things like that...(But something fixed, or just when you felt like it?) Well no, it was every time that my mom told me to, go clean this, every time my mom told me to, and if not (ugly face)...

Si, ayudaba limpiar, regar, cosas así...(Pero era algo fijo, o no más cuando te daba la gana?) Pues no, era cada vez que me mandaba mi mama, anda limpiar eso, cada vez que me mandaba mi mama, y si no (cara feo).

Other youth, including Julieta and Rey, also described having minor daily chores; Julieta had to clean her room, while both had to wash dishes. César was also spared of household chores.

César: My friends went to work since they were little with their parents and support the families, but others also (like) the same as me in their homes, just studying.

Mis amigos fueron a trabajar desde pequeños con sus papas y soportar las familias, pero algunos también iguales que yo en sus casas, nada mas estudiando.

In the absence of intense, assigned household responsibilities, the youth had more time to devote to their studies and to leisure. Rey recalled not having household responsibilities allowing him to spend all day, Saturday and Sunday, hanging out with his cousins and friends, going to the lakes. During the week, however, like other urban youth, his only household responsibility was to study.

Rey: [Did you have any activity in the house?] No, only to do my homework, tranquil...

[Hacías alguna actividad en tu casa?] No, solo hacer mi tarea, tranquila...

Like Rey, César's only responsibility was also to bring home good grades: **“they told me, “you give me good grades and you can have what you want”/”**a mi me decian, “tu dame buenas calificaciones, y tienes lo que quieres.”

In comparison to the rural youth, urban youth are not considered as integral to the household economy, financially or otherwise. Although these youth have some responsibilities, they are not nearly as intense as those held by the rural youth, which usually occur alongside their parents, during most of their free time. Rather than be expected to contribute at early ages, it appears as if urban youth have few household responsibilities that are integral to the well-being of the family. Cleaning one's room, for example, is more for one's benefit, as well as appearance, rather than central to the family's well-being, economic or otherwise. Several of the youth, the youngest males, reported not having any assigned chores at all. Instead, they spent their free time playing or watching the television.

Although prior to their teenage years, urban youth did not engage in regular work, unpaid or paid, some urban youth would occasionally accompany their parents to work at young ages. Although occurring neither as regularly nor as seriously as for those rural youth who accompanied their parents into the field and worked alongside them, some urban youth went with their parents to their workplaces as well. Samuel recalled going with his father to his selling post in the market place since he was very young, where, in addition to playing, he would help him in his selling. His father allowed him to keep half of all sales to teach him the value of working for money.

Samuel: Well, it is that my papa took me since I was young to work with them, I helped them work like in business, at the side of my papa, and I went to help them. And well, I went to help him and there I learned, and since I saw my papa, how he earned money, and I saw him with money. [And how old were you when you started going with your papa?] Well, since I was little he took me, like since five years old, because my father lasted a long time with that business. Since I was little he took me. He paid me, and like that, he gave me

half of what I sold. He told me that it was not because you are my son, and he told me, if you sell, let's say, like one thousand pesos, I will give you five hundred, if you sell one hundred, I will give you fifty, and he told me that I had to be selling there too.

Pues es que me llevaba mi papa desde pequeño a trabajar con ellos, yo los ayudaba a trabajar como en negocio, al lado de mi papa, y yo iba a ayudar a ellos. Y pues yo iba ayudar a él y lo de ahí aprendía, y como yo vi a mi papa como ganaba dinero, y lo veía con dinero. [Y que tantos años tenias tu cuando empezaste a ir con tu papa?] Pues de chiquito me llevaba, como desde cinco, porque duro mi papa mucho tiempo con ese negocio. Desde que yo estaba pequeño me llevaba a mí. El me pagaba, y ya, el me daba la mitad de lo que yo vendía. Me decía no porque tú eres mi hijo, y me dijo, si tu vendes, suponga como mil pesos, yo te doy quinientos, si vendes cien, te doy cincuenta, y me decía que yo tenía que estar vendiendo ahí también.

Regular waged labor, however, did not begin for urban youth until they were in their middle teenage years. This was older than most rural youth who began working for pay by the age of ten. Of those urban youth who worked for pay in Mexico, they too reported having various jobs, or moving from job to job in search of improved pay and work conditions. Unlike their rural counterparts, not a single urban youth reported ever working in the fields, although some reported working in jobs that some rural youth had also worked in, like making windows, bricklaying and as mechanics. When asked about his jobs in Mexico, Samuel began to rattle off a list of jobs he had between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, eventually trailing off and saying that there were many more to list.

Samuel: I worked in everything there, I worked in construction, I worked in an ice cream parlor, as a painter, in buses, oh, I had many jobs, and I still have not finished. My last job [in Mexico] was of some windows and all of that.

Yo trabaje de todo allá, trabaje en construcción, trabaje en nevería, de taxista, de pintor, en los buses, oh, yo tuvo muchos trabajos, y todavía no acabo. Mi último trabajo fue de unos vidrios y todo eso...

Gabriel also began working for pay relatively "late," after completing *secundaria*, at the age of sixteen. Needing money to pay for his *preparatoria* expenses, Gabriel worked on Saturdays and Sundays as a clown. After dropping out of his first year of *preparatoria* however, at the age of seventeen, he began to work full-time, all week, in construction, while continuing to work as a clown on weekends.

Gabriel: [And how many years did you work as a clown?] Two years, until I came (here). Already after when I left prepa, I began to work all week in construction.

[Y cuantos anos trabajaste como payaso?] Dos anos, desde que yo me vino. Ya después cuando yo sali de la prepa, yo empecé a trabajar todo la semana en construcción.

In their first jobs, urban youth find employment through their social contacts, either family members, including uncles and cousins, or through friends. Both Solomon and Samuel reported that they were employed in their first jobs by their uncles, but eventually, they would branch out on their own and individually seek better pay and work conditions.

In the case of Solomon, it was this first job at age thirteen during the summer, and “good” pay that first cast a doubt in his mind about continuing his studies. After completing *primaria*, Solomon began working with his uncle doing plumbing work and, in his eyes, was earning a lot of money—a thousand pesos [or one hundred dollars] for one week of work. Invited to participate in the labor market by his uncle at age thirteen, it was this favorable experience where he earned a significant amount of economic capital that he was tempted to leave his primary field of schooling to enter into the Mexican labor market field full-time. Having this opportunity to participate in the labor market full-time during the summer, as well as the economic capital he earned, led him to entertain the idea of leaving his studies so that he could work full-time and earn money.

Solomon: Well, I left *primaria* and went to go work with my uncle, we worked, we worked two weeks, and I earned a lot, well so I said that it was better that I continue working to earn...

Pues yo salí de la *primaria* y fui a trabajar con mi tío, trabajábamos, trabajábamos dos semanas, y ganaba mucho, pues yo dije que mejor que yo sigo trabajando, para ganar.

Samuel was also first employed with his uncle at the age of fourteen with whom he lasted four months working full-time with him in construction. After quitting because his uncle scolded him too much, another uncle hired him to drive one of his taxis, and then recommended him to work for his son [Samuel’s cousin], driving buses.

Samuel: [And why did you only last four months?] Because I did not like to be with me uncle, he was very scolding...it is when someone does not feel right, they say no, I'm going...and I went, I went to my home. [And after?] I have there my uncle who had a taxi, that same uncle got me work with his son, who knew how to drive the buses, and I helped him drive the buses.

[Y porque no mas duraste cuatro meses?] Porque no me gustaba estar con mi tío, el era muy regañón...es cuando alguien no se siente bien, dicen no, me voy...y me fui, me fui para mi casa.[Y después?] Allí tengo mi tío que tenia taxi, y allí, ese mismo tío me conseguí trabajo con su hijo, que supe manejar los buses, y lo ayude manejar los buses.

Other youth began to work full-time for wages by the age of fourteen. Urban youth reported doing such not only so they could end their dependence on their families. Samuel was one such youth, who reported telling his father that he wanted to become independent at age fourteen, paying his own expenses and not relying on his father for money. This happened to coincide with school problems, and using this opportunity, Samuel opted to begin full-time work.

Samuel: Yes, because of that, I told him that already at fifteen years, well, I told my father that I was going to become independent. And I told him that I wanted to work. No, I still did not have fifteen, I just had fourteen years. I told him, "you know what, papa? Since I had the problem in school and everything, and I was changed from that school to a school that I did not want to go to," so then I told them, "you know what papa, why do you go spending our money, better that I start working, and I do mine [pay for my expenses]." And he told me yes. And since then, I began to work, to work.

Si por eso, yo le dijo que ya a parte de los 15 anos, bueno, yo le dije a mi papa que yo me iba a volverme independiente. Y le dije que yo ya que quería trabajar. No, todavía no tendría yo 15, apenas tenía yo 14 anos. Yo le dije, "sabes que papa? Como yo tuve problema en la escuela, y todo, y me cambiaron de escuela a una escuela donde yo no quería ir," entonces yo les dije "sabes que papa, porque andas tu gastando nosotros dinero, mejor me pongo a trabajar, y yo lo hago lo mío. Y me dijo que si. Y ya desde allí empecé yo a trabajar, a trabajar...

Like their rural counterparts, however, urban youth who worked for pay described high rates of turnover in the employment careers, some voluntary, but mostly involuntary. Samuel discussed being able to find temporary work, but not full-time stable work. Ultimately, it was his inability to find work that led him to immigrate to New York City.

Samuel: That job, I had to leave it because when I finished, I did not have work, and they told me to wait, and I waited like three months, and they did not give me work and I had to look for another [job]. I had to come over here.

Ese trabajo, lo tuve dejar porque cuando termine, yo no tenía trabajo, y me dijeron que esperaba, y me espere como tres meses, y no me daron trabajo, y tenía que buscar otro. Tuve que venir para aca.

Urban youth begin their careers by their middle teenage years, later than their rural counterparts. Like them, however, they are employed in low-paying jobs which require little skill. Using social capital to find these jobs, they are able to become somewhat financially independent from their families. Eventually however, faced with dismal job prospects, they experience unemployment and begin to look northward for work opportunities.

Obtaining Skills in the Urban Mexican Labor Market

Urban youth also reported learning useful skills through their unpaid and paid labors in Mexico. Oblivious to their utility in the United States while they were still in Mexico, the youth reported that it was not until they had arrived in New York City and were now completely independent that they realized that those skills were valuable. Samuel reported that through his unpaid and fairly irregular housework, he learned skills that enabled him to be on his own and take care of himself in New York. In a sense, he was learning life skills through his housework in Mexico.

Samuel: Well, yes, you learn something, no? It is already when you live alone like I am over here and I am, live here, well I realized that I learned something from my mom, by being at home, by having the house in order, to buy things how they are, it shows you various things, when you are already alone, you learn.

Pues, si algo se aprende, no? Ya cuando alguien ya vive solo como estoy yo acá, y esta, vive acá, pues me da cuenta que aprendí algo de mi mama, de estar en casa, de mantener la casa ordenada, de comprar las cosas como son, te enseñan varias cosas, cuando ya estás solo, aprendes.

Urban youth also learned skills that could be employed for pay in New York City. Samuel discussed learning valuable skills throughout his employment career, starting at age five with his father. While with his father, he learned how to sell, both by observing his father and practice, when he began to work full-time at age fourteen, he also learned valuable skills that he could

transfer into jobs in New York City. For example, Samuel learned how to drive and to make glass windows and doors in Mexico, skills that he wanted to use on the job in New York City. .

Samuel: Well, I learned to drive, nothing more, they taught me how to drive, to make windows, I learned how to make windows and all of that, I started to help, ,and to do it professionally, making windows, making doors, all of that, I learned how to do.

Pues aprendí a manejar nada mas, a mi me enseñaron a manejar, de hacer vidrios, yo aprendí de hacer vidrios, y todo eso, yo empecé ayudar, y hacer lo profesional, haciendo ventanas, haciendo puertas, todo eso yo aprendí hacer.

Like the skills he learned at home, Samuel continued to discuss how these skills learned on the job may help him in New York City.

Samuel: Well, right now I am looking with a company where I could use them [job skills learned in Mexico], but in that company where I went to go see, they wanted me to get my license to have a car, so that I can put the windows on top [of the car] and move them here, and I told them that yes, I am just getting it and waiting to get my license.

Pues ahorita estoy buscando con una compañía donde yo las poderlas usar, pero en ese compañía donde yo fui a ver, ellos quieren que yo saque mi licencia para tener un carro, para que yo puedo poner los vidrios de arriba y moverlos para acá y les dije que si, yo no mas estoy sacando o esperando para sacar mi licencia...

Gabriel also discussed learning valuable skills during his employment in construction in Mexico, skills that could be put to use for pay in New York City.

Gabriel: Well various things, there I learned how to paint, also how to put up the walls, I learned how to put the *sabije*, well, the brick...

Pues varias cosas, ahí aprendí a pintar, también a dar las paredes, aprendí a pegar el sabije, pues, el ladrillo...

Rey also reported learning valuable skills while living in Puebla. Although he never worked for pay, he would help his father and his uncle at his uncle's mechanic shop, learning various automotive skills while there.

Rey: For example, they taught me a little of mechanics, I know how to check tires, wash cars...

Por ejemplo me enseno un poco de mecánica, yo sé como chequear las llantas, lavar carros.

Urban youth reported learning skills that are largely not learned in formal schools, but rather on the job. These skills, such as making windows and doors, constructing houses and

painting, and working on cars are skills that the youth could practice in the New York City labor market. These youth were armed with skills that would garner more pay than the traditional entry level jobs of busboys and dishwashers that are most available to young Mexican workers in New York City.

The Exchange of School Skills in the Labor Market

By and large, Mexican youth found that human and cultural capital earned and learned in Mexican schools were not exchangeable in their local labor market fields. In the case of Samuel, although he had completed two years of a technical *secundaria* track focusing on refrigeration in Mexico, he was unable to find a job where he could use those skills, or a job that would hire him based on those qualifications.

Samuel: These skills that I am using, I learned them in the street, working...my profession that I was studying and all of that about that, I have not found a job of my track, about everything that I learned, well, because of that I never worked in that.

Estas habilidades que estoy usando yo las aprendí en la calle, trabajando...mi profesión para que estaba estudiando y todo eso de eso yo no ha encontrado un trabajo de mi taller, de todo lo que aprendí, pues por eso nunca ha trabajado en eso.

Unable to exchange school-learned skills in the local Mexican labor market, urban Mexican youth began to rely on their on-the-job, street learned skills to garner employment. Soon, several found that it would be human capital learned on the job that was valuable, not school learned skills, even vocational ones.

Exhibiting some similarities to their rural counterparts, urban youth may not engage in unpaid household labor at the same rates as rural youth, but upon their middle teenage years, they too join the labor market. Mostly to assert financial independence from their parents, some youth, however, are working, like some rural youth, to pay for their schooling. Unable to Exchange school-learned skills in their local labor markets, youth learn early on that it is in their

jobs in which they learn valuable skills. They are already seeing a disconnect between school skills and labor skills, an idea they may carry with them to the United States.

Fields in Urban Mexico: Education

Average Levels of Urban School Completion

Just as in rural areas, generational differences existed in the average number of years of school completed by urban residents. In 2006, approximately 44.1% of the urban Mexican population between the ages of 25 to 59 had completed over ten years of schooling, while 55.9% possessed nine years of schooling or less. The average number of years of schooling completed by those between 25 to 59 years of age was 9.8 years, with an average of 10.2 years of completed schooling for males and 9.2 years of completed schooling for females (ECLAC, 2007).

For the Mexican population between 15 and 24 years of age, the total average number of years of schooling completed for both sexes was slightly higher, averaging a 10.1 total years. For urban males ages 15 to 24, the average number of years of schooling completed was actually lower than for older males, approximately 10.0 years of schooling, while for urban females, the average number of years of completed schooling was higher, 10.3 years. Additionally, over 51.3% of the urban Mexican population between the ages of 15 and 24 possessed over 10 years of schooling, while 48.7% possessed nine years of schooling or less.¹²⁸

Urban youth described being aware of these generational differences in the number of years of schooling completed. Their discussions of generational differences, however, only covered two generations: their parents, and their own, unlike the rural youth distinction among

¹²⁸ Not only do average levels of years of completed schooling differ by generations, they have also increased across generations over time. ECLAC provides data on the average levels of completed schooling in Mexico since 1989. In 1989, the average completed levels of schooling totaled 8.4 years of age for both sexes between the ages of 25 and 59 years, and 9.7 for both sexes between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Over time, then, the average years of completed schooling for urban Mexicans across ages has increased.

three generations. Like the rural youth, they believed that their parents' generation had no more than *primaria* educations, while their own generation had average levels of education of *secundaria* completion, and even entering into *preparatoria*, but not completing it.

Gabriel: My community? No, already high school, more or less, well, that, yes, not even prepa, some secundaria...(Can you give me, for example, ages?) Like the people, now people who are 20 years old, like secundaria, and older people, well it's only primaria...

Mi comunidad? Ahorita ya la prepa, mas o menos...bueno eso si ni prepa, ni termina [algunas] la *secundaria*...(Podrías dar, por ejemplo, edades?) Como la gente, ahorita la gente de 20 anos, creo como la *secundaria*, y la gente más grande, pues no más es la *primaria*.

Samuel also believed that people his age were completing *secundaria*, while his parents' generation had not completed their studies.¹²⁹

Samuel: Well there, the majority, well of my era that I was, the majority of us study, but the majority of our parents did not finish with their studies...

Pues ahí, la mayoría, bueno de mi época, que yo era, la mayoría estudiábamos, pero la mayoría de nuestros padres no acabaron con sus estudios...

Like rural youth, urban youth reported generational differences in the levels of education that members of their communities possessed. Whereas their parents' generation had not finished their studies, or perhaps had just reached *primaria* education, their generation was reaching *secundaria*, with some going on to *preparatoria*. In the lives of these youth, they see that with each subsequent generation, the level of education is increasing. However, around them they are still observing low levels of education that mirrors the country's level of compulsory education, but that on a global scale, much less than that of the United States, is very low. These youth, however, grow up understanding that these levels are customary. Youth bring these borderline credentials with them into the United States, where such levels are considered unusual in the general working population. Unsurprisingly, Mexican immigrant youth, from urban areas, as

¹²⁹ Youth appear to equate "acabando con t/sus estudios," or finishing/completing one's studies, with completing *secundaria*. This reflects the Mexican State's definition of completing obligatory education.

well as rural areas, arrive in New York City with the belief that ending one's education after *secundaria* may be sufficient.

One youth actually attributed the generational differences in schooling to the changes in resources over time. Gabriel said that before, there had not been enough resources, and there had not been many schools. This had since changed.

Gabriel: Well, they say why, some say because they did not have sufficient resources, realistically, they did not have sufficient resources, before there were not enough schools... Pues, dicen porque, unos dicen porque no tenían los suficientes recursos, realmente no tenían los suficientes recursos, anteriormente no habían muchas escuelas,

Like the rural youth, urban youth reported generational differences in the average amounts of education they observed in their communities. Whereas their parents' generation had reached only elementary levels of education, their own generation, the youth generation, had average levels of education that reflected *secundaria* enrollment and/or completion. This is below average levels of education in the United States (OECD, 2004)¹³⁰. Growing up in these areas of Mexico, it is highly likely that these youth then internalize these average levels of education as appropriate, and continue to be guided by this idea of "sufficient" education in the United States. Operating on this idea, then, most youth may believe they have already "**finished their studies**/acabaron sus estudios." The lack of resources in Mexico, which translates into, at the basest level, an absence of physical schoolhouses, may begin to help explain the generational differences in schooling.

School Coverage in Urban Mexico

In spite of early reports of these cities and areas having few educational institutions available to the youth at their times of incorporation, urban youth reported having more than

¹³⁰ The 2004 average levels of educational attainment in the United States for individuals ages 25 to 64 are 13.2 and 13.4 for males and females, respectively. This is significantly higher than Mexico's averages of 9.1 and 8.6 for males and females, respectively (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/56/9/37863998.pdf>, retrieved October 5, 2010).

adequate access to schools within reasonable travel distances. Urban youth could recall having at least three or four *primarias* and *secundarias* within walking distance of their homes. Not limited to only one school in their town/vicinity, urban youth could choose among schools. Julieta recalled that near her home in Esperanza, a neighborhood within Mexico City, she knew of several *primarias*, *secundarias* and a *preparatoria*.

Julieta: It (community) has a lot of people... it has everything, it has elementary schools, junior high schools, it also has a *preparatoria*...(Do you remember if there were a lot of schools?) There were more than five elementary schools, and I remember around my neighborhood, there were three or four, *secundarias*, and my kindergarten was two houses away from my house...

Gabriel also reported knowing about many schools, some of which were located within five minutes of his home.

Gabriel: Well, more or less there, where I live, it is by neighborhoods, they are neighborhoods, there in the neighborhoods there were like eight or nine schools...(And around your house?) The school was there, on the side of the market, the *secundaria* was like five minutes away...because there where the *secundaria* is, the *primaria* and the kinder...(Where were they located?) The *primaria*, the *secundaria* and the kinder(garten), all together...

Pues mas o menos ahí, en donde yo vivía, son por colonias, son colonias, ahí en las colonias había como ocho o nueve escuelas...(Y al redor de tu casa?) La escuela estaba ahí, al lado del mercado, la *secundaria* era como cinco minutos...porque hay donde está la *secundaria*, la *primaria* y el kínder...(Donde estaban ubicadas) La *primaria*, la *secundaria*, y el kínder, todos juntos.

Likewise, César, also from a community in Distrito Federal, reported that many schools were close to his house, including a university.

César: Yes, it started with kindergarten, *primaria*, *secundaria*, *preparatoria*, we had everything up to a university that was named, it was part of (inaudible), five or six degrees...

Si, empezaba de kindergarten, *primaria*, *secundaria*, preparatoria, teníamos todo hasta una Universidad que se llama, es parte de (inaudible), cinco o seis títulos...

All of the urban youth reported living in communities where they had access to many schools, from *preescolar* to *secundaria*. In fact, some of the youth reported living in

communities where various *secundarias* were located. However, much as in the in the rural areas, the urban communities' average levels of education reflect the schools that are available in their communities. Whereas the youth reported that the majority of their own generation had reached *secundaria*, all of the youth reported that various *secundarias* were located in their communities, and of all of the urban youth, only two youth reported having a *preparatoria* in their communities.¹³¹ Only one youth reported knowing of a university near his home.

In addition, the youth reported having several schools from which to choose for attendance, both at the level of *primaria* and *secundaria*. Although at the level of *primaria*, most urban youth merely attended the school closest to them, some youth suggested “choosing” the *primaria* that they would attend.

Julieta: [So why did you go, you said there were a lot of elementary schools in Esperanza, why did you go to this one?] Because you hear about “oh that’s a good school, that’s not good,” because my sister and brother went to another school and it was in the other colonia [neighborhood], so my mom and my dad decided to send me, it was closer to my house. [It was closer, was it better?] Yes, it was better, it had better teachers.

At the level of *secundaria*, urban youth reported “choosing” the schools they would attend, telling their parents which school to enroll them into. While still in *primaria*, the urban youth discussed being provided with a list of *secundarias* from which they could choose which ones they wanted to attend. From the list, students could select five schools for consideration. Based on grades, the schools then selected their preferred urban youth for matriculation. This is a vast difference from the rural youth whose school options were severely limited by availability of *secundarias* in their hometowns. Unlike most of their rural counterparts who, if available, chose the town *secundaria* due to financial reasons related to travel and distance, urban youth could

¹³¹ As discussed in Chapter 7, the youth discussed attending either *secundaria tecnicas* or *secundarias oficiales*, not *telesecundarias*, like the ones located in rural areas.

select from numerous schools, and base their selections not on distance or cost, but on their interests.

In the case of Samuel, he was able to mark five schools for consideration. These five schools were from a longer list of schools to which the youth supposedly had access. He was selected by the first school he chose, which not only was within walking distance, but if he had opted for it, was also served by bus.

Samuel: Yes, yes, yes, they talked to us, yes they gave us some options of what school to go to, if you would go to that one or to the other one, and they gave us a sheet (of paper) like that, that we had to put five schools, five solicitations to send, and well if they did not pick you in one, they picked you in another. And well, with me, the first one that I picked was that one, and well I went there, because of my grades, and well I stayed there.

Si, si, si, nos platicaban, si nos daban unas opciones de que escuela seguir, si iba a esa o no a la otra y nos dio una hoja así, que teníamos poner cinco escuelas, cinco solicitudes para mandar, y pues si no te agarraban en una, te agarraba en otra. Y ya bueno conmigo, la primera que me escogí fue esa y pues ahí fue, por mis calificaciones, y pues yo me quede ahí.

Although the youth were able to select between schools, the schools differed, at least in the youth's eyes, in terms of quality of instruction. Samuel believed that the teachers in the official *secundaria* to which he transferred after having academic problems did not teach as well as they did in the *tecnica*. They taught "very little," nor as well as in the *tecnica*.

Samuel: No, it's that they taught a little, they did not teach so well like they taught in the *tecnica*, because it was (an) oficial (*secundaria*).

No, es que enseñaron un poco, no enseñaron tan bien como se enseñaron en la técnica, porque era oficial.

In spite of differences in instruction, the ability to select among several schools enabled not only choice, but permitted youth a second chance if one did not do well in one school. In other words, if youth had academic or disciplinary problems in one school, it did not necessarily mean the end of their academic careers as it may have in a rural environment where there was only one *primaria* and one *secundaria*. In urban environs, the availability of other schools provided urban

youth the opportunity not only to choose among schools, but also to continue their formal educations in the case of expulsion in one school.

Cost of Schooling in Urban Mexico

As in rural Mexico, attending school in Mexico included paying several school fees, including registration and uniform fees. Urban youth reported paying registration fees totaling approximately three hundred pesos at the time of registration. Unlike their rural counterparts, however, they did not disclose paying extraneous fees such as *cooperaciones*, or *mantenimiento*, fees charged to rural youth to pay for school events, construction, as well as the upkeep of the schools. Samuel recalled that unlike in rural communities, “they” or the school officials paid for *mantenimiento*, or the maintenance of the schools.

Urban youth reported that they did not believe that their parents had difficulty paying for their school costs. They did not report having doubts that they could continue their studies due to the economic conditions of their homes. Absence of concern could be attributed not only to more stable household economies but also to the payment plans that their schools offered to parents to pay for their children’s schooling.

Samuel was one youth who expressed little concern about his schooling costs because of his school’s flexibility in payment. The schools he attended allowed payment of school fees until the end of the school year. If parents had not paid their schooling costs by the end of the school year, students were not provided with their diplomas/certificates. He reported that many families saved money all year long so that they could pay at the end of the school year without penalty.

Samuel: [And do you remember, if any time, your parents complained to make those payments, that maybe you were not going to be able to finish, or they did not have [enough] to pay?] No because that, those schools gave you options to pay. If you register, but at the end of the year, if you had not paid, they were not going to give you your certificates, that

was the only condition. Well there were many waiting until the end of the year, like that [people] were gathering [money] to pay, and when you are going to pay, they give you your certificate.

[Y recuerdas tú, si alguna vez, tus papas se quejaron por hacer esos pagos, que a la mejor no iba a poder cumplir, o no tenían para pagar?] No porque eso, esas escuelas se daban opciones de pago. Si tú te ponías a inscribir, pero al fin del año si no habías pagado, no e iban a dar tus certificados, esa fue la única condición. Pues fue muchos esperando hasta el fin del año, ahí fueron juntando para pagar, y ya cuando vas a pagar, te dan tu certificado.

Gabriel, however, believed that his parents began to have difficulties paying his schooling expenses when he passed to *secundaria*, but he attributed this not only to the increased expenses associated with attending *secundaria*, but also the simultaneous enrollment of his older brother into *preparatoria*. At the *secundaria* and *preparatoria* levels, and especially with several children enrolled in these two levels, school expenses increased and became less affordable for families. In a sense, as youth reached higher levels of education, their participation in the educational fields became more and more problematical due to the economic costs of participation. In the case of Gabriel, after witnessing his parents cope with financial pressure and his father working longer hours, he and his brother opted to take some of the burden off of their shoulders.

Gabriel: Well yes, yes they could pay, but I already saw them very pressured, or and well, I took a little bit of the responsibility, the same to help them. [And your older brother?] The same...my brother too, they are the same.

Pues sí, si lo podrían pagar, pero ya los veía muy presionados, ósea, y pues yo me tome poquito de la responsabilidad, lo mismo para ayudarles. [Y tú hermano mayor?] Igual...mi hermano también, son los mismos.

In several cases, it would be when urban youth enrolled in *preparatoria* that financial difficulties attributed to schooling costs would emerge. In addition to other costs such as books that were no longer provided free, *preparatoria* registration was over double the costs associated with *secundaria* registration, a costly seven hundred pesos. Urban families whose children enrolled in

preparatoria, then, not only were dealing with increased costs to attend *preparatoria*, but also with other school costs, including transportation and making copies.

Gabriel: And already, the registration fees there, they already charged like seven hundred pesos and they charged me in *secundaria* like three hundred and forty pesos, so then, it was already a lot of money for my parents, maintaining the two expenses, no? And in addition to the house...Because in *prepa*, to study, they ask you for more things, it is more money, in *prepa* you have to pay your travel, your travel and you have to pay for all of the copies, and that because then because you did not have enough money for the books so you have to make copies of the books and all of that...

Y ya en la inscripción ahí, ya lo cobraba como siete cientos pesos y me cobraron en la *secundaria* como trescientos cuarenta pesos, entonces, ya era mucho dinero para mis papas, manteniendo los dos gastos, no? Y más aparte la casa...Porque en la *prepa* para estudiar te piden mas cosas, es más dinero, en la *prepa* tienes que pagar tu pasaje, tu pasaje y tienes que pagar todas las copias, y eso porque luego no te alcanzaba para los libros y luego tienes que sacar copias de los libros y todo eso...

At these points, several of the youth reported knowing that their parents could not pay for their *preparatoria* schooling, and began to work to pay for their schooling expenses. While Gabriel began working as a clown on weekends to pay for his schooling expenses, César began selling roasted chickens at a *mercado* post to earn money for school. In both cases, however, they eventually ended up dropping out before *preparatoria* completion. Unable to keep up with payments, Gabriel would eventually drop out before the end of his first year, while César, would drop out during his last year of *preparatoria*. His father faced financial troubles, so he handed over his school monies to him.

Quality of Schooling

Teachers and Instruction

Unlike their rural counterparts, urban youth did not disclose having insufficient teacher coverage, and for the most part, the urban youth did not have complaints about their teachers or their behaviors. Reminiscent of Valenzuela's (1999) discussion of caring in Houston public schools, a couple of urban youth lodged complaints about their teachers, believing that Mexican

teachers did not care about them. Solomon, an eighteen year old non-school going youth from Xochitlapa complained that in *primaria*, his teachers did not really care about the students and did not teach well.

Solomon: The teachers, well, they did not teach well. [Why do you say that?] Because also, they did not pay much attention to the students, they just entered and would leave, and not come back...they did not pay attention to things.

Los maestros pues, no enseñaron bien. [Porque dices eso?] Porque también no pusieron mucho la atención a los alumnos, no mas se entraban y salían, y no volvían...no fijaba en las cosas.

When asked to compare the quality of instruction in Mexico and in the United States, Julieta also stated that she believed that Mexican teachers, especially at the level of *secundaria*, did not care much about their students.

Julieta: From what I remember from my experience, it was different from elementary school than the *secundaria*, because in the *secundaria*, the teachers were more like “I don’t have the time, “they would tell you if you want to talk about it, you have to talk about it in class and when we were in class, they would say, “we’ll talk about it later, because we’re talking about today’s lesson.”

For the most part, though, urban youth discussed having sufficient teacher coverage in their schools and being taught by what they considered “good” teachers, several of the urban youth believed that their teachers did not sufficiently care about them and were not as helpful as they could be with the youth.

School Resources

When asked about the educational resources that the youth had access to in their schools, responses varied among the youth. Some youth recounted attending large schools that were adequately resourced, and other youth recalled small schools with few resources. Samuel, who went to school in Valle de Cabeza, recalled positively his *primaria* experience.

Samuel: Yes, we had computers, we did not have a library. The classrooms had the libraries, like with books and all of that. But we did have our hours of computing, and all of the physical education activities, all of that, yes, they taught us well at that school.

Si, teníamos computadoras, no teníamos biblioteca. Las bibliotecas las tenían en los salones, como de libros y todo eso. Pero si teníamos nuestras horas de computación, y todas las actividades de educación física, todo eso, si nos enseñaron bien en esa escuela.

Of those who attended smaller schools, their descriptions of available resources were not all that different than those of their rural counterparts. While the other urban youth attended *primarias* that possessed libraries, some urban youth reported access to the libraries was very limited, with students allowed to attend only during one specific class period or not at all. Gabriel believed that they did not open the library because they did not have sufficient books for the students. None of the rest of the urban youth attended *primarias* that possessed computers or provided computing classes.

At the level of *secundaria*, urban youth reported having access to a wider variety of resources and course offerings. Although Samuel would eventually end up attending an official *secundaria* after some academic difficulties, he began his *secundaria* studies at a *secundaria tecnica*, or a technical *secundaria* that offered a wide variety of technical classes and tracks.

Samuel: There they taught everything and they had all sorts of workshops. There they taught workshops on electricity, refrigeration, accounting, secretarial, well there they had many workshops, and there were like six, seven workshops dedicated, and they gave us four hours of workshops, two times a week.

Ahí enseñaron todo y tenían todo de talleres. Ahí enseñaron talleres de electricidad, de refrigeración, de contabilidad, de secretaria, pues allí tenían muchas talleres, ahí había como seis, siete talleres dedicaba, y nos daba cuatro horas de talleres, dos veces a la semana.

Julieta also described attending a *secundaria* with a larger library and more access to computers and computer classes. During *secundaria*, she was able to attend computing classes twice a week for an hour.

Community Messages about school-going

Overall, the urban youth reported hearing encouragement from community members about school-going. These messages came primarily from older people, teachers, or other

relatives, in their communities. It is other youth, however, not other community members as the rural youth reported, who offer discouragement, suggesting that they (the youth) forget about school.

Several youth reported that older people mostly told him to stay in school. Because of their life experiences in urban areas, they have a better idea about the consequences of not finishing one's studies, and they did not want the youth to go without. It was their young friends and peers who were disparaging school. They had not seen how formal education would translate into higher earnings or jobs with better conditions.

Gabriel: Well, many think that it (continuing one's studies) is very important, but also today's youth think, they don't think much about finishing it, just in making trouble. (So when someone says that school is important, who says it, the old people, young people, who?) Well the older (people), no, they say, they already lived it, they don't want that (we) go through the same...

A pues muchas piensan que es muy importante, pero también los chavos de ahorita piensan, no piensan mucho en terminarla, no más en el desmadre...(So cuando alguien dice que la escuela es importante, quien lo dice, los viejos, los jóvenes, quien...) Pues los grandes, no, les dicen, ellos ya lo vivieron, no quieren que lo pasen lo mismo.

Likewise, Samuel reported that the community support came from their teachers, but friends were always countering these messages to continue his schooling. Instead, his friends would suggest doing otherwise, inviting him to skip school.

Samuel: No, well, the teachers always supported us, but the truth is that I had friends who always told me," don't go, come over here, and you do, well, yes, let's go," and that is when I began to fail in my studies.

No, pues, los maestros siempre te apoyaron, pero la verdad es que los tuve amigos que siempre me decían, "no, no vayas, vamos por acá, y tu sí, pues si vámonos," y ya es cuando yo fui fallando en mis estudios.

In larger cities, there are more opportunities to observe how educational capital and cultural capital may be exchanged in particular fields, including the labor market. It appears for previous generations, persons participated in fields where their educational levels were not sufficient enough to be exchanged for higher status and economic capital. Armed with this knowledge and

experiences, these persons share this knowledge with the youth, who may or may not take heed. More persuasive, it seems, for some youth, are messages from their friends, who discourage them from performing school behaviors in pursuit of higher levels of educational capital. Obviously, if same-aged, these youth will not participate in these same fields as their older counterparts until much later, and thus, they have no experience of working in these fields. Unlike their rural counterparts, they enjoy the luxury of not having yet entered into the adult labor market fields, and frankly, due to their location in urban areas, they are not even considering. Rather, these are fields they will participate in when they are older, and desire higher wages, and/or better positions. Now, as youth, they simply are not interested, nor, have they heard about alternatives to those found in the Mexican labor market field.

Continued Participation in Urban Mexican Educational Fields

Perhaps reflecting the differences between treatment in *primaria* and *secundaria*, many of the urban youth reported having successful *primaria* careers but then changing course upon arrival to *secundaria*. Although several of the urban youth, both New York City non-school goers and school-goers from urban areas discussed how their academic performance dropped after *primaria* in *secundaria*, several of the urban youth would either dropout or consider dropping out prior to *secundaria* completion. In the case of Samuel, his performance in *primaria* was so positive that he was selected to attend his first ranked *secundaria*, a *secundaria tecnica*. His grades ranged between nine and ten [on a scale from 1-10] and he attributed his *secundaria* selection to his high grades. In *secundaria*, however, he began to hang out with male friends who invited him to skip school and act out, which he did. Eventually, he would be forced to leave the *tecnica* and his father enrolled him in an official. Unhappy in his new school, Samuel would drop out before his graduation.

Likewise, Solomon reported experiencing a significant lowering of his grade point average in *secundaria*. Whereas in *primaria*, he averaged 7s and 8s, by *secundaria*, his grades had lowered. He had wanted to drop out of school after completing *primaria*, but after much coercion from his mother and other relatives, he stayed in a *secundaria* regular and completed his *secundaria* studies. Upon *secundaria* completion, his mother and relatives again encouraged him to attend *preparatoria*, in spite of financial difficulties, but he refused to take the *preparatoria* exams.

For both *primaria* and *secundaria*, it appears as if urban youth attend schools that are well-resourced. Although at the *primaria* level, the youth reported having fewer resources than in *secundaria*, they do not discuss these resources as being inadequate. At the level of *secundaria*, however, the schools that the urban youth attended appeared to be much larger and better resourced. The youth were provided with more course and track choices, with resources to match.

Exiting Educational Fields in Urban Mexico

As early as the end of *primaria*, some of the urban youth reported wanting to switch the fields in which they were devoting the majority of their time to. At the start of their teenage years, urban youth reported wanting to no longer participate in the education fields and instead, participate full-time in the labor market fields, where they could earn economic capital. As early as the age of thirteen, with only *primaria* education, several urban youth reported thinking that they wanted to discontinue their studies so that they could work, or earn money.

In the case of Solomon, at the age of thirteen, after graduating from *primaria*, he told his mother that he did not want to continue studying. He wanted to begin working full-time.

Solomon: Well, when I left *primaria*, I thought about not continuing to *secundaria*. [Why?] No, that, no more, why continue, if I am going to work, that was my thinking, I told my mama, two months passed when classes were going to start.

Pues, cuando yo sali de la *primaria*, yo pensé de no seguir a la *secundaria*. [Porque?] No, que, ya no, para que seguir, si voy a trabajar, eso era mi pensamiento, le dije a mi mama, ya pase dos meses cuando iba empezar las clases.

Like Solomon, Samuel also would end up not dropping out of school for another year, but he began thinking about discontinuing his studies a full year before he actually did, at age thirteen. Instead of being in school, he said, he began to think that he should be working and earning money.

Samuel: Well yes, sometimes I would say, “ah, well, instead of being in school, I could be earning money, “that yes, sometimes I thought like that.

Pues si, a veces yo me decía, “ah, pues en lugar que estar en la escuela, estuviera ganando dinero,” que si a veces pensaba así.

However, Solomon and Samuel would end up dropping out prior to their completions of *secundaria*. While Solomon had long before lost interest in continuing with his *secundaria* studies, Samuel lost interest after being expelled from his first school and transferring to an official school, one that, in his eyes, was more boring and one which he did not want to attend.

At his first *secundaria*, Samuel and his sister began to skip classes; she left with her friends and he with his. By his third year, his father informed him that he was going to enroll him and his sister into an official school closer to home. This transfer would prove to be a catalyst for him to discontinue his studies.

As in some rural households, it appears that for some urban youth both problems at home and school intersected with the desire to work full-time. Samuel discontinued his studies after two months at his new school, during which his father and his sister were having problems at home. Ultimately, Samuel explained his decision to discontinue studies as the result of his not liking his new school, having problems at home, and his desire to be financially independent.

Supporting the idea that parents relinquished their control over their children at young ages, leaving them to make their own decisions, his father approved of his plans to leave school and begin working full-time. Samuel would later explain his leaving of school as being his decision, and only his decision.

Samuel: Well no, at that time, I did it [left school] because before we had a problem with my papa and my sister, and so I told him, “you know what, papa? I don’t want to study anymore, “and I told him that I wanted to be earning money for myself...I did not want to go to that school because I did not like it.” And then he told me, “Do what you want to do.” And well like that, I began to work.

Pues no, en ese tiempo, yo lo hizo porque antes tuvimos un problema con mi papa y mi hermana, y pues yo les dije, “sabes que papa? Ya no me quiero estudiar,” y lo dijo que yo ya quiero estar ganando dinero por yo mismo...yo ya no quiero irme a esa escuela porque no me gusta.” Y luego el me dijo, ‘haz lo que quieras’. Y pues ya, me puse a trabajar.

Other urban youth, like some of their rural counterparts, dropped out of school because neither their parents nor they could afford to continue paying for their schooling. Like some rural youth, the lack of funds led several urban youth who had already entered *preparatoria* to drop out of school. Although they were able to reach *preparatoria*, they dropped out soon after starting simply because they could not afford the costs. This was the case of Gabriel whose parents could not pay for his schooling expenses. He also tried to pay for his *preparatoria* costs by working on Saturdays. Unable to afford *preparatoria* expenses, he discontinued his studies and began to work full-time.

Gabriel: No, well I left, from *prepa*, because I did not ask them for money so that they could help me anymore, because I saw that they did not have sufficient money to give me for my expenses, and already after, I could not [handle] my expenses alone, for the same [reason], because they asked me for many books, and with only working Saturdays and Sundays, I did not have enough, and so I decided to leave.

No, pues me salí yo, de la prepa, porque ya no les pidiera dinero para que me ayudaba, porque yo veía que no tenían suficiente dinero para que me dieron mis gastos, y ya después, yo no podría con mis gastos solo, por lo mismo, porque me pidieron muchos libros, y con lo que yo trabajaba, no más los sábados y domingos, no me alcanzaba, y entonces me decidí a salir.

Like their rural counterparts, urban youth appear to be vulnerable to similar forces that impact whether or not they will drop out of school before its completion—both *secundaria* and *preparatoria*. Urban youth expressed both disinterest in school and a desire to enter into the labor market to contribute to their households, as well as belonging to households that could no longer pay for schooling. While some youth were able to immigrate and “transfer” into schools in New York, several urban youth left the educational field prior to leaving Mexico, effectively increasing the chance that they would not enter in New York.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the surroundings and conditions in which future and current Mexican youth’s primary habitus is developed, prior to immigration. Informed by the environs in which they grow up, the youth internalize these conditions and norms about family, work and education. Although both hailing from marginalized communities, rural and urban youth exhibit important differences in terms of their access and participation in various fields, including the family schooling and the labor market that will set the tone for their practices in New York City. In the case of rural youth, I demonstrate how these youth, at early ages, are taught that work, both unpaid and paid, is a valued activity that defines their membership in their families. Learning at early ages that work is an integral part of one’s life, they are socialized to maintain work as a primary activity in their lives throughout their life course. Intersecting with limited schooling, both due to community coverage and expense, the youth also learn that formal education is *not* a primary activity for lengthened periods of time.

Likewise, urban youth receive similar messages, but due to their location in better resourced locales, these youth experience slightly different pre-immigration lives. In most cases, although living in areas with scarce employment, the youth’s parents are employed in more

gainful employment than farm work. This translates not only into less urgency for youth labor at early ages, but also the ability to pay for the youth's schooling. Additionally, increased educational coverage until at least high school provides the youth with increased access to formal education for longer periods of time. Their life stages more clearly resemble those found in the United States, as they reported living relatively worry-free during their childhoods and teenage years.

Chapter 6: Coming to America: Mexican Youth and their Imagined Lives in New York City

The worldviews of Mexican youth who remain in their home communities until their teenage years, their worldviews are shaped not only by their membership in these communities, but also by their participation in transnational social spaces that span across their communities and the communities in the United States. These memberships influence how they experience their transition to adulthood and shape their ideas about immigrating as they prepare to shift from being stay-at-home migrants to transmigrants. For this shift to occur, the youth, while socialized by the institutions and individuals in their home contexts, become increasingly oriented towards *el Norte* as a result of the messages they are receiving from families and friends in the United States regarding immigration. Partly a reaction to structural conditions found in their home communities, and, as a result, their understandings of age and life stages in Mexico, Mexican youth become attracted to the idea of life in the United States transmitted by family and peer immigrants abroad. During their teen years, differences between the immigrants' pathways are becoming more refined. While some Mexican youth will follow pathways that continue their trajectory to early employment, other youth follow a path that allows them to continue their studies in New York City. But just how do these youth shift from being stay-at-homes in Mexico to transmigrants in the United States? And, more importantly, how are their worldviews being shaped so that they might actually begin to imagine a life in the United States? How do they imagine where to invest most of their resources – into the labor market or education in the United States?

Although almost all of the Mexican immigrant youth in this study were members of transnational communities and households since birth, they only envisioned themselves as active,

mobile transnational agents upon reaching adolescence. Until this time, although longtime members of transnational households and communities, the youth are usually only on the receiving end of the exchange of transnational goods and messages. This position may include living in split-households, receiving phone calls, pictures, gifts and/or monies [Dreby, 2008; Marroni, 2002; Kanaiaupuni, 2000]. Although full, active participants of these transnational spaces since birth, the locus of activity, imagined and real, is in their Mexican communities.

This orientation towards home is reinforced by their enrollment in Mexican schools, as well as their access to local employment. As youth become older, however, and their participation in the Mexican educational field comes to a close, their socialization and exchanges may turn more towards individuals in the United States and their descriptions of the fields found there. Their attention becomes more deliberately spread across the transnational social space spanning Mexico and the United States, as friends and other family members immigrate, communicate and share more resources with them from abroad. Increasingly independent from their parents and/or guardians, as well as, in many cases, emancipated from school, the youth begin to accommodate the possibility of their own immigration into their worldviews. This border-crossing socialization occurs in part via the information and resources they are receiving from their transnational relatives, including parents, and friends. This allows the youth to not only picture their immigration, but more importantly, envision or not envision their entry into certain fields in the United States even before they actually interact with them.¹³² Imagining their participation in particular fields then, suggests their orientation towards particular outcomes north of the United States-Mexico border even prior to their arrival.

Transnational Social Spaces and Shifts in Mexican Youth's Worldviews

¹³² While these United States based fields are, in many ways dictated by different rules than their corresponding fields in Mexico, they are and have been inextricably connected to them for many years [Padilla, 2006].

As they grow older, teenage Mexican youth increasingly participate in these transnational spaces by virtue of a] living in communities with high out-migration and immigration, [b] belonging to families with immigrants, c] belonging to peer networks that include immigrants, and [d] by immigrating themselves and maintaining their own cross-border ties. As a result, Mexican youth are active members of transnational kinship networks and collectivities and as they age, increasingly communicate across borders both ways with their co-nationals, family and friends by receiving, and later sending, social and financial remittances (Brittain, 2002; Levitt, 2001; Marroni, 2002). Instrumental in nature, transnational social spaces allow these youth to obtain and exchange economic, social and cultural capital that not only allows them to begin to see how their lives may be organized in New York City, prior to immigration, but will also enable them to immigrate, and then settle in the city.

In recent years, the multidirectional flow of capital across transnational social space spanning between Mexico and the United States has been enhanced by technological advances (Lowell and de la Garza, 2002; Portes, 1996; Smith, 2006). Mexicans in the United States and Mexico continue to interact with and influence each other by sharing information about work, family, and schooling through telephone and internet communication, and by traveling between their communities in Mexico and the United States. Monies are also often sent from immigrants in the United States back to Mexico. Mexican youth's worldviews are shaped by virtue of these movements and exchanges and prior to their own immigration, youth are receiving messages about immigration and life in New York which they then integrate into their own realities and subsequently, act upon as they leave their home communities.

These flows are enabled through the pedagogic work performed by relatives, including parents, and friends, *from abroad*. Whereas immigration and transnationalism may be integrated

into their worldview since birth, *their own* immigration becomes normalized for these youth during their teenage years as they not only receive invitations to immigrate from their relatives, but they also see similarly-aged peers immigrate. These peers maintain contact with them after they immigrate to New York, oftentimes inviting the youth to join them.¹³³ Not only does their own immigration become normalized, but also, based on the interaction between their own habitus and the information that their contacts in the United States provide them, the youth's ideas about which fields they will participate in New York City begin to take shape.

Transnational Habitus

While Mexican youth develop a transnational habitus by virtue of their residence and participation in transnational communities and families, it is the further pedagogic efforts by relatives and friends abroad that orient the youth towards thinking that they themselves will actually immigrate. When examining the cultural and social reproduction of Mexican youth's lives as they orient themselves towards immigration, transnational social networks must be recognized as being of utmost importance in providing these pedagogic agents from abroad with a space and means across which they may perform pedagogic work on and exchange capital with/to the youth – even further impacting the youth's already transnational habituses.

This further work is what orients the youth towards immigration more than before, and allows them to begin to believe that a life in the United States, however temporary, is for people

¹³³ Studies of immigration have largely ignored these aged interactions in transnational social networks, and when discussed, have characterized teenagers as passive participants dictated by desires of their parents already living in the United States [Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995; Thorne, et al., 2003]. Discussions of immigrant youth's social networks have been limited to families and schoolhouses in one context, rarely transnational or in other social spaces [Brittain, 2002; Dreby, 2008; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995]¹³³ Neglect of their practices outside of school houses is amiss, as it suggests an absence of youth's social networks separate from those of their parents or schools.¹³³ The Mexican youth, are instead, *members* of transnational social networks which although involve their parents, are not exclusively defined by their parents actions, and include access to cultural and social capital undetermined by their parents, including from other relatives and peers [Golbert, 2006]. Additionally, their lives are not limited to schooling and include socialization and a flow of resources that occurs and is useful outside of their nuclear families and schools. While some youth are socialized and receiving/exchanging capital that is school-oriented, others are socialized and receiving/exchanging capital that will be useful in a labor market, as well as other fields.

like them. While already possessing a transnational habitus as stay-at-homes, with greater, more meaningful, exposure to transmigrants, both in person at-home and via technology, the youth's habitus may become more oriented towards the United States. It is these messages that enable them to imagine a future in the US with more certainty, imagining fields that they may or may not attempt, as well as their ability to be successful or not in these fields once there [Bauder, 2005; Guarnizo, 1997, Kelly and Lusia, 2006].

Transnational Social Capital

Immigrants abroad are able to transmit messages about the exchange rates of specific forms of economic, cultural and social capital in the United States, enabling youth to imagine how their lives may unfold upon immigration. Massey, et. al [1987] suggest that it is in these capacities that family and friends who have already immigrated become highly instrumental in the lives of people who are preparing to immigrate. While prior to their own leaving, family and friends may offer particular types of resources valuable only in Mexico, after immigration, these same individuals are able to provide a different set of resources as a result of their experiences in new contexts. They have now interacted with new social institutions and fields and have acquired new knowledge and resources that may be helpful to assist others' immigration and settlement. The ability to share this knowledge across transnational social spaces becomes important as Mexican youth are able to secure information, even prior to their immigration that if embarked upon, may make them more successful in New York City fields.

Simply stated, for youth who become inclined to immigrate, old friends and relatives are more useful than before as they now possess new economic, cultural and social capital that they themselves obtained through their new interactions with social institutions in the United States. Encouraged and armed with new information, youth are able to adjust their worldviews to

imagine and then embark on their own immigration and entry into new fields located in a different geographic territory, New York City.

Transnational Fields

In addition to possessing a transnational habitus and access to transnational economic, cultural and social capital, the youth are simultaneously imagining participating in transnational and local fields. Although their relatives and peers describe local fields in New York City and provide them with social capital that will be useful in the local New York City fields, this sharing of capital is occurring across borders, or across a transnational household field. In addition, as the current and future non-traditional school-going youth imagine their entry into the New York City labor market, they imagine improving their household status in relation to the local context, but via transnational practices. Lastly, as they imagine immigrating and obtaining improved employment, this imagined improved position will occur within a transnational labor market field. In most cases, the youth are no longer agricultural workers; instead, their positions have improved to that of unskilled worker in New York City.

Organization of Chapter

Whereas Chapter Five discusses how Mexican immigrant youth's lives are organized at one pole of the transnational field of power, in their sending communities, Chapter Six continues this discussion to examine how Mexican immigrant youth's begin to and actually orient their lives towards the geographically opposite pole in New York City through immigration and their active participation in transnational social spaces and networks. Continuing on their trajectory as transnational youth workers, their dependence on adult relatives and similarly-aged Mexican immigrants already residing in New York City increases as they begin to think about and make plans to immigrate and seek employment and in some cases, schooling opportunities in New

York. As Mexican youth shift their gaze to New York City, relatives and friends who already live in New York City begin to assume greater significance in the primary socialization in their lives.

The first section of this chapter examines experiences that all of the Mexican youth share: witnessing the immigration and transnational activities of individuals from their communities, belonging to transnational networks, and receiving general information about immigration and life in New York City, all while still in Mexico. In Sections II and III, I examine the heterogeneous conditions that shape the youth's ideas for different pathways in New York City. I explore these ideas that occur at different ages and are informed not only by different sets of relatives and friends who are already located in New York, but also by different transnational socializations, information and resources that they receive. As a result of these transnational interactions, Mexican immigrant youth begin to learn [or not learn] about particular fields in the United States, as well as their possible participation in them, and either continue on their imagined trajectories, or, in some cases, begin to suppose their entry into other fields they had not previously conceived. What messages are shared, and how these messages reinforce the youth's ideas about which fields they will enter into upon immigration are explored. How this occurs in the lives of future and current non-traditional school-going youth is explored in Section II, and in the lives of traditional school-going youth in Section III.

Section I: Immigration as a way of life: How Mexican Youth learn about immigration

Orientations towards immigration and subsequent entry into the labor market or education are partly a result of the pulls that youth feel towards New York City by virtue of their membership in communities, families and peer networks that span the US-Mexico border. Across *all groups of youth*, oriented towards school-going or not, the Mexican youth reported

knowing and being in regular and semi-regular contact with family who had immigrated to New York City to work. In addition to relatives, Mexican youth knew other youth their own age or slightly older, who immigrated prior to them.¹³⁴ Mirroring their orientations, Mexican youth who wanted to and ended up in the labor market full-time, discussed knowing other youth who immigrated to work, while post-immigration youth who were attending school full-time reported, prior to immigration, knowing youth who had immigrated for family reunification, or to join their parents. Regardless of the reasons for their departure, prior to immigration, Mexican youth remained in contact with both older and similar-aged relatives and friends who had immigrated before them, and as a result, were members of transnational social networks across that would inform the future organization of their lives in New York City. Obviously, however, the information that flowed across these networks would reflect the experiences their contacts had themselves in the labor market, the educational system, or whatever other fields they had interacted with.

The Origins of a Transnational Habitus at young ages

Although the youth have lived in transnational communities and households since birth, and arguably possess transnational habitus since this time, this does not necessarily mean that they will immigrate. Instead, there are particular conditions of the communities, as well as the youth's observations of and interactions with particular individuals that trigger the youth's ideas not only that they will immigrate, but that they will immigrate at young ages. While growing up and seeing immigration makes the idea of leaving home second nature, it is observing and being

¹³⁴ Roberts, et al., [1999] found that urban adult Mexican immigrants were less likely to participate in transnational social spaces than rural Mexican immigrants. Adult rural Mexican immigrants were found to hold stronger kinship ties, whereas urban Mexican immigrants reported having little access to social networks that provided resources for immigration. The authors attributed this partly to the heterogeneity vs. homogeneity of the transnational social spaces the immigrants found themselves in. As demonstrated in this chapter, urban youth were more likely to not know/be friends with similarly-aged youth who had immigrated, or if they know of same-aged youth, maintain contact with similarly-aged youth who had immigrated. These youth received all of their messages about life in New York City from family members.

in contact with youth, as well as adult immigrants that make the idea of leaving home real for them, at their ages.

All of the Mexican youth describe living in communities in which circular migration among its residents is common, and they have observed members of their home communities engaging in these practices for many years, especially males, so that their families left behind, including parents, wives, and children may live in better conditions. While they see these adults return to their hometowns and family, it is most often temporary, as their hometowns, as established in Chapter Five, possess few opportunities for gainful employment and impede their permanent settlement. After a stretch of time at home, these individuals immigrate again to the United States.¹³⁵ The study youth grew up observing this circular migration, in their own families and others, and may believe that this is a normal way of life for residents in their hometown. Immigrating to return and then depart again is part of the “culture of migration” or the ways in which people from these towns and in their families live out their lives across borders [Cohen, 2004; Sawyer, et al.,2009].

Carolina recalled growing up and observing the departure of many community members to the United States, especially males. She would see them return, spend time with their families and resume their work in the fields, but before too long, they would leave again.

Carolina: [What percentage of your community has immigrated to the United States? Are there still families like the ones you are describing, with a mother, a father, in-laws and children, or has there been a change in San Pedro?] There has already been a lot, I would approximate, like how it is, like 60 to 70% of men who have immigrated to this country, since thirty years ago, and these men have immigrated to the United States with the idea to progress, to be able to work, and send money to their families and try to construct a home. Um, but they return, and when they return to San Pedro, they return to their labors, return to their agriculture, again, like parents, like husbands, and then they return to immigrate to the United States...

¹³⁵ Much has been documented about declines in circular migration due to the increased border security which has increased the risk and cost of border crossing. Mexican immigrant youth shared that at the start of the new century crossing may have cost under \$1000. When they crossed, the amount exceeded \$2000.

[Que porcentaje de tu comunidad habían migrado a los Estados Unidos? Todavía habían familias como de que tu estas describiendo, con mama y papa y suegros y ninos, o había un cambio en San Pedro?] Ya había bastante..yo aproximaria, como sera, como una 60 o 70% de los hombres habían migrado a este país, desde hace como treinta años pa' atrás, y estas hombres habían migrado a los EU con el idea de poder progresar, de poder trabajar, y mandar dinero a sus familias y tratar de construir un hogar. Este, pero ellos regresan, y cuando regresan a San Pedro, regresan a sus labores, regresan a su agricultura, otra vez, como padres de familia, como esposos, y luego vuelvan a inmigrar a los EU...

Likewise, Jesus was well aware of the patterns Mexican immigrants followed, going back and forth between Mexico and the United States. He attributed their circular movement to the imbalance of employment opportunities that existed on opposite sides of the U.S.-Mexico border.

Jesus: Well, there are many people who have come to New York and have returned to Mexico, but just to visit, they don't stay in their country, they are not comfortable already because there is no work there, so here they see another life, it is easier to work here than in Mexico, so just about everyone returns here, just about no one is staying in Mexico..

Bueno, hay muchos personas que han venido a Nueva York y han regresado a Mexico, pero no más visita, ya no quedan en su país..por no se comodo ya por el falta de trabajo que hay allá, so aca ven otro vida, es más fácil el trabajo aca que en Mexico, so casi todos estan regresando para aca, casi nadie esta quedando en Mexico..

While Carolina and Jesus observed the immigration of adults, both family members and friends, other youth observed similarly aged youth immigrating to New York for the same reasons as the adults: to find work and to help their families in Mexico. News of their plans for immigration were known throughout the community, as the departing youth would share their intentions with their friends and even school officials. Seeing other youth leave their hometowns to immigrate to New York City broadens the age parameters around the acceptability of immigration. Not only do adults immigrate, but youth immigrate as well. Jenni recounted how former classmates would come by the school to bid farewell to their former teacher, Mr. Martinez, before they would leave to New York. Arriving during class, the students would witness their *despedidas*, or farewells, to these teachers.

Julio and Lisandro also both knew that the majority of youth in their home communities in Mexico had or would end up leaving for the United States. Already living in New York City, Julio believed that most of the youth his age, age seventeen, had already immigrated to the area.

Julio: [Would you say that the majority of youth your age, from your town have come here or have stayed over there?] They have come over here. [And in school, have teachers talked about there being a lot of boys who come here?] Yes.

Julio: [Decías tu que la mayoría de muchachos de tu edad [en tu pueblo] han venido por aca o han quedado allá [en Guerrero]? Han venido por aca. [Y en la escuela, han hablado los maestros que hay muchos muchachos que vienen por aca?] Si.

While youth immigration for family reunification is well documented, youth immigration to become target earners is not. In the case of these Mexican youth, even if they themselves would end up immigrating for family reunification, they knew of and observed other youth leaving to become target-earners. Lisandro, a seventeen year old male now living in New York but originally from Santo Rosa, a neighborhood in Mexico City, also believed that many similarly-aged youth had immigrated from his colonia. These youth were neighbors whom he did not know well, but in his opinion, they immigrated because there were not enough jobs in their colonia.

Lisandro: Well, my age, from my town, yes, a lot of people from my neighborhood immigrate here. [Why did they immigrate?] Well, the exact reasons, I don't know, but I think it would be because of a lack of jobs. [And them, do you know who they are, who immigrated?] Not exactly, but they are just people in the neighborhood, neighbors, who I know...

Pues de mi edad, de mi pueblo, si, mucha gente de mi colonia migran para aca..[Porque inmigraron?] Pues las razones exactas no se, pero yo pienso que eso debe ser por falta de trabaja. [Y ellos, sabes quienes son, quien inmigraron?] No exactamente, pero ellos eran solamente gente en la colonia, vecinos, quien yo conocia...

Growing up in communities that possess a “culture of immigration” (Cohen, 2004), the youth are surrounded by individuals leaving their households and immigrating to the United States for predominantly economic reasons. Not only adults, but also youth, the study youth observe that

immigration is an acceptable activity for individuals both young and old. Mexican youth also see other youth immigrate in response to the absence of gainful employment in their neighborhoods and towns, as well as for family reunification.

To immigrate or not to immigrate: The risks associated with entering into new fields

Immigrating so that youth can access new fields which may offer greater rewards comes with risks. Relatives and friends tell the youth about the dangers that will face them if they decide to cross the United States-Mexico border so that they may access fields in the United States. In some cases, these cautionary messages may be meant to dissuade the youth from crossing, or may simply act to provide more information to better inform their decisions about whether or not the possibility of access to new fields [and the expected gains] is worth more than one's physical safety. The alternative, the youth lament, is continuing to participate in the Mexican fields they believe they will never be economically successful in.

Mexican youth reported knowing that the border had become militarized and that crossing was dangerous and difficult, with risks ranging from detention, to sexual assault, to death. Alejandro spoke of knowing that the military was stationed along the border.

Alejandro: [What do you know about immigrating to New York?] Well, that it is difficult right now, to immigrate to New York because of the army, right now.

[Que sabes sobre migrar a Nueva York?] Pues, se que es difícil ahorita, para migrar a Nueva York porque ahorita esta el ejercito..

Alejandro goes further in discussing the immigration experiences of one of his cousins who was detained en route to New York City.

Alejandro: My second cousin, [immigrated], not so easily, because his father returned here, he is here in San Valentín, and he, it was very difficult. He immigrated two times. The first time, he could not pass, they detained him, and then there, I don't know where, I think he was there, in a prison, like two months, after they returned him to Mexico, he stayed here like half a year, and already, he passed again.

Mi segundo primo [se migro], no tan fácil porque su papa regreso para aca, esta aquí en San Valentín, y el, fue muy difícil. El migro dos veces. La primera vez, no pudo pasar, le detuvieron,

y luego allí, no se donde, creo estaba ahí, en una cárcel, como dos meses, después le regresaron para Mexico, quedo aquí como medio año, y ya paso de nuevo.

Judith also knew, through communications with her sister, that the crossing is dangerous and ugly or “feo,” and that immigrants run the risk of being detained by United States immigration officers.

Judith: Well yes, that there is the danger that *la migra* [immigration] grabs you and like that...

Pues sí, que hay peligro de que te agarra la migra y así...

Miguel’s father had actually been detained twice by United States immigration officials during his first crossings. In spite of these detentions, Miguel was not dissuaded from immigrating and joining his older brother in New York City.

Miguel: Well, my father, the first time that he came, it was very difficult for him because he was grabbed by *la migra*, two times..

Pues mi padre, la primera vez que el vino, fue muy difícil para él porque fue agarrado por la migra, dos veces..

The threat of sexual violence or rape is also well-known among the female youth who consider immigration. Izel and Clementina recounted how they had been warned of these dangers.¹³⁶

Izel: Yes, but then they tell me of the dangers, that they have raped women who cross the border.

Sí, pero luego me dicen de los peligros, que han violado mujeres que cruzan la frontera.

Clementina: They have also told me that crossing the border is difficult to cross, for one thing or another. For the immigration. There are people who rob, who rape the girls who stop, it is that it is difficult to pass.

También me ha dicho de que cruzar la frontera es difícil de cruzar una por otra cosa. Por la migración. Hay personas que roban, que violan las muchachas que para es que es difícil de pasar.

Ultimately for these youth, the risks that face them in crossing are outweighed by benefits that they perceive await them in New York. Herminda recounts how she weighed all of these risks, including the risk of dying in the desert with the benefits of leaving her sexual abuser and

¹³⁶ Sexual assault during crossing is a significant danger to female crossers. Men, human traffickers, etc, have raped women crossing the border and often hang their underwear on nearby trees to publicize their exploits. A very real danger, the “rape” trees have been highly publicized globally (Falcon, 2001).

her hometown behind to start a new life. She decided that the benefits outweighed risks. In her case, she did not learn about the dangers associated with being a female border crosser from her sister, but rather through the coyote who her sister also used in her crossing.

Herminda: So then, he [coyote] did not doubt that I was going to pay because he knew my sister, and he knew that she could pay, I spoke with him, today I'll speak with him, I asked him about the experience, what happens, and he prescribed [to me] that it could be that you die there, or you cross or don't cross, and you die there, those are the risks, and then I thought about it, and I said, okay, I'm going, I'm going because I don't want to stay here, I want to start a new life, I want to work, and I want to take the reins of my life at age sixteen..

Entonces, el no dudo en que yo iba pagar, porque conoce mi hermana, y el sabia que ella podía pagar..hoy le platico, le pregunto sobre la experiencia, que pasa, y me receto, puedes ser que mueres ahí, o que cruces o no cruces, o mueres ahí, esos son los riesgos, y luego lo pienso ,y le dijo, okay, me voy, me voy porque yo no quiero quedar aquí, yo quiero empezar una nueva vida, yo quiero trabajar, yo quiero tomar la rienda de mi vida a los diez y seis años..

The youth tell me about these dangers, and that the stories they have been told to them, matter-of-factly, as cautionary tales, not to prevent their immigration but rather to merely make them aware. In spite of the dangers that exist during the crossings, relatives, including parents and siblings, continue to invite youth to immigrate. Relatives and youth weigh these risks with the benefits of immigrating and decide that the risks are worth taking. According to their calculations, nothing positive can emerge from remaining in Mexico: in spite of these risks, youth should immigrate.

Concepción: My sisters tell me if I want to go, but to go for something that I want to do, but because they tell me that here [in Mexico], I am never going to have anything..

Mis hermanas me dicen si yo quiero ir, pero para ir para algo que yo quiero hacer, pero porque me dicen que aquí [en Mexico], nunca voy a conseguir nada.

In spite of being informed of the numerous dangers associated with border-crossing including arrest, detention, as well as physical and sexual assault, Mexican youth are willing to risk their safety and lives to immigrate to the United States. Comparing the possibilities that could arise from remaining in Mexico and participating in her fields with the possibilities that

could emerge if they arrive safely in New York and are able to participate in her fields, the youth ultimately decide that the benefits outweigh the risks. Mexican youth are convinced that they will be able to obtain greater capital, economic and social, to participate not only in fields in New York, but perhaps more importantly, in transnational housing fields across borders.

Difficulties in the Big Apple

In addition to hearing about the dangers associated with crossing the border, the youth also discussed hearing about a more difficult quality of life in New York City due not only to linguistic differences but also to the dangers associated with life in Gotham. Some relative and friends cast negative lights on immigrating to New York City, and encourage the youth to remain in Mexico. In the United States, according to them, people only spoke English and not Spanish, making it difficult for individuals to communicate or just feel comfortable. In addition, Mexicans, especially women, lived their lives locked up behind closed doors, unable to move around freely as they did in Mexico.

Not knowing English, the youth had heard, caused major discomforts in the lives of the Mexicans in New York City. Alejandro's friends had shared that living in New York was not easy and that not knowing English contributed to these difficulties.

Alejandro: Well, according to the commentaries from my friends who are over there, it is that for Mexicans who are over there, their lives are very difficult, even more, you cannot communicate with the people over there in their language...

Pues segun los comentarios de mis amigos que estan allá es de las vidas para los Mexicanos que estan allá es muy dificil, entre más, no puedes comunicar con las personas de allá en su idioma...

In addition, some youth reported being told that life would be more restrictive in New York. Relatives who returned back to the youth's hometowns shared that one lived *encerrado* or closed up in New York City. In some cases, youth are dissuaded from immigrating because of

the potential restrictions they will encounter upon immigration. Youth will have to remain indoors, going out only when others take them out.

Izel: Yes, they have told me that they have to be closed up inside, my niece who came here from New York told me...[But who told you?] One time my cousin told me too, and a friend who sometimes calls me...that already arriving at home, you cannot go out [anymore]...that they take you out only to see..

Si, me han dicho que tienen que estar encerrados, me dijo mi sobrina que vino aqui de Nueva York...[Pero quien dice eso?] Una vez también mi primo, y un amigo que a veces me habla..que de llegando a la casa, ya no pueden salir..pues que sacan no más para ver..

Even prior to their immigration, Mexican youth are provided with messages that foreshadow the conditions that await them upon immigration. Mexican youth receive messages about the diminished exchange value of the Spanish linguistic capital in New York City, and the difficulties that emerge from not knowing English. In addition, Mexican youth receive messages about how their physical freedom will change, as they will move from having unfettered physical mobility in Mexico to being significantly more limited in their movements.

Section II: Transnational Pathways Leading to New York City: Future and Current Non-School-Going Youth

Envisioning Immigration: Age at first imagined

Most research discussing differences in youth's immigration experiences has focused on the age at immigration, concluding that age *does* matter. Several immigration scholars have identified age twelve as the critical year after which immigrant youth's experiences with adaptation, acculturation and assimilation may be more difficult and produce different outcomes than if immigration occurs prior to age twelve (Hirschman 2001, Meyer, et al., 2008, Oropesa and Landale, 2009; Portes and Rumbaut, 2004; Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 1995). These differences [which also rely on the assumption that the youth are joining mothers and/or fathers], many scholars argue, have much to do with the length of exposure these youth will have to receiving communities' social institutions, most important, schools. Early arrivals have been

found to show advantages in educational outcomes, including English language proficiency and school completion, and later, in adult outcomes, such as obtaining a higher socioeconomic status, whereas youth who arrive after age twelve show greater difficulties in traditional schooling, exhibiting lower levels of English proficiency, as well as higher levels of school incompleteness (Meyer, et. al 2008; Rumbaut, 2004). Scholars argue that the earlier one immigrates, the higher the guarantee that their behaviors will include an orientation towards English proficiency and academic achievement.¹³⁷

Fewer scholars also raise attention to the importance of age as a proxy for the stage of life during which these youth immigrate, and the social contexts in which they find themselves upon immigration [Rumbaut, 2004]. Although I too call for an examination of youth understandings of their age at arrival, I also believe that we must look further into the youths' histories by examining the age at which Mexican youth even begin to consider their immigration, the reasons for this imagining, and the steps taken to actually immigrate. For example, if the youth imagine immigration at particular ages, and they believe that other particular behaviors, such as working full-time are appropriate at this age, then the youth may imagine engaging in the labor market in the United States, making entry into other social institutions a moot point upon arrival. It is this age at imagined immigration, as well as their understandings and behaviors associated with these ages even prior to arrival that also has significant implications for the youth's life course outcomes in their receiving communities. Focusing only on the numerical age at arrival, scholars ignore social understandings of age prior to and after arrival and how they have developed

¹³⁷ Moving away from simply a dichotomous distinction between immigrant youth, more recently, Rumbaut (2004) introduced a third distinction to further explain differences between those who immigrate before age 6 [1.75 generation], those who immigrate between the ages of 6 and 12 years [1.5 generation], and those who immigrate after age 12 [1.25 generation]. Seeking to further interrogate how life stage impacts settlement experiences, Rumbaut introduces seven life stages we should consider when conducting immigration research.

throughout one's life course, ultimately affecting educational and other outcomes in the United States and in Mexico. In the case of immigrants, their understandings of their life stages, past, present and future develop prior to arrival are results of not only their socialization in their home communities, but are also reinforced or challenged by the messages they are receiving from abroad. For example, if they are told that they can have access to fields in the United States that correspond to the fields they already have access to in Mexico, their understandings of age can continue uninterrupted across borders. If told differently, however, their understandings of age may be disrupted. In such cases, if immigrating to work, they would most likely then delay immigration.

Integrating the information provided by their older relatives into their worldviews, Mexican youth who were not inclined to enter into the educational field, but rather entered into the labor market field upon immigration began to imagine their departures to New York City at slightly older ages than their counterparts who reported that they would continue their studies upon immigration. Citing economic woes as the main reasons that they began to imagine immigration, including wanting to help their parents or grandparents [guardians] financially, the age for imagined immigration for these youth was age 15. They youth also expressed that they had thought about immigrating for an average of 11 months.¹³⁸

Envisioning Immigration: The Role of Peers

Mexican youth not only discuss knowing of similarly aged immigrants in the abstract, but they are also friends with similar-aged youth who leave their hometowns before they do. For Mexican youth who would discuss wanting to immigrate to work, as well as working once in New York, they appeared to continue their friendships, across borders, with youth target earners,

¹³⁸ While these youth were at various levels of school completion or incompleteness, this age corresponds with the approximate age at which youth complete their studies, by virtue of their legal obligation to school attendance [completed *secundaria*].

while fewer Mexican youth were friends with and knew target earners. These youth, instead, had been friends with other youth who had left to reunite with their families and they had not kept in touch.

Mexican youth who were future and current non-traditional school-goers discussed having friends who had left their families and friends behind to try their luck at becoming target-earners in New York. In many cases, the youth lose contact with these friends once they immigrate, but several of the youth discussed maintaining contact with their friends, through which they would receive not only information about New York City, but information about New York City through the eyes of a similarly aged Mexican immigrant. In addition to receiving valuable information that, upon immigration, they might be able to use, their friends even offered to finance their journeys across the border.

Felipe: [And do you know boys your age, friends who have arrived here?] Yes. [Why did they come?] Well, they came for money, they did. [So they came for money, and?] And they stayed working.

[Y conoces muchachos de tu edad, amigos, que han llegado aca?] Si. [Porque se vinieron?] Pues vinieron por dinero, ellos. [So, vinieron por dinero, Y?] Y quedaron trabajando.

Prior to their departures, stay-at home Mexican youth were privy to their friends' reasons for immigration. Across all of the youth, the dominant reason given to explain their friends' immigration to the United States was because they had known that improved economic opportunities existed in the United States. After the immigration of their friends, several of the youth maintained relationships with them once they had arrived in the United States.

Maintaining contact not only allowed immigrant youth in New York to let their friends in Mexico know what life is like living in New York, but it also allowed them to plant the seed and further nurture the idea of immigrating to New York in their friends' heads. Some

friends went further and offered them money to help them pay for their passage to New York City.

Judith was only fifteen when her boyfriend left San Valentín. After his departure, they remained in contact for eight months, but after their romance fizzled, the calls stopped. During this time, however, he shared details about life in New York City, and offered to bring her to live with him and his family. Now, she knew details about his life from his sister in San Valentín who spoke with him regularly by phone.

Alejandro had friends from his hometown who had immigrated to New York City and had been there for several years. He discussed in particular the case of one of his closest friends, Pascual. Along with other friends, Alejandro would gather once a week in a friend's house to receive Pascual's weekly call where he would talk to them about life in New York. Recently, Pascual had returned after living in New York City for four years. During this last visit, he invited Alejandro to return back with him to New York. Without enough money and with no way to pay, Alejandro declined.

Alejandro: Yes, with my friends [I talk]. Um, Pascual just came, a year, it has been two years, I spoke with him directly, he invited me to go, together, that he was going in December.

Si, con mis amigos [platica]. Este Pascual apenas vino, un ano, hace dos años, yo platique con el directamente, el hizo la invitacion de irme [inmigrar], juntos, que iba para Diciembre.

Samuel discussed keeping in touch with a friend who had immigrated to New York before him and had also recently invited him to immigrate. During calls from New York to Mexico, this friend would tell Samuel about the differential in wages in New York City, and how quickly he could earn many times over the money he would earn if he stayed in Mexico. Having been unemployed in Mexico for several months, Samuel found the idea of abundant employment and higher wages highly appealing and accepted. Saving money from odd jobs here and there,

he finally came up with the money and immigrated to New York. Samuel's friend did not, however, inform him of the downfalls of living in New York City, and he blamed him for his unhappiness due to immigration.

Samuel: [Like how often did you talk?] Like once a month, and then one time we stopped talking for like, since he came first, we stopped talking for like a half year, well, he did not call me and then I did not call him and then, until he called me, he is the one who told me that I should come over here, I would still be over there, happy, very happy. [Okay, and before coming over here, what did he tell you about what it was like here, what you were going to do, how the environment was here?] Well, no, yes he just told me like that, he told me that the truth was, in the case that you are going to come, here is not like it is over there, he told me, there you work half a year not to work the other half year, but here, you have to work the 365 days out of the year, he says, well, already, I have to go, because over there for what I wanted to do, is that over there [Mexico] what I was going to put/build in five years, I can do it here in one year. [And so, and so, because he put the idea in your head, you arrived?] Mmhmmm.

[Como que tanto hablaron?] Una vez al mes, y luego una vez nos dejabamos hablar por como, como el vino primero, nos dejabamos hablar por como media ano, bueno el no me hablo y luego yo tampoco le hablo, y ya hasta que me hablo, el es el que me dije que me viniera para aca...pues por eso luego luego le dije pues por ti estoy aquí, le digo, Si tu no me decias que me vinera, yo todavia estuviera allá, bien feliz. [Okay, este y antes de venirme para aca, que te dijo a ti como era de estar aca, como es, que ibas hacer, como era la onda aquí..] Pues, no, si el no más me lo dije asi, dice que la verdad es, caso que tu vas a venir, aca no es como allá me dijo, allá tu trabajas medio ano para no trabajar el otro medio ano, pero aquí tienes que trabajar los 365 días del ano, dice, pues, ya que, tengo que ir, porque lo de allá de lo que iba hacer, lo que allá iba poner en cinco años, yo lo puede hacer aquí en un ano. [Y luego, y luego, porque el te metio el idea, llegaste?] Mmmmhmm.

Prior to immigration, Mexican youth live near, are friends and go to school with similarly-aged youth— other youth who may be making plans to work, earn money, and have “better lives” in New York City. As a result, prior to immigrating from their home communities, these youth learn from them that immigration to New York City is a way of life for not only Mexican adults, but also for Mexican youth their own age, an act that is acceptable in their communities. In addition to learning that it is acceptable to immigrate, they learn acceptable reasons to immigrate: not to continue their schooling, but to work. Observing this, youth begin to believe that immigrating to work is an acceptable act for them as well. Rather, immigration, at

their ages, to work, becomes part of their worldview, something that is entirely acceptable and in many ways, expected of them to do.

Additionally, future and current non-traditional-school-going youth discussed not only knowing these youth, but keeping in contact with them and receiving valuable information about life in New York City. Remaining in contact with someone their own age is valuable as these youth were provided with first-hand experience about the types of fields that were accessible to individuals their ages in New York City, as well as the positions in these fields, i.e. types of employment that were available for youth their age and about wages they would earn if they immigrated. Lastly, youth discussed being invited by their friends to immigrate to join them in New York City, invitations some of the youth accepted. These invitations were not just invitations to immigrate, but also the first step towards not only obtaining a higher position in the transnational field that envelops the two countries and communities, but also to engage in new fields in a new geographic space.

Envisioning Immigration: The Role of older non-parental kin

In addition to possessing friends in New York City, almost all of the youth reported possessing family members, immediate and/or extended who had immigrated to New York City. While still in Mexico, these youth maintained even more frequent and in some cases, more instrumental contact with family members who were living in New York City and through these contacts, were able to receive information about the organization of their lives. Knowledge about these organizations had been learned from friends as well as older family members, and they were provided with models of how their own lives might be organized if they immigrated.

In the case of future and current non-traditional school-going youth, they communicated mostly with older, non-parental relatives, while future and current traditional school-going youth

reported being in contact mostly with their parents. Whom the youth contacted with not only affected the nature of their transnational social networks, but also affected the types of messages and socialization that the youth would receive through the transnational social spaces.

In the majority of the cases of future and current non-traditional and school-going youth, their parents were not in New York City, but rather had remained in Mexico, or were absentee, voluntarily or due to death. With their parents at home, these youth maintained contact with older relatives in New York City including siblings, as well as aunts, uncles and cousins. With non-parental relatives as the youth's primary contacts in New York City, youth received information and encouragement to immigrate as target earners. To do this, these relatives communicated with the youth and frequently shared information not only about the act of immigrating, but also about living and working in New York City. As recipients of this information, the youth began to integrate these ideas into their own thinking and worldviews and began to imagine their lives in the United States.

Mexican youth reported speaking with their relatives located in *el norte* by telephone or by letters mostly, with no youth reporting communicating with their relatives via email while they still lived in Mexico. Communications were frequent and consistent, with some youth speaking with their older relatives anywhere from every three days to every two weeks. Through these communications, these relatives gain status as pedagogic agents and conduct pedagogic work on the youth from New York City.

Judith, a sixteen year old pre-immigration female from San Valentín had several older sisters who lived in New York City. Judith discussed being closest to one sister in particular, with whom she had made plans to immigrate two years prior. When the day to immigrate

arrived, her sister told her to remain in San Valentín to finish her studies and left without her. She remained this sister's closest confidante, and they spoke regularly by phone.

Judith: And your sisters, do you speak with them by phone, by mail, or by email, or how? By telephone. [And how often?] Well, we talk every third day. [And do they speak with you, or do you just say hello and then pass it to your mom, or what happens?] No, the one who just left, like we were always the two, she speaks more with me, she always spoke more with me.

[Y tus hermanas, hablas con ellas por telefono, por correo, o por correo electronico, o como?] Por telefono. [Y que seguida?] Pues habla cada tercer día. [Y habla contigo, no más te saluda y lo pases a tu mama o que pasa?] No, la que apenas se fue como siempre eramos los dos, habla más conmigo, ella siempre hablaba más conmigo.

Some youth reported possessing immigrant relatives who although were now older, immigrated at their same age, during their teenage years. Clementina reported having cousins, male and female, who, at her age, had immigrated to the United States. Clementina was in regular communication with them, communicating with two older female cousins approximately every two weeks by telephone and with an older male cousin through letters. In these communications, the cousins were able to tell her about work, among other family matters, including how everyone was.

Clementina: Many of them went alone, from very little, like between 16 and 18 years. My cousins, the majority went very young, but they already have some twelve years, seven years, or two years. [How often do you communicate with them? What do you talk about?] I speak with my [female] cousins every 15 days, by phone, and with my [male] cousin, we send letters by male. We talk about how they are, about work, about how they feel over there, about family.

Mucho de ellos fueron solitos o solitas, de muy chico, como entre 16 y 18 años. Mis primos, la mayoría se fue de chicos, pero ya tienen algunos 12 años, 7 años, o 2 años...[Que tanto comunicas con ellos? De que hablan?] Hablo con mis primas cada 15 días, por telefono, y con mi primo, nos mandamos cartas por correo. Hablamos de cómo estan, de trabajo, de cómo sienten allá, de familia.

Future and current non-traditional school-going youth are related to older individuals who serve as the primary examples of how they may live their lives once in New York City. Some relatives immigrated at young ages themselves and now share information with the youth

about life in New York City. These relatives usually call the youth's home to speak with older relatives, but during these phone calls, they are able to also speak with the youth and tell them about work, schooling, and family life in New York City, as well as receive information about life in Mexico from the youth. It is during these regular episodes of communication, occurring by telephone, as well as through letters, that the youth are able to receive information about what their lives in New York would be like if they immigrated.

Envisioning Fields in the Big Apple: The Role of older non-parental kin

Possessing relatives in New York City makes it easier for youth to imagine the fields they would enter once in New York City. With most immigrants calling home anywhere from every three to every fifteen days, Mexican youth are able to speak to their relatives and friends to learn and ask questions about the opportunities and possibilities in New York City. Additionally, on return trips home, relatives shared stories about life in New York City with the youth. Through both explicit and implicit messages then, the youth gain information about fields in New York, especially the labor market, including the types and conditions of employment that are available in New York City, but differences in earnings in New York City as well, compared to their communities in Mexico.

Manuel, a current non-school-going Mexican male also reported speaking with older brothers in New York City when he was still in Guerrero. These older brothers shared general information about New York with him, as well, telling him about the labor market in New York City. Two different brothers had opposing views about life in New York City: one brother framed immigrating and living in New York City in a positive light, while the other brother was more discouraging. In any case, both brothers framed participating in the labor market as a natural part of one's life in New York City.

Manuel: Well, many people talk about how they live, because each person lives differently. My brother told me that here it was pretty, that you can walk more cleanly, you can help your family easily [economically], but another brother told me how difficult it is, that you have to work a lot...No, they just told me that here you work.

Bueno, mucha gente platican como la viven, porque cada persona vive diferente. Mi hermano me dijo, que aquí estaba bonito, que puedes andar más limpia, podrías ayudar la familia más fácil [económicamente], pero otro hermano me dijo sobre que tan difícil es, que tienes que trabajar bastante...No, ellos solo me dijeron que aquí haces trabajo.

Also discussed was the economics of immigration. During one of his return trips back to Mexico, one of his brother-in-laws explained the benefits of immigrating to work as a function of work to savings, as it existed in two national contexts. One could work more and save less in Mexico or work less and earn more in the United States.

Manuel: And a brother-in-law came and told me, no, here, to save five thousand pesos [500 dollars], you have to work a year, but there, in the United States, you earn it in a month, if you work hard, you can earn up to one thousand pesos, in one month, and well here, that is like 10, 000 pesos, if you work there in a year, it is like here working ten years like a farmer, if you are there, like three or four years, you can earn like 300 thousand pesos, there which is like thirty thousand dollars, and like that, things got into me...and like that, like starting like that no, and my brothers too, since they have money in the bank...

Y un cunado vino y me dijo, no aquí para ahorrar cinco mil pesos, tienes que trabajar un año, pero ahí, en los Estados Unidos, lo ganes en un mes..si hechas ganas, puedes ganar hasta mil pesos, en un mes...y pues aquí esos son como 10 mil pesos, si tu trabajas ahí un año, es aquí como trabajar diez años, de campesino, si tu estas allá como tres o cuatro años, tu puedes ganar como tres ciento mil pesos, ahí que son como 30 mil [30,000] dolares..y así me metió así cosas...y ya así, como empezar así no, y mis hermanos también, como tienen dinero en el banco...

Aside from knowing that they could earn more in the United States, some youth also knew that they could work in what they considered better conditions than those found in their hometowns in Mexico. While in the eyes of the youth, anything was better than working in the *campos*, or the fields, most of the youth had already learned about the types of jobs they would most likely acquire, and the conditions in which they would work if they immigrated to New York. In their eyes, the type of employment provided in New York City, by virtue of pay and conditions [with fieldwork as a reference] was an improvement from the employment found in their hometowns, and marked a higher position in a transnational labor market field.

Knowledgeable about jobs in New York City, youth begin to imagine living their lives differently than if they stayed in their home communities, perhaps adjusting their *habitus* to reflect being a transnational worker than simply being a *campesino*, or a farmworker.

Realizing Immigration: Older Non-Parental Kin Inviting Mexican Youth to Immigrate

Whereas the youth were able to already have ideas about what they could expect upon immigration to New York City and, more specifically, the contours of the fields into which they considered entering, these ideas could not come into fruition without their relatives and friends' assistance. Most youth reported that most relatives also encouraged them to immigrate, as well as provided them with various forms of economic and social capital to enable their immigration. In the cases in which the relatives with whom youth maintained contact were not their parents, these generous offerings were made to youth with the implicit and sometimes explicit understanding that they would be immigrating to work. Many relatives offer to pay for their crossing and help them settle once in New York City, but with the condition that the youth are immigrating to work, not study. These non-parental relatives in New York were concerned with the youth becoming economic burdens on their households if they indeed immigrated. Youth were invited to model their adult relatives as fellow workers, but not as hosts so they could continue their educations full-time.

Several males reported that their older brothers had invited them to immigrate and move to New York City. Felipe reported that his older brother was in NYC and told him, while he was still in Mexico, to immigrate to New York City.

Felipe: I came because my brother was here and he told me to come.

Vino aquí porque mi hermano estaba aquí y me dijo que me.

Solomon also stated that his brother was able to end his indecision to leave his home. During his

return trip home, his brother invited him to immigrate so that he could earn in New York more than ten times the amount of money he earned in Mexico.

Solomon: Well, I hadn't decided it, but well, since my brother came, and that, and already he had just gone over there, and he told me, if you want, let's go, and then, you are not going to earn the same as here, like over there, it is worth here, it is worth ten times over there, what it is here, one dollar [here] is worth ten dollars there, so then...

Pues no lo tenía decidido, pero pues, como mi hermano se vino, y eso, y ya apenas se fue para allá, y me dijo, si tu quieres, vámonos, y así, no vas a ganar el mismo que aquí, como de allá, vale aquí, vale diez veces de allá de aquí, un dólar [aquí] vale diez dolares allá, entonces...

Jenni had also been invited by her aunt to immigrate to New York, but only under the condition that she would work upon arrival. Sensitive to the potential of her arriving and becoming a financial burden on their households, her aunt offered to pay for her travel expenses, but explicitly told her which field she would enter into upon arrival: the labor market.

Jenni: Well, some do say that if I wanted to go [to New York], they can help me, but to go to work. [And who tells you that?] My aunt, she lives there, and she earns well. Like if I want to go, to go, and that they can help me with the cost of the trip.

Pues algunos si dicen si yo quiero ir, me pueden ayudar, pero para ir a trabajar.[Y quien te dice eso?] Mi tia, ella viva allá, y ella gana bien. Como si me quiere irme, que me vaya, y que ellos me pueden ayudar con el pasaje.

Relatives like Jenni's aunt did not want to risk the arrival of relatives who would place financial burdens on their homes. Carolina also reported speaking with her sister while she was still thinking about immigrating, but her sister dissuaded her from immigrating, fearing that she could not take on additional household expenses that Carolina's residence would bring. Several years later, after Carolina was older, now age 16, and problems at home had worsened, her sister revisited the idea and helped her immigrate to New York. Now older, there was a higher likelihood that Carolina could find employment upon arrival and not become a financial burden on her sister.

Carolina: [One sister was already here, right?] Yes, she told me no, no, no. [And what was the reason that she told you no?] I think that the reason was that she could not take on that

responsibility, she could not maintain me, because she was already a mother, so then I think that she was not in the conditions [to have me immigrate and live with her].

[Una hermana ya estaba aqui, verdad?] Si, ella me dijo que no, no no..[Y que era la razon de que ella te dijo que no?] Yo creo que la razon era de que ella no podría cargar con esa responsabilidad, ella no podría mantenerme, porque ella ya era madre de un hijo, entonces creo que ella no estaba en condiciones.

Realizing Immigration: Arranging and Paying for Immigration

Aside from inviting youth to immigrate, youth relatives also offered to arrange and pay for their immigration to New York City. Relatives in New York City provided youth with the financial resources so that they could pay for their immigration, usually on the condition that once in New York City, they will be repaid. Without this economic capital that is wired to them and/or their coyotes across nation-state borders, the youth would be unable to enter into the fields that they have been oriented towards prior to their immigrations. In this sense, future and current non-traditional school-going youth depend on the financial resources of their older relatives in New York City so that they may enter into more lucrative labor market field in New York. Thus, by virtue of their transnational social network, these youth are able to find the financing for their immigration. In the case of Gabriel, his uncle and his uncles' friends who already lived in New York City lent him and his brother money to immigrate.

Gabriel: [But who helped you, didn't you pull get some money together for the coyote?] Yes, they lent, they lent us money to pass...[And who was it?] Well, my uncle and his friends lent us the money to pass, so then that money, we had to pay.

[Pero quien te ayudo, no juntaron dinero para el coyote?] Si,le prestaron...nos prestaron dinero para pasa...[Y quien fue?] Pues mi tio y sus amigos nos prestaron para pasar, entonces ese dinero tenemos que pagar.

Alejandro also reported that his uncle offered to help pay for his immigration if he decided to leave San Valentín. Previously, his uncle had arranged and paid for his own son's immigration from San Valentín to New York City, and he offered to do the same for Alejandro so that he could immigrate with a trusted human trafficker.

Alejandro: They tell me [my uncle] that if I go, that he will help with the *coyote*.

Me dicen [tio] que si me voy, que el hecha la mano con los coyote.

Carolina's sister also helped her arrange for and pay for her immigration. Using the coyote her sister had used, Carolina contacted and arranged her immigration, but her sister paid for her crossing. With her sister's money, she purchased the plane ticket that she needed within Mexico and then paid the coyote for the rest of the journey.

Carolina: And that is when she decided to help me with the money, \$2500 USD, for the passage...plus for the plane ticket, plus the food that you eat on the road...that is like a total of \$4000 dollars, more or less...so then he [coyote] did not doubt that I was going to pay because he knows my sister and he knows that she could pay...

Y ese es cuando ella decidi a ayudarme con el dinero, \$2500 dolares, para el pasaje...más parte de tu boleto de avion, aparte de la comida que comes en el camino...eso hace total como \$4000 dolares, más o menos...Entonces el no dudo en que yo iba pagar, porque conoce mi hermana y el sabia que ella podía pagar...

Jesus was fifteen when he immigrated. After finding a coyote and figuring out when he would immigrate, he let his brother know of the plans. He then made the travel arrangements, turning only then to his brother to pay for his crossing. After, his brother sent him the funds.

Jesus: Well, the *coyote*, I investigated him, I knew a friend, from another neighborhood, my friend, I asked him if he knew a *coyote*, and he put me into contact with him, I spoke with the *coyote*, and I told my brother that I spoke with the *coyote* and I told him that already, yes, that the proposal [to immigrate] was good, how [we] were going to pass and all. My brother paid my coyote but he sent me money in a bank and when he delivered me, I paid him the other half.

Bueno, el coyote, yo lo investigue, yo conocí un amigo, de otra colonia, mi amigo, yo le pregunte si el conocia un coyote, y el me puse en contacto con el, yo hable con el coyote, y le dije a mi hermano que el hable con el coyote y el dijo que pues ya, si, esta bien como esta haciendo la propuesta, como iba pasar y todo..mi hermano le pago a mi coyote pero me mando el dinero en un banco y ya cuando el me entrego, yo le di la otra mitad.

Prior to their immigration, Mexican youth who are not oriented towards traditional school-going [and not immigrating to join their parents] must figure out how to prepare for and pay for their immigration. In nearly all of the cases for these youth, uncles and aunts, as well as older siblings in New York City lend them money so they too can immigrate. While in some

instances, the relatives themselves come outright and offer to pay for their immigration, in other cases, the youth must approach their relatives and ask for loans. After immigration, it is understood that the youth will work and compensate their relatives for these loans that total thousands of dollars. It is with this economic capital that youth even have a chance to change their position in a transnational field in which they may move from farm workers to unskilled laborers, as well as raise the positions of their families in their communities.

Deciding Field Participation in New York City: Mexican Youth as Target-Earners

Some youth reported thinking about immigrating so that they could work and financially help their families in Mexico. Susana began to consider her own immigration at age fifteen after observing the receipt of remittances by her grandmother, aunt and uncle from relatives in New York City. Observing that her grandmother received money from her aunt for medications, as well as her aunt and uncles' construction and payment of a sturdier home with her cousin's financial remittances, Susana also wanted to immigrate so she could send money home to help her sister pay for her studies and her grandparents with money.

Susana: [Why do you want to immigrate to New York?] I want to do something here, help with my family, go to work...I know that others go to get to know, but I want to work...
 [Porque quieres inmigrar a Nueva York?] Quiero hacer algo aquí, ayudar con mi familia, ir a trabajar...yo se que otras van a conocer, pero yo quiero trabajar...

Likewise, Alejandro began to think about immigrating when he reached age fifteen. He had long observed his single-parent mother struggle financially, especially in paying his and his siblings' schooling. The idea of sending money home so that he could help his mother drove his desire to immigrate.

Alejandro: Well I decided, well, one was seeing the necessity in my home, economically, that's what motivated me...
 Pues lo decidi pues uno es por ver la necesidad de mi casa, economicamente, eso el lo que me motivo...

Even though Concepción's father and sister were already living in New York City, she felt that her father's remittances were inconsistent and insufficient to maintain her mother's household. Seeing her mother worry about household bills, she began to think about immigrating around the age of sixteen.

Concepción: [But you never thought about it before?] No, that idea just came to me, since I saw my mama how she worried about money, well, I wanted to come...

[Pero nunca lo pensaste antes?] No, no más me dio ese idea, como yo veía a mi mama como ella preocupaba por dinero, pues yo quería ir...

Armando was a seventeen year old non school-going male from rural Puebla who began to think about immigrating so that he could help his parents. He would often see his father under financial pressures, so he wanted to immigrate so he could financially assist him. Friends of his were going to *el norte*, and he decided to immigrate with them.

Armando: I wanted to help my parents, or um, that I didn't want for them to continue how they were, because sometimes, like my father was under a lot of pressure, and I would see him, and I would talk to him, and I would see him, and umm, I talked with him that I obviously wanted to come over here...

Armando: Yo quería ayudar mis papas, o, um, que yo no quería que ellos continuaron como eran, porque a veces, como mi papa siempre estaba muy presionado, y yo lo veía, y yo lo platicaba, y yo lo veía, y um, yo platicaba con el que obviamente yo quería venir para aca...

Likewise, in the case of Pedro, he reported starting to think about immigrating because he wanted to help his mom. Although working full-time since the age of 11, his wages were simply not enough to keep his mother and their household financially afloat. With the desire to help her more, Pedro began to think about immigrating, even in spite of his uncle's warnings from New York City.

Pedro: Well, it was that my uncle already had like a year being here, and he went, and well, we only had, we did not have much, I can't tell you, or money, it was that we lacked things, he talked about how it was over here, he told me that it was ugly, but that didn't matter to me, aha, but that they treated you poorly, but it was already like, "but I want to go," and I want to help my mom, and that...

Bueno es que mi tío ya tenía como un año de estar aca, y él se fue, y ay, no más teníamos, no teníamos mucho, no te pude decir, o diérselo, es que nos hizo falta cosas, él platicaba como era

para aca, el me dijo que estaba feo, pero no me importaba, aha, pero que te tratan mal, pero ya era como, “pero yo me quiero ir,” y quiero ayudar a mi mama, y eso...

In other cases, it was the inability to continue with their studies that precipitated thoughts about immigration. With schooling always placing a financial strain on households, at some point, households reach a point where they merely cannot continue funding their children's schooling. At this point, many youth begin to think about immigrating as way to alleviate their households' financial challenges.

Jenni reported first thinking about immigration at age fifteen after her mother told her that they would simply not be able to afford for her to continue her studies after she completed *secundaria*. Unable to continue her studies and unwilling to work in the fields after graduating from *secundaria*, she thought, she might as well immigrate to work in New York.

Jenni: [When was the first time you thought about immigrating to New York?] Mmmm, since they told me that I was not going to continue studying, I started to think about going over there, well what am I going to do here? Well yes, I thought about it, because I thought, since I was not going to continue studying, well maybe because I don't like to go to the fields, to work in the fields, and well, I could look for a good job, because maybe with *secundaria*, I can get a good job, better than going to the fields, because I don't like going to the fields...

[Cuando fue la primera vez que pensaste de inmigrar a Nueva York?] Mmmm, desde que me decian que ya no iba seguir estudiando, me empezo de pensar que me voy para allá, pues que voy hacer aca? Pues si pensaba, porque pense, como si no iba a seguir estudiando, pues a la mejor porque yo no me gusta ir al campo, a trabajar en el campo, y pues me podría ir a buscar un buen trabajo, porque tal vez con *secundaria*, yo puedo conseguir un buen trabajo, mejor que ir al campo, sera eso, porque no me gusta ir al campo...

Julio, a 17 year old non-school-going male from Guerrero began thinking about immigrating while he was still in his third year of *secundaria*. Neither he nor his mother could pay the total amount of money needed for school fees, so he dropped out. His mother did not work, and he saw that it was difficult for her to pay for households' necessities, so he began to think about immigrating.

Julio: [Okay, and when was the first time that you began to think about coming over here?] Because one time, I did not have money, and my mother did not either, or we did not have to pay a [school] cooperation fee...[And in your house, was it difficult to pay?] Yes, it was difficult, because she did not work and just well, sometimes there was an animal that she had to sell to pay for things, and like that, she had some animals that they gave her at Christmás, and she was selling...

[Okay, y cuando fue la primera vez que ya empezaste venir por aca?] Porque alguna vez, yo no tenía dinero, y mi mama tampoco, ella no tenía dinero, o no teníamos para pagar alguna cooperación... ..[Y en tu casa, era difícil para pagar?] Si era difícil, porque ella no trabajaba, y solo bueno, a veces había un animal que tenía que vender para pagar por cosas, y así, tenía que, tenía ahí unos animales que le dieron en Christmás, y había vendiendo...

Likewise, Gabriel was a nineteen year old from Valle del Chalco who also began to think about immigrating after he was also forced to drop out of *preparatoria* due to financial reasons. In Mexico, he worked on weekends to pay for his schooling, but it simply was not enough for his school fees. He began to think about immigrating after dropping out in Mexico because he wanted *plata* or money. He wanted to save this *plata* so that he could return, complete his studies and have a better life, in Mexico.

Gabriel: [And why did you think about immigrating?] Well, the same, to be able finish my studies [in Mexico] and to be able to have a better life when I return to Mexico...

[Y porque pensaste de inmigrar?] Pues igual, para poder terminar mis estudios [en Mexico] y para poder tener una vida mejor cuando yo regreso a Mexico...

Mexican youth whose households are experiencing economic woes begin to imagine immigration not only after speaking with friends and relatives, but also as they realize the gravity of their households' financial situations in Mexico. Living in financially-strapped homes, the youth begin to imagine immigration as a way to earn money to help their parents/ guardiáns, as well as to save money for themselves so that they may return and have better lives. Told that they will be unable to continue their studies, and unable to financially depend on their parents/guardiáns, these youth are left with little else to do than imagine their own financial independence where they can contribute to their households with their own earnings. To do so, they will immigrate and enter labor market fields in the United States.

Realizing Immigration: Making their own preparations

Many of the work-oriented youth reported deciding to immigrate after deciding that they could not attend school anymore. While some had merely lost interest with school, others were left with little alternative but to leave school after figuring that they and their families could not continue paying for their schooling. For some of these youth, full-time work followed, during which they figured they would be able to earn more in the United States and were encouraged, and in some cases, invited to immigrate by relatives and friends abroad. From here, youth would leave home on their own, leaving their parents and younger siblings behind.

As suggested in the previous sections, all of the youth discussed, and in some cases, produced their plans to immigrate with at least one other person who lives in the United States. Among the groups, however, differences existed in how plans to immigrate were made, with work-oriented youth showing more within group similarities than the school-going youth. Characteristic of continuing their transition to adulthood, the majority of non-traditional school-going youth described making plans to immigrate without their parents' knowledge, either with relatives or friends, knowing, and after, informing their parents that they were going to immigrate.

Many of the work-oriented youth described contacting traffickers themselves and making the financial arrangements, either borrowing money from their relatives or saving the money themselves. Exhibiting various levels of independence in their planning, when it came time to inform their parents or guardians of their departures, the youth described different approaches. Most youth reported asking their parents for permission to immigrate *after* the youth had already made plans to immigrate. Rather than **formally** asking permission and being prepared to discard plans if denied, the youth informed their parents that they were going to immigrate and asking

for their blessings. If their parents did not give them their blessings, some threatened, they would immigrate anyway, without saying goodbye.

Explaining it as if it was the scene in a contemporary action film, Luis described how he and his friends would meet in the evenings while he was living with his father in Distrito Federal. The youngest, he and his friends wanted to see what the United States was like, if it was really like what everyone said it was like. These *jovenes*, or young adults, began to make arrangements for their collective immigration. They found a *coyote* and the money. They had gathered the necessary provisions. The only thing that was left to do was to tell their parents. This proved to be more difficult than Luis had imagined and it challenged the feelings of adulthood he felt while he was making plans with his friends.

Luis: It's like that, we would get together at night, when we could, each time that we could, we would stay there in the neighborhood in Mexico, and we agreed as to what we were going to do, we need that amount of money, we need an agenda to take us too, we need to look for the way to get papers to carry, count on some people over there too, like I told you, we know some people there. And then we communicated with our closest friend there from here, see if he could help us and they said yes, they could, okay, we already have one thing, it was the most important, and now look for someone to bring us over here, we connected with one from Oaxaca, from the city, we got together with that man from there, okay, um, it's going to cost you this much, okay, and we follow that, well, like I told you, I had some older friends who I, with only them we got this, um, the money to come over here, well they got it, since they are older they got it, and okay, we already have everything ready, we set the date, this date, okay, um, by that day we said that already, by that date there's no turning back, that it's already done, on that day, when we already had the date, that's when we went to our parents, I went with mine, you go with yours, you know what I said, we already did this, we already have this, that and the other, only thing left is to connect with someone over there, that's it, its that we want to go over there, to know how it is over there, practically, even if your parent doesn't want [you] to, but you already have everything ready, you already have there already the money ready, which you can't lose, because you know if your papa is already there, it is something that you cannot recuperate easily there. And like that, I told my father like that, and at first he told me no, he told me no.

Es así, no, nosotros nos juntábamos en la noche, cuando nos podríamos, cada vez que nos podríamos en la noche, quedarnos allí en un barrio de México, y nos pusimos en acuerdo en que íbamos hacer, necesitamos tal cantidad de dinero, necesitamos una agenda que nos lleve también, necesitamos buscar la forma para sacar unas papeles para llevar, contar con alguna gente de allá también, todo, como te ha dicho, conocemos a varias gente allá. Y luego comunicarnos con un

amigo más cercana allá. De aca, haber si nos podía ayudar y ellos dije que si, se puede, okay, ya tenemos una cosa, era las más importante, y ahora buscar alguien que nos trae aca, nos conectamos con uno de Oaxaca, de la ciudad, era X de Oaxaca, juntamos con ese señor de allá, okay, este, te va costar tanto, okay, y seguimos eso, bueno, como yo te digo, tenía unos amigos más mayor edad que yo, con mero de ellos nosotros conseguimos este, este, la economía para venir para aca, bueno pues ellos las conseguieron, como están mayores los consiguieron, y okay ya tenemos todo listo, okay, pusimos la fecha, tal fecha, okay, este, ha ese día nos dijeron que ya, que no hay para hecharte para atrás, que ya está, en ese día, cuando ya teníamos la fecha, bueno, pues es que ya fuimos con los papas, yo me fui con el mío, tu te vas con el tuyo, okay, sabes que dije ya hicimos esto, ya tenemos esto y esto y el otro, nada más de conectarnos con alguien de allá, ya está todo, es que queremos irnos para allá, saber como es allá, prácticamente, aunque tu papa no quiere, pero ya tienes todo listo, ya tienes ya es un dinero allí que no lo puedes perder, porque tu sabes si tu papa ya está allí, es algo que no puedes recuperar fácil allá. Y así, yo le dije así a mi papa. Y a la primera no, me dijo que no.

Luis' father was angry, and in disbelief that at such a young age, he had done this behind his back. Luis' father believed that at age fifteen, his son was too young to make these types of plans independently. Luis explained that his father's response was based on Mexican law, that one had to be eighteen years old before they could operate independently without their fathers' consent.

Luis: [What did your father tell you?] Well, how did you do all of this like that, behind my back? You are still not of age, you cannot do whatever you want, you still depend on me, how did you do this? Well, the truth is, that I got together with them and did this... [And when you were making the plan, it's very interesting that your father told you that you still depended on him, like to tell you that you are still a child, no?] Exactly, I don't know about here, but there, after eighteen years, you can do whatever you want, there, you already depend on yourself, but as long as you are not eighteen years old there, you cannot until you have that age there, and that is why I could not...[Que te dijo tu papa?] Pues como hiciste todo eso así de mis espaldas. Todavía no eres mayor de edad, tu no puedes hacer lo que tu quieras, todavía dependes en mí, como es que hiciste eso? Bueno, la verdad, es que yo junte con ellos, ya hizo esto... [Y cuando estabas hacinedo el plan, es muy interesante que tu papa te dijo que tu todavía dependía en él como dicerte que todavía eres niño, no?] Exactamente, no se de aquí, pero allá, después de dieciocho años, ya puedes ser lo que tu quieres, allá, ya dependes de ti mismo, pero mientras que no tienes los dieciocho años allá, no puedes hasta que tienes esa edad allá, y es por eso que yo no podría...

While telling his father, Luis' resolve began to waver, and he suddenly did not feel as "big" as he had when he had made these plans with his friends. Instead, his father made much sense, and soon, Luis was confused about his initial plans.

Luis: Well, when I was making the plans with my friends, well I felt, like you know, I was here with my friends, well I felt like that there, like one of them, already big too, one of them, there was not a problem, it was decided to do what I thought, no, but after, when I spoke with my papa, my papa told me this and that, well maybe he has reason, he has reason, and well, I became confused.

Pues cuando yo estaba haciendo los planes con mis cuates, pues yo sentia como tu sabes, estabas aqui con mis amigos, pues me sentia asi allá, como uno de ellos, ya grande también, uno de ellos, no iba ser un problema, estaba decidido de hacer lo que yo pensaba, no, pero ya despues, cuando ya hable con mi papa, mi papa me dijo este y otro, pues tal vez tiene razon, tienes la razon, y pues, me confundi.

Marco's parents were not as angry as Luis' father; but rather they seemed resigned to the inevitable. By the time Marco was fourteen, he had been thinking about immigrating to New York for, he says, nine years. He did not get along well with his parents either, and when one of his cousins was immigrating to New York, he decided that he would join him. When asked if his parents knew about his immigrating, he said that they really had no say in the matter.

Marco: They did not say anything. That it was my decision.

Ellos no dijeron nada. Que era decision mio.

Likewise, at age seventeen, Samuel informed his mother that he was leaving. In spite of her opposition of his decision, he told her that this was something he had to do, whether she approved or not.

Samuel: [And how did you tell your parents that you were coming?] To my mama? [Yes to your mama.] I told her, it does not matter mama, I have to go, and she didn't want [me] to, and she did not want [me] to, and she did not want [me] to, and I told her, even if you do not want [me] to, and I have to do it, and I came...

[Y como dijiste a tus papas que ibas a venire?] A mi mama? [Si a tu mama.] Le dije, ni modo mama, me tengo que ir, y no quería, y no quería, y no quería, y le dije, aunque tu no quieres, yo tengo que ir, y yo tengo que hacer, y me vine...

All of the other work-oriented youth recounted scenarios such as this, with plans made somewhat clandestinely, and then outlined to parents after arrangements had been made. Even if the parents were upset, there was little they could do about it, the youth had made up their minds

and raised the money themselves to pay human smugglers.¹³⁹ While the youth would rather make the trek with their parents' blessings, it was often the case that they were prepared to make it without their approval. Rather, parents could do little to prevent their immigration. Mexican youth made this life-changing decision on their own, taking the initiative and looking for and obtaining the means to enable it to come to fruition. Exhibiting high levels of initiative, however, as well as independence, are usually qualities attributed to adults, not teenagers.

Deciding to immigrate on his own, Jose Luis believed that this made him feel like an adult. Taking the initiative and making the decision himself lent to his feelings of adulthood.

Jose Luis: Yes, it made me feel like an adult because it was my own decision, that is something that adults do, make decisions.

Si, me hizo sentir como un adulto porque fue una decision propia, eso es algo que los adultos hacen, tomar decisiones.

The ways in which the youth inform their parents of their decisions to leave the household, and perhaps more importantly, the country, foreshadows how the youth's lives will be organized upon arrival to New York City: like adults. Already making life-changing decisions on their own without their parents' knowing, in this case, leaving home to live in another country, these youth are beginning to make choices to organize their lives as independent adults may—living on one's own and working full-time.

Imagining Fields in New York City: The Labor Market

As a result of their friends' and relatives discussions, non-traditional school-going youth were well informed about the contours of the labor market field. Not only did the youth know what types of jobs were available in New York City, as discussed previously, these youth knew the types of wages they could earn, as well as conditions of employment. The youth learned these

¹³⁹ The youth's parents were in position to raise money themselves. Youth, as previously discussed, asked for/borrowed money from relatives already in the United States. It was agreed that after immigration to New York, the youth would pay the borrowed amount back over time, from their employment earnings.

details from the stories their older relatives and peers shared with them about their own lives when they called home or even returned to Mexico, and the youth imagined their own lives based on the stories they were told.

When asked about the types of jobs they would be interested in working in, most youth named jobs in which Mexican immigrants, including their relatives and friends are disproportionately found in New York City: the service industry. Requiring few skills and characterized by long hours and little pay, these jobs still reflected vast improvements in at least pay, and arguably, in conditions over fieldwork. Out of the sun, and paid in one hour what many were paid in one day in Mexico, these youth were believed that obtaining these jobs were marked improvements occupational status and work conditions [see Chapter 5]. When asked about the types of jobs the youth were interested in working in upon arriving in New York, responses ranged from general, such as wanting a job that will allow the youth to send money back home, to more specific, including working in restaurants and working in stores. Both Concepción and Alejandro expressed general desires for employment. They were not too interested in the type of job they would obtain, only that they could earn enough to send money back home. Rosa responded likewise.

When asked what sort of job she wanted, Concepción responded **“not of the best ones, but one that pays more or less, so that I can help a little in the house [in Mexico].”** /No de los mejores, pero uno que paga más o menos para que yo puedo ayudar un poquito aqui en la casa. Likewise, Alejandro responded **“Well that I don’t know, well only that it is sufficiently economically to send money here.”**/Pues eso no se, pues no más que es suficiente economicamente para mandar para aca. When asked what she imagined she would be doing in

New York if she immigrated, Rosa responded **“Working, in a job, where they give me [work]./[Trabajando, en una trabajo, donde me den.]”**

In other cases, the youth knew about the types of jobs that their families and friends held. These jobs, the youth believed, were the same types of employment that they would seek upon arrival in New York City. Most mentioned were jobs in the restaurant industry, including cooks, waitresses, food preparers, dishwashers, etc.

Jenni: Well, my uncle, well I have like three uncles who are cooks. The others work in making repairs, well yes, like things to sell, like repairs, others [female] are waitresses, others stay to take care of their children, but are like cashiers, or something like that.

Pues mi tío, bueno tengo como tres tíos que son cocineros. Los otros trabajan de hacer arreglos, bueno sí, como cosas para vender, como arreglitos, otras son meseras, otras quedan a cuidar sus hijos, pues están como de cajeras, o algo así.

Other jobs they knew about included cleaning schools, being child care givers, working in different types of stores, working in bakeries and delis, as well as housecleaning. These are the jobs that their friends and relatives had held and told them about on return calls home.

When the youth are asked about what types of jobs they would like to have if they immigrate to New York, the youth responses mirrored the jobs they had heard of and/or that their own relatives and friends had been employed in. For example, Clementina’s female cousin worked cleaning schools and houses, while her male cousin worked in a restaurant. She herself responded similarly when asked what kind of job she would want if she immigrated.

Clementina: I can work in a house, or I could be a cook.

Puedo trabajar en casa, o podría ser cocinera.

Sebastian was a fourteen year old male from San Pedro who wanted to work in the same type of job that his father had worked in. Although he responded that his father was in New York City, rumors circulated around San Pedro that his father had been killed in a knife fight in New

York. Nonetheless, his father had worked in a pizzeria, and Sebastian wanted to work in a pizzeria as well.

Sebastian: [And what types of jobs would you like to have?] I don't know, well, the first job that I would like to have is the one that my papa had, he made pizzas.

[Y que tipos de trabajos te gustarias tener?] No se, pues el primer trabajo que me gustaria tener yo es el que tenía mi papa, el hizo pizzas.

Although all of the youth knew about employment opportunities, many had little idea as to what they skills they would need to actually obtain a job. With little knowledge about skills needed for employment in New York, most youth were certain that the locale-specific skill of English was the most important skill one could possess in seeking employment in New York. In the case of Jenni, like Willis' (1977) lads in England, she believed that the skills she needed to obtain a job in New York were to be efficient and to do everything right. Like their international counterparts, many of the Mexican youth oriented towards not continuing their formal studies in New York believed that these were the most important skills to learn to work in New York.

Jenni: Skills? Well in work, well, it is to be efficient, and that you do everything right and to not be doing badly, things like that...

Habilidades? Pues en el trabajo, pues de ser eficiente, y que haces todo bien y de no estar hacienda mal, cosas asi...

Other youth were locale-specific in their answers. They believed that in New York City, English was the most important skill one must possess in order to be successful. Santiago, a thirteen year old male from San Pedro, knew this from speaking with his father who was working in a restaurant in New York City.

Santiago: [If you work in New York, what is the most important skill to have?] English, and um, and to know things like that, how to manage them. Because there are few people who know how to speak Spanish, like for example, they don't know there what you are saying and we don't understand them either, because we don't know the language.

[Si trabajas en Nueva York, que es la habilidad más importante de tener?] El inglés, y este, y saber como cosas asi, como manejarlas. Porque ahí hay pocas personas que saben como hablar el espanol, como por ejemplo, no saben ahí lo que estas diciendo, y tampoco no atendíamos ellos, porque no sabemos el idioma.

Clementina also believed that knowing English was the most important skill to have to find a job. She is aware, however, that the most valuable English for work is not the English that is taught in Mexico, but rather a different type of English, suggesting that even if one learned English in Mexico, it is difficult to find a job.

Clementina: [And what do you think is the most important skill to have to get a job in New York?] The principal [skill] is to speak English, but the English that they teach here [in Mexico] is not the same as there [in New York].

[Y que crees tu es la habilidad más importante de tener para conseguir un trabajo en Nueva York?] El principal es que hablas inglés, pero el inglés que enseñan aquí, no es igual allá [Nueva York].

Before immigration, Mexican youth also knew about the mistreatment committed against Mexican workers in New York City. The youth's relatives and friends were exploited and treated poorly in their workplaces. Several of the youth had heard from their friends and relatives that in some cases, bosses and other employees exploited Mexican workers. For example, when asked about what people from the United States thought about Mexicans, Izel responded that Americans believed that they could pay Mexicans less because they were immigrants.

Izel: Well, they are immigrants, and that they can pay them less..
Pues son inmigrantes, y que pueden pagar menos..

Shakira also reported hearing her cousin speak about being mistreated at work. One of his co-workers, a native-born worker, yelled obscenities at him for not working more rapidly.

Shakira: My cousin, who worked in the kitchen, that he had to work rapidly, and one [male] began working who was born in New York, and he told him bad words because he didn't do it the same.

Mi primo, quien trabajaba de cocina, que tenía que trabajar rapido, y que entro uno nacido de Nueva York, y le dija maldados a el porque no lo hicia igual.

Solomon received a different impression of living in New York City from his father. His father had immigrated many years before, and shared with him that living in New York was different

than how most people described. Instead of encountering roads paved with gold, Solomon's father found that improving one's lot and earning more money was difficult, that the work was difficult, and improving one's economic condition took time. Solomon knew that his life would be consumed with work in the United States, and prior to his immigration, he was unsure about whether or not he wanted to assume a lifestyle in which he would only be working. Instead, his father had filled his head with doubts about working and living in New York.

Solomon: Well for me, before I came, that my father was here, he told us the reality, no, that everything was not how many people say, that "ah, well there I am going to earn a lot of money quickly," everything is a process, like I tell you, he told us all of that, that it is also hard, it is not like many people go and tell us, that there [US] it is really easy, it is not like how a lot of people tell...and I did not want to, so then, in some ways it was not going to be better because they work the same work routine, because here it is to work, work and worked, and there [Mexico] no, well it is that one day you rest, you can rest even up to a week and that, pass it with your family, the entire week.

Pues a mi, antes de venirme, que mi papa estuve aquí, el nos conto la realidad, no que todo no es como mucha gente dicen que "ah, pues allá voy a ganar mucho dinero de volada," todo tiene un proceso, como te digo, el nos conto todo eso, que tambien es duro, no es como mucha gente van y la cuenta, que allá, es bien fácil no es como la gente se cuentan...y yo no quise...entonces también de tales maneras no se iba ser mejor porque trabajan es la rutina igual, porque aquí es de trabajar, trabajar, y trabajar, y allá no, pues es un día descansas, puedes descansar hasta una semana y eso, pasarlo con tu familia todo una semana.

Even prior to their immigration, Mexican youth begin to imagine what sorts of employment opportunities await them in New York, as well as the types of jobs they would like to enter into upon arrival. Their ideas about the jobs they want to obtain closely reflect the jobs that they already know their relatives and friends hold, predominantly in the unskilled, low-wage service industry. Expressing the desire to become nannies, store clerks and cooks, these youth are merely mirroring the types of jobs that they know of through communication with their relatives. Additionally, they also know, through friends and relatives, what types of capital are most valuable to possess for employment in New York. Most youth believed that the most important skill that they could possess to work in New York is English proficiency. Distinguishing

between English learned in Mexico and English learned in the United States, the youth suggest that they may be ill-equipped in this skill. Undeterred, however, they are able to begin to imagine the types of jobs they may hold upon immigration, as well as the currency that is most valuable to obtain and hold employment, as well as the obstacles that may block their success in the labor market field.

Imagining Fields in New York City: Educational Field

Across all of the Mexican youth, non-traditional school-going and traditional school going, future and current, little was known about attending school in New York City. Of the two groups, however, non-traditional school-going youth reported possessing more information about schools in New York, both non-traditional and traditional. Of the two types of schools, however, they reported possessing disproportionately more information about English classes than traditional schools. The non-traditional school-going youth discussed not having much information about traditional schools for a simple reason: they simply were not interested in school-going. They were immigrating to *work*.

Armando was one youth who had little interest in learning about schools prior to his immigration. Before leaving Mexico, he had given it little to no thought because his primary reason for immigrating was to work.

Armando: [When you left Mexico, did you have any plans or ideas about how to enter into schooling here?] No, the truth is no. [And why not?] Because it didn't interest me. [Why didn't it interest you?] Because I simply wanted to come here to work, I didn't want to study, I didn't know anything about that.

[Cuando saliste de Mexico, tenías tu planes o ideas sobre como podrías entrar a la escuela aqui?] No, la verdad es que no. [Y porque no?] Porque no me interesaba. [Porque no te interesaba?] Porque simplemente yo quería llegar aqui a trabajar, yo no quería estudiar, yo no sabia nada de eso.

Some Mexican youth knew that English classes were available in New York City. Few on details, Mexican youth simply knew that they existed because some of their friends who have

already immigrated told them that these classes existed. These relatives and friends not only shared that English classes existed in New York City, but that knowing English was necessary to live and get around New York with greater ease.

Although not knowing much about schools in New York City, Alejandro, a pre-immigration male in San Valentín, knew that English schools existed in New York City. Friends of his who had immigrated and lived in New York City had shared this with him, but they had not been able to share important details, such as how to register for these schools, or what materials he would need.

Alejandro: [And do you know anything about schools in New York or no?] About schools in New York? No, only that English schools exist. [And who has talked with you about them or how do you know about these English schools?] About these schools? Well, because of some friends who are there, who have immigrated. [And do you know something about how these schools are or just that they exist?] Well, like to know something like that, like how schools are, I don't know, just that they exist. [And do you know or not how you can enter into an English class in New York City?] No, I don't know. [Y sabes alguna cosa de escuelas en Nueva York o no?] De escuelas en Nueva York? No, solamente que existen escuelas de inglés. [Y quien te ha platicado o como sabes de estas escuelas de inglés?] De esas escuelas? Pues por los amigos que estan allá, que han inmigrado. [Y sabes algo de las escuelas o no más que existen?] Pues como de saber algo asi, como de cómo son las escuelas, no se, no más solo se que existen. [Y sabes o no como puedes entrar en un curso de inglés en Nueva York?] No, no se.

Concepción, a premigration rural female discussed speaking periodically with a female friend who lived in New York. According to her friend, knowing English was the most important skill to have to live in New York. Her friend attended English classes and told Concepción about taking them, as well as reasons she had attended.

Concepción: The only thing I know about over there is from a friend that I have there, is about the English classes, that the best thing about over there is the English. [But this friend, has she taken English classes?] She has, she is the one who told me that she went because she lacked not knowing how to speak English. [And is she your age, or is she older?] No, just about the same age... Because like she has told me, those who are over there, well what helps you more is the English...No, she just told me that because she felt that she was lacking [English] and because the most important [thing] is to speak English.

El unico de que yo se de allá, es de una amiga que tengo allá, es de los clases de inglés, que el mejor de allá es de inglés. [Pero esta amiga, ha tomado cursos de inglés?] Ella si es la que me hablado de que ella entro porque la hacía falta de no saber hablar inglés. [Y ella es de tu misma edad, o tiene más años?] No, casi la misma edad. [Y en que trabaja ella?] Ella me dijo que lava carros...Porque como me platican los que estan allá, pues que lo que te ayuda más es el inglés...No, no más me dijo porque ella sentia que le hacía falta y porque el que importante es de hablar inglés...

Fewer youth discussed relatives and friends who spoke to them, in general, about the importance of schooling in New York City. These youth had relatives and friends who, upon interacting with the labor market field in New York found that possessing or not possessing a particular type of cultural capital, educational credentials, impacted one's experiences in the labor market field in the United States more than they did in Mexico. Alluding to the differences in the fields that the youth may encounter upon immigration to New York City, these relatives and friends share information across nation-state borders that were based on their own experiences in New York City, and the new fields that they have encountered. Upon their entry into new fields in New York City, especially the labor market, their relatives and friends found that higher levels of education, and cultural as well as linguistic capital (English), would provide Mexican immigrants greater success in the workplace. These were the messages they shared with the youth.

Clementina: Well, I think that like over there it is more necessary to continue studying. My aunt was there for four years, and she told me that it depends upon the level that one has studied, the job that they give you, depends on your studies, the job that they give you. I feel that in the United States, studies are more important for work.

Pues yo siento como allá es más necesario de seguir estudiando. Mi tia estaba allá por cuatro años, y me dijo que depende hasta el nivel de que has estudiado, el trabajo que te dan, depende en tus estudios los trabajos que te dan. Siento que en los Estados Unidos es más importante el estudio al el trabajo.

Jose Luis, a postmigration rural youth from San Pedro recounts his older cousin's advice to him prior to his immigration about learning a little English and going to English classes.

According to his cousin, enrolling in English classes and being able to exhibit increased English proficiency led to his ascent at his job.

Jose Luis: Um, he was going over there, and well he told me how life was here, that was the first thing when he arrived here, at age 12, and then he returned at age 15, he told me that he studied, that he went to school with people from other countries, he already mastered English, he talked about all of that, after, when he started to work, in that same year that he came, he said that he was going to study, and already, he left studying, he began to tell me, that no, that yes, that at work he rose a little, but he said, it's that if you speak a little English, but if one day you want, you should speak a little English, get into a class, to learn...

Este, iba para allá el, y pues me dijo como era la vida aquí, era el principio que llego aquí, a los 12, y luego regreso a los 15, me platicaba que el estudiaba, que iba con gente de otros países, el inglés ya lo dominaba, platicaba todo eso, después cuando el empezo a trabajar, en ese mismo año que el se vino, el dijo que iba estudiar, y ya, el dejo a estudiar, el empezo a platicarme, que no que si, que en el trabajo se sube un poco, pero no se me dificulta mucho, porque yo habla inglés, me dijo, pero, lo que te ayuda ahí, me dijo, es que si hablas poquito inglés..pero si un día quieres un día, debes hablar poquito el inglés, te metes en un curso, para aprender...

Some youth learn that taking English courses may be essential to not only ascending in one's job, but in keeping one's job. Jenni, a fifteen year old pre-immigration female from San Pedro also knew about English classes through her cousin. Her older cousin took English courses after being threatened to be fired him if he did not learn English. Her cousin had shared this knowledge with her during one of his phone calls back to their grandmother.

Jenni: Well, well yes, my father's cousins, some boy, took an English course, because he is, mmm, how do you say, he works in a restaurant where he tends to people who arrive, and his boss told him that if he wanted to continue working, he had to take an English course so that um, so that he could tend to people who went, and the boss could not speak Spanish very well, but also so that he could understand better what they told him in English.

Bueno, pues si, los primos de mi papa, algún muchacho, tomo un curso de inglés, porque el es, mmm, como se dice, el trabaja en un restaurante que se atiende a las personas que llegan, y eso su patron le dijo que si el quería seguir trabajando, el tenía que tomar un curso de inglés para que este, para que el podría atender a las personas que iban y no podrían hablar muy bien el [jefe] el espanol, pero también para el se entendía mejor lo que ellos dijieron en inglés.

Several youth reported wanting to do this, take English classes while they worked full-time. The youth knew of this possibility through the stories their contacts in New York shared with them about doing both. In the case of Izel, she spoke often with a cousin who worked two

jobs in New York and still was able to attend English classes. He told her that he attended classes in between his two jobs. He said that the classes were easy.

Izel: One of my cousins is studying over there...[in what?] In English. [And what has he told you, how are they, are they difficult or easy or how?] Well, he has told me that he goes after work, to the school, and then from the school to work...[And how are the classes?] Well my cousin told me that they are easy.

Unos de mis primos esta estudiando allá...[en que?] En inglés. [Y que te han platicado, como estan, si son dificiles, faciles, o como?] Pues me ha dicho que va después del trabajo, a la escuela, y luego de la escuela al trabajo...[Y como son las clases?] Pues mi primo me dice que son faciles.

Youth integrated these messages about English classes in New York into their ideas about what they wanted to do after arriving in New York. Milagros was one of the pre-immigration youth who reported wanting to attend school in New York, but mainly for English classes. After hearing about the importance of being able to speak English, she stated that while she wanted to continue her studies in New York, her greatest academic interest was in attending a school that taught English.

Milagros: [If you go to the United States, do you think that you will continue with your studies?] Yes. [Like what type of school would you like to attend?] The ones that are mostly English.

[Si vas al EU, piensas que vas a seguir con tus estudios?] Si. [Como que tipo de escuela te gustaria asistir?] Los que son más de inglés..

Mexican youth who did know about traditional schools in New York [middle and high schools] only knew so if older relatives were parents to young school-going children. These relatives tended to be older brothers and sisters, as well as aunts and uncles, who had immigrated and had children in New York. These relatives had first-hand knowledge of New York City schools as they had enrolled their own in schools. Including both U.S. born and immigrant youth, it was through these youth's parents that Mexican youth developed ideas about school-going in New York City. Although most of the information had general relevance, none of the relatives could share age or level-specific information that would best serve the youth.

Jenni: No, well I have cousins, but their children are studying over there. One just finished entering into kindergarten, others in elementary school, others are going to enter into *secundaria*.

No, bueno tengo primos, pero sus hijos estan estudiando allá. Uno acaba de entrar a kinder, otros en primaria, otros van a entrar a *secundaria*.

For the most part, the youth had received messages about and believed that the educational system in the United States was not only better in terms of instruction, but also more generous than the system in Mexico. Through friends and older relatives, youth were under the impression that the conditions and quality of educational instruction surpassed those found in Mexico. In addition to being of higher quality, in the United States, parents were not held financially responsible for schooling and additionally, students receive additional benefits, such as food.

Concepción had also heard that schools were better at educating their students than in Mexico. When asked if she knew whether or not differences between schools in the two countries existed, Concepción responded that she thought U.S. schools better prepared their students.

Concepción: Well, I say that over there, they prepare/educate them better than here.

Pues yo digo que allá te preparan mejor que aca.

Esmeralda knew from her aunts that schooling was free in the United States, with families exempt from paying any of the fees that they paid in Mexico. She knew this because she possessed younger cousins who were born and/or raised in New York, and were now attending elementary school. Her aunts told her about their children's experiences with school-going, which Jenni then compared with her own in Mexico. In Mexico, Esmeralda stated, parents were saddled with the financial responsibility for maintaining schools.

Esmeralda: Because there they say that, they barely charge anything, and here yes, you have to pay many things. Well there, the government pays, and here, the parents pay to maintain the schools...

Porque allá dicen que, casi no se cobran nada, y aca si, tienes que pagar muchas cosas....Pues allí, se paga el gobierno, y aca los pagan los padres de familia, que se mantengan las escuelas.

Additionally, Izel's nieces were enrolled in schools in New York. Her sister had told her mama that here, in New York City, families did not have to pay anything, and even were fed in the schools.

Izel: Yes, my mother told me that when my sister went over there that she told her that she didn't pay, and there that they feed you, that they give you pizza..

Si, mi mama me dijo que cuando mi hermana se fue para allá que ella platíco que no pagan, y ahí te dan de comer...que te les dan pizza...

The youth believed, however, that these benefits may only be eligible to native-born and younger children, not to them. Lastly, youth reported not knowing how citizenship and/or immigration status would affect chances of school enrollment. Pedro reported not knowing anything about traditional schooling, including about his rights to enroll in school. He was doubtful that with his particular immigration status, he could even enroll in school.

Pedro: Like I wasn't going to have rights here, we did not know hardly anything about schools, until now, I did not know anything about the laws, about the schools, about the educational programs that there were, just about nothing...

Como no iba tener derechas aquí, casi no sabíamos nada de escuelas, hasta ahorita...yo no sabía nada de los leyes, de las escuelas, de nada, de las programás educativas que estaban, entonces, casi no..

In general, all of the Mexican youth know very little about the educational field in New York City prior to their immigration, but non-traditional school-going youth appear better informed about the field in general, and one sector, in particular, specifically English courses. A consequence of their interactions with relatives and friends who themselves are working, non-traditional school-going youth know that their older and similarly-aged relatives and friends attend English courses, and they are informed of their utility in the labor market. Through these messages, they may begin to believe that they too are able to take English classes, and probably should take English classes to be more successful in the labor market.

Non-traditional school-going youth possess much more limited knowledge about traditional schools, especially knowledge that could facilitate their own entry into high school. The information that they do possess is based on the experiences of their younger, mostly native-born relatives' participation in these educational fields. Because they are receiving particular messages about school-going as it relates to young children, the youth may imagine that only young, U.S. citizens [or those who arrived at earlier ages], children, are eligible to enter into educational fields in the United States, not teenage, Mexican born youth. Armed with no real life examples of individuals such as themselves, Mexican and either similarly aged or older, entering into English classes, and no examples of similar trait youth entering into traditional school fields, then, Mexican teenage youth have little information to strongly orient their initial worldviews towards studies.

Imagining Transnational Fields: Split households and sending money home

Armed with information about the labor market, including the wage amounts the youth could earn, non-traditional school-going Mexican youth, future and current, reported that even prior to immigration, they had envisioned sending money back home to their parents in Mexico from New York City. Reporting that they had wished to immigrate so that they could help their households economically, they would do so by sending remittances back home. When asked why they would send money home, the youth responded that they wanted to help their households.

Clementina was one youth who expressed no desire to attend school in New York. Instead, her purpose for immigrating was only to work so that she could send money back home to her family in San Valentín.

Clementina: [And when you immigrate to New York, do you intend to send money home? Why or why not?] Yes, I am going to send money to help my grandmother and my sister with her studies.

[Y cuando migras a Nueva York, intentas mandar dinero a tu casa? Porque o porque no?] Si voy a mandar dinero para ayudar a mi abuela y a mi hermana con su escuela.

Although Erik expressed a desire to attend school in New York, he was only interested in attending English classes. Attending English classes only would allow him to work full-time so that he could garner enough earnings to send money home.

Erik: [And if you go over there, do you think that you will send money to your house?] Yes. [Why?] To help my parents. [With what?] So that they can use the money, so they can maintain [themselves].

[Y si tu vas para allá, piensas que vas a mandar dinero a tu casa?] Si. [Porque?] Para ayudar a mis padres..[Con que?] Para que ellos se ocupen el dinero, para se mantienen.

Even prior to their immigration, non-traditional school-going youth are imagining that they will arrive in the United States to work and send money back to their families in Mexico. Whereas pre-immigration, these youth are located in the southern end of the transnational field, by virtue of sending money home, across borders, the youth are envisioning transnational activities in which now, they will be located in the northern end of the transnational field, sending money South. In many cases, this idea, to continue their participation in their households in Mexico, while in New York, impacts their decisions, even prior to immigration, about which fields they will envision engaging in.

Conclusion

Even prior to their own immigration, Mexican youth may engage in transnational imagining/living by imagining and supposing what their own lives will be like upon their immigration to New York City. Their involvement in social networks includes not only older family members who have immigrated to New York City, but also similarly aged friends who have immigrated to New York City. These family and friends are able to engage in transnational communications about the organization of their own social and economic lives via telephone and internet, or when they return home to engage in lengthy storytelling.

Mexican youth, especially those who are not oriented towards traditional school-going, receive detailed information about entering into a labor market field. Youth know what sorts of jobs exist in the labor market field, as well as the wages youth will be able to earn, the conditions of employment, and the skills needed for success in this particular field. Alternatively, prior to immigration, youth know little about entering into the educational fields. Although school-age, the Mexican youth possess less information traditional schools than about English language schools, and express an interest in attending the latter, not the former. In regards to traditional schools, any information that they possess is based on the experiences of their much younger cousins, nieces and nephews. Although knowing that schooling is free in New York City, they do not know if they are eligible to attend due to their immigrant/legal status, or their ages.

Instead, these Mexican youth possess more knowledge about English classes, as well as know similarly aged Mexican youth who have enrolled in English classes. After speaking with similarly aged and older relatives and friends, they know not only that knowing English is extremely useful for living in New York, but also for obtaining and keeping employment, engaging in occupational mobility, and to earn higher wages. In the eyes of work-oriented youth, this knowledge may actually compel youth to enroll in English classes whereas before they had not considered additional schooling. Instead, the youth may then rethink their ideas about entering solely into the labor market once in New York, and instead consider continuing their studies – if only to learn English for increased occupational mobility.

Section III: Future and Current Traditional School-Going Youth

Future and current traditional school-going youth differed in several ways from their non-traditional school-going counterparts and showed greater heterogeneity in their orientations towards immigration. Surprisingly, a small minority of Mexican youth stated that they had never

given any thought to immigrating and had never believed that they would leave Mexico. The majority of the youth discussed, however, wanting to immigrate to New York, either to get to know New York, or to reunite with their parent[s]. This latter group comprised the majority of the traditional school-going youth whose main reason for immigration could be defined as family reunification. All groups, however, were less conscious of fields in New York City, especially the labor market, and did not appear to be as informed or field-determined as their non-traditional school-going counterparts. Instead, they exhibited weaker orientations towards fields in New York, appearing to have not given much thought to their immigrations nor potential subsequent actions in New York.

Several youth reported never thinking about immigrating, but instead had believed that their parent [s] would return to Mexico to resume their lives at their sides. Lisandro swore that he had never considered immigrating until being told less than a week before leaving that he would be joining his family in New York City. Not only had he not ever thought about immigrating, he definitely had not considered staying in New York as long as he had, five years.

Lisandro: Well, like I told you before, I never thought, I did not want to come to this city, it was because of influence, that my brother influenced me, and my parents too, that I come here to live for some time, I never, I did not think of staying here this [length] of time..

Pues como te dije antes, yo nunca pense, yo no quería venire a este ciudad, fue por la influencia, que me influyo mi hermano, y de mis padres también, de que vinieron un tiempo para aca para vivir, yo nunca, no pensaba quedarme este tiempo aqui.

Likewise, Miguel had not believed that he would ever set foot in New York City. Instead, he always believed that his parents would return to Mexico to be with him and his siblings. His parents and brother had to convince him, at age twelve to come, just for a little while, to see how it was.

Miguel: Well, I never had thought about it, I always thought that my parents would return with us, instead, they are the ones who made me come with them...

Pues nunca la iba pensado, siempre pensaba que mis papas iba regresar con nosotros, sin embargo, ellos son los que me hicieron venire con ellos...

Other youth discussed casual, romantic notions of immigration, wanting to immigrate so that they could get to know New York City, or *para conocer*, as well as to reunite with their parents. Izel's father had immigrated to New York City years before, and she counted five brothers and sisters who already lived there. She said that she had been thinking about immigrating since she was twelve years old, when her father and siblings told her that she could come.

Izel: [And why do you want to go over there?] To go to get to know [there], know how it is...

[Y porque quieres ir para allá?] Para ir a conocer, saber como es...

Erik, a quiet fifteen year old male talked about thinking about immigration since he was age thirteen. Although both of his parents resided in San Pedro, his father had gone back and forth for years, and he had much older brothers who lived in New York City. He also reported wanting to immigrate to get to know the city.

Erik: [Why do you want to go?] Because I want to get to know [there]...

[Porque quieres ir?] Porque quiero conocer...

These Mexican youth, in addition to those who discussed wanting to reunite with their families, reported that they began thinking about immigration at a younger mean age, or age 13. With the majority of these youth's having at least one parent in the United States, these youth resided in households that were receiving remittances and were not experiencing as severe economic stress as their counterparts. As such, their reasons for immigration were less urgent and tied less to the household's economic conditions. Not feeling the pressure to work, these youth discussed immigrating to get to know the city that their relatives described as *bonita*, or

pretty. These youth had thought about immigrating for a shorter time, an average of 9.8 months.¹⁴⁰

Envisioning Immigration: The Role of Peers

Mexican youth who were enrolled in full-time traditional schooling in New York were more likely to respond that they did not know of similarly-aged peers who immigrated. Few reported knowing youth who had immigrated to New York to work, and even fewer reported knowing individuals their age who immigrated to reunite with their families. Only one traditional school-going youth discussed knowing youth who had arrived to reunite with their family members. Patricio, an 11th grader in New York City knew both similarly aged youth who had immigrated unaccompanied for family reunification and to work.

Patricio: [Do you know other people your age, or friends from your hometown who have immigrated?] Yes. [Why did they immigrate?] Some immigrate to be with their families and others only to work...I know two people, one who is named Luis, and other who is named Larry, Luis immigrated for his family, and Larry immigrated to work..

Patricio: [Conoces otras personas de tu edad, o amigos de tu pueblo que hallán inmigrado?] Si.[Porque inmigraron?] Algunos inmigraron para estar con sus familias, y otros solamente para trabajar..Yo conozco dos personas, una que se llama Luis, y otro que se llama Lari, el Luis inmigro para su familia, y Larry inmigro para trabajar..

Few future and current traditional school-going youth discussed knowing other similar-aged immigrants who had departed to reunite with their families and go to school. The youth who they could recall who were now in schools in New York had immigrated long before them. The idea of immigrating at young ages to enter into schooling is an idea that they have not observed amongst their peers, and prior to immigration, they themselves are the only ones they know who may do so.

¹⁴⁰ The mean number of months was calculated by converting the number of years and/or months that the youth reported they had thought about immigrating prior to the interview, in the case of preimmigraty youth and actual departure for postimmigration youth. Total number of months were calculated for each group and divided by number of participants reported for that group. In the cases for youth who had never thought about immigration before actually immigrating [Postimmigration, Group 3], the number of months was calculated as "zero."

Realizing Immigration: Family Reunification

The majority of future and current traditional school-going youth reported having at least one parent residing in New York City prior to their own immigration. The youth's primary transnational communication occurred with them and they engaged in conversations in which their parents were trying to convince the youth to immigrate to New York to reunite with them. As the conversation turned to how the youth would live their lives upon arrival, the majority of the parents discussed lives filled with activities that reflect mainstream life course literature about age-appropriate behaviors: learning and having fun. In these cases, the idea of work and earning monies was never mentioned.

Patricio reported speaking with his parents about immigrating so that he could be with them. No longer wishing to be with his aunt and uncle, he wanted to live with his real parents, in New York City.

Patricio: [And with whom did you talk about the idea [to reunite?] With my mother first, that I wanted to immigrate to this country, and then my mother spoke with my father and then he spoke with me and then we made the decision that I was going to immigrate to this country..

Y con quien platicaste este idea [de reunificar?]. Con mi madre primero, de que yo quería inmigrar a este país, y luego mi madre hablo con mi padre y luego el hablo conmigo, y luego tomamos la decisión que yo iba inmigrar a este país.

Although he would eventually immigrate at age thirteen, Roberto reported speaking about his immigration with his mother before he was twelve years old. Wishing to see his mother, he told her that he wanted to come to be with her.

Roberto: When I grew up is when my mom spoke with me and asked me if I wanted to come with her, or like that, or if I wanted that they could bring me..[And who produced the idea to immigrate?] What produced my idea to come was my mother, because it had been a long time since I had seen her and I missed her.[And really, why did you decide to immigrate to the United States?] The reason was to see my mother, because of that...

Cuando crecí más es cuando mi mama me hablo y me pregunto si yo quería venirme con ella, o así, o si yo quería que vos eran para traer.[Y que te produjo el tu idea de inmigrar?] El lo que produjo mi idea de venir era mi mama, porque no tenía mucho tiempo que yo no había visto y la

extrañaba.[Porque decidiste realmente a inmigrar a los EU?] La razón era porque por ver a mi mama, por eso...

Realizing Immigration: Arranging and Paying for Mexican Youth to Immigrate

Among the school-going youth whose parents were in New York City, plans and financing for their immigration had been made in advance by their parents and the youth merely had to pack and go. These youth did not know much about how their immigration had been planned, including costs. Their immigration had been arranged and paid for, and they did not speak of being obligated to compensate their parents for their immigration. Miguel shared that he had just been told that he was leaving the following week, and he did.

Miguel: Well, I didn't know anything, my parents just told me a week before to come over here and I with desire to see them, so much time without seeing them, I told them yes.

Pues yo no sabia nada, mis padres no más me dijeron una semana antes que me viniera para aca, y yo con ganas a verlos, tanto tiempo sin verlos, yo les decia que si.

Julieta's parents told her that she was going to immigrate with even less time to prepare for her departure. Her parents called her one night and told her to pack a bag because she was going to leave the next day. Her parents had made the plans in advance without her knowledge or planning.

Julieta: When my dad called me, I just was like "okay," I thought it wasn't true because I told them that they were playing and I said "tell me the truth" and they said "you have to come, you are going to come tomorrow" and I said, "no" and they said "yes" that they had made the plans even before I was going to come here.

Future and current traditional school-going youth discuss that their primary sources of transnational communication occurs between themselves and their parents. With at least one parent in New York, the majority of these youth describe having conversations where their parents discuss having the youth join them in New York City, a place where they will have fun, as well as make new friends, learn new things and go to new schools where they will learn more. Although they become keen to this idea, and dream of reuniting with their parents, the youth do

little on their own to make this a reality. Instead, they are told by their parents that they will immigrate. Without their input or control, in most of the cases of the immigrant youth, their parents determine the details of their immigration, as well as finance the sojourn without expectation of their payback. Ironically, unlike the non-traditional school-going youth, who, in most cases, planned their immigration behind their parents' backs and then informed them, in the cases of traditional school-going youth, the youth's parents made the plans behind their children's backs, merely informing them of their immigration date as it approached.

In most cases, family reunification was the primary reason for thinking seriously about immigration, as these youth, like their pre-immigration counterparts who stated that they would continue their studies, included more cases of individuals who possessed at least one parent in New York City. In most instances, rather than deciding and planning for themselves, the youth were told when and how they were going to immigrate.¹⁴¹ Although the youth reported being told, with little advance notice, on what day and how they were going to come to New York City, in many cases, the youth imagined this day long before being told or its arrival. In the case of Patricio, he began to think about reuniting with his family in New York City three years before actually immigrating, at age thirteen. With his parents in New York, Patricio was growing up under his aunt and uncle's care in rural Puebla. He missed his parents terribly, and he had long thought about immigrating to be with them in New York City.

Patricio: Well, I began to think about immigrating when I was growing up and I realized that I did not have my mother and father. [What caused you to produce your idea to immigrate?] I wanted to be with my parents, because I missed them, because it is not the same to be with your family, like your uncles/aunt and uncle, than being with your mother and father.

Pues empecé pensar de inmigrar cuando yo me fui creciendo y me dio cuenta que no había mi madre y mi padre [Que te produjo tu idea de inmigrar?] Quería estar con mis padres, porque yo les extrañaba yo, porque no es igual de estar con familia, como tus tios, que estar con tu madre y padre.

¹⁴¹ This is significantly different than what was reported by Dreby (2008).

Rather, the ages at which they begin to imagine immigration, the reasons for immigration, and their understandings of these ages orient them not towards fields that may imply independence, such as the labor market, but rather towards fields that, for the most part, maintain their financial dependence on their parents at the age of immigration, or the educational field. As members of split households that are financially stable and supported by U.S. dollars, they are not subject to the pressures their Mexican neighbors experience to adjust their behaviors to relieve their households' economic needs. For this reason, there is no reason for them to imagine immigration to become target earners. Instead, their imagined immigration includes envisioning behaviors that are not that different from the ones they are engaging in Mexico: school-going and worrying little about financial pressures.

Imagining Fields in New York City: The Labor Market

Although these youth appear to know little about any fields, like their non-traditional school-going counterparts, traditional school-going youth appear to possess more ideas about the labor market field than the educational field. Not only do they possess family members, including their parents, who have immigrated and are employed, they also know few similarly-aged youth who have immigrated to work. Obtained mainly from family and friends, traditional school-going youth possess limited information about work conditions in New York City.

These youth discussed knowing very general details about work in New York City. They knew that their family members had immigrated to work and were earning more money in New York City than in Mexico. It seemed, however, that besides these general details, the youth knew little else including what sorts of jobs they could work in and how much they would earn.

Only Esteban seemed to know more about work in New York than his peers. One of his friends had immigrated two years prior and told him about difficult work conditions in New

York City. Unlike in Mexico, Mexican workers' lives become consumed with work upon immigrating to New York.

Esteban: [Have they given you advice, if you should go over there?] Well, my friend tells me that maybe its better here [in Mexico], than there, that it is harder there...the jobs, that the jobs are difficult, and then some already want to return/come here, there is nothing more but to work over there...

[Han dado consejos se debes ir para allá?] Bueno, mi amigo me dice que a la mejor es mejor aquí [Mexico] que allá, que es más duro allá,..los trabajos, que hay trabajos que son difíciles, y luego algunos ya quieren venir para ac, no hay nada más que trabajar allá.

Most of the future and current traditional school goers begin to think about immigration while they are still in secundaria, and living in households where their full-time work is not necessary. These youth begin to think about immigrating to visit, as well as to reunite with family members. Guided by these reasons to immigrate, the youth do not consider that they will enter into the labor market upon their immigration. For various factors, including that they do not believe themselves at an appropriate age to consider full-time employment, as well as the economic conditions of their households in Mexico, as well as the conditions that await them in New York, these youth are not imagining immigration for work. As such, they may have had no need to ask questions about employment in New York, nor have their parents shared these types of information with them.

Imagining Fields of Immigration: Educational Field

When Mexican youth receive information from their parents about life in New York, for the most part, future field participation is not discussed in detail. Instead, the parents appear to focus more on the aspect of family reunification and fun, and remain silent about what awaits them outside of the household activities.

In the few cases in which parents discussed what awaited the youth after arriving in New York, the issue of continuing one's studies was discussed. Lisandro had never entertained the

idea of immigrating to New York but his parents, both in New York City, were trying to convince him to join them. They used the lure of fun and continued studies to make the case that he would enjoy his life in New York City more than in Mexico.

Lisandro: Well, when I was in Mexico, I did not think about coming here, I didn't like it, I didn't want to, it did not pass through my mind, I liked to live in Mexico...so then my father told me that it was a little more fun to come here, to school and that..

Pues cuando yo estaba en México, yo no pensaba en venire aquí, no me gustaba, no quería, no pasaba por mi mente, aunque yo era chico, pero no pasaba por mi mente, yo me gustaba vivir en Mexico..entonces mi papa me contaba que era poco más divertido venire aqui, a la escuela y esto..

Keeping in mind mainstream ideas of age-appropriate behaviors, other youth with parents in New York City reported that they were told that they would go to school and have fun in New York City. In the case of Miguel, his parents had also spoken to him about immigration, enticing him with the lure of learning.

Miguel: Well they told me that it was going to be a good opportunity for me because I was going to learn another language, meet new people, new people from other countries, and I was going to learn about all types of new things...

Pues me dijeron que iba ser una buena oportunidad para mi porque me aprendía otro idioma, conocería nueva gente, nueva gente de otros países, e iba aprender nuevas cosas de todo..

Aside from the idea of entering into traditional schools in New York City, however, the future and current school-going youth know very little about traditional school-going. The youth did not know about what types of schools existed in New York, nor what schools required for enrollment.

Very few future and current traditional school-going youth discussed knowing about schools in New York City prior to immigration. When they did possess information, like their non-traditional school-going counterparts, they obtained this information through the experiences of younger relatives who lived and attended schools in New York City.

Esteban knew about *secundarias* in New York City because his cousin had attended one. Every time his aunt called the house to speak with his grandmother, he too could speak with his school-going cousin. Although he was now in high school and they did not speak as frequently, his cousin had shared his experiences with Esteban when he was in middle school. Through his cousin's participation in an educational field in the United States, Esteban himself learned that the curriculum was difficult.

Esteban: [And have they talked to you about the idea of continuing your studies or pursuing a career there [in NYC]?] Yes, I have talked about it, but just talk, with my cousin. [What have you talked about with your cousin?] About how school is over there. [And about what level?] Secundaria. [And what does he tell you?] That it is difficult there. [Y te han platicado sobre este idea de seguir estudiando o agarrar una carrera allá?] Si lo ha platicado, pero no más platica, con mi primo..[Que has platicado con tu primo?] De cómo es la escuela allá.[Y de que nivel?] Secundaria. [Y que te platica?] Que es difícil allá.

In spite of not knowing much about the educational field in New York City, several of the future and current traditional school-going youth discussed wanting to obtain university studies in the United States. Santiago, Rosa and Esteban all discussed wanting to enter university studies in New York City. In the case of Santiago, he believed he could immigrate to reunite with his father in New York City, and continue along his pathway to become a teacher.

In addition to knowing about traditional schools, Esteban also knew that his cousin was taking English classes and working at the same time. This older cousin shared with him that one could go to school and work at the same time, something that interested Esteban. After taking English classes at an early hour, he would then go to work.

Esteban: Yes, I think that he takes them [English classes] early, and then he enters into work.

Si creo que las toman temprano [English classes], y luego se entran a trabajar.

For most of these youth, little information is shared with them about the education field. While parents do mention that they will continue their studies in New York, the parents, most likely,

have not begun to investigate the conditions of this field, and as we see in Chapter 7, will not do so until their children arrive. Their parents, instead, speak of school generally, discussing education in the context of their arrival and the resumption of the lives they had in Mexico: being financial dependents continuing their studies, learning English, socializing and playing. When youth do learn about the educational field from others, information is scarce. In thinking about their lives in New York, beyond generalities, details about the labor market, as well as schooling are part of their potential new lives in New York are not being integrated into the youth's worldviews. Rather, their worldviews, as they integrate the possibility of a new context, include only general ideas about new fields; instead, family reunification is foremost in their imagined lives in New York.

Conclusion

Presented with two very distinct pathways, for very distinct reasons, even prior to immigration, the youth are receiving messages about immigration from different family members that will lead to entry into different fields in New York City. While future and current non-traditional school-going youth are enticed, invited and sponsored so as to arrive and work in New York, future and current traditional school-going youth are invited by their parents with promises of reunification, fun and, in general, continued studies. These youth are already being *tracked* into a different field, the educational field from their Mexican youth counterparts.

Differences in age when immigration was first envisioned, as well as reasons for immigration, are rooted primarily in the youth's household economic conditions (something dictated, in part, by their parents' residency in the United States). For youth who plan to work and end up working full-time once in New York City, this shift in thinking about their own immigrations and subsequent entry into the labor market in the United States occurs

independently, as a result of the intersection of their understandings of their ages, the poor economic situations of their own households and assessments of future possibilities. Additionally, messages received from New York City inform them of alternative employment and wage-earning opportunities in the North. For those youth who live in households that are more financially secure due to their parents' remittances, their thoughts about immigration occur at earlier ages and are based more on their desires for family reunification. Because of the presence of at least one parent in New York, their household financial situations are more secure, sparing them from thinking about immigrating to become a target earner. At these young ages, they are not yet thinking about full-time work, but rather can and do continue to think about staying in school, not only because of their ages, but also because they have no pressures to provide monies to support their households.

Overall, social ties between family members are stronger than those held with friends and elicit higher levels of communication and obligation between the youth and their family members in New York City. When asked with whom they spoke in New York City prior to immigration, youth reported communicating greater frequency and length of conversations with their relatives. These relations also offered and subsequently provided assistance that would assist their immigration and settlement in New York. Because of their kinship, and the resources that are shared because of this kinship, the youth's relatives are critical to helping shape the ideas the youth have about immigrating to New York and what they will do upon arrival – whether work or school – as well as undertaking the actual immigration and settling in New York.

Different sorts of relationships occur, however, between the youth and their relatives, depending on which relatives are in New York City. When the youth's main contacts are older

siblings or extended family, conversations are dominated by discussion of work, and how one can earn more money in the United States. When the youth's main contacts are parents, however, discussion revolves around schooling and play, either to immigrate and enter into educational fields [only], or not to immigrate and remain in those fields in Mexico.

Additionally, who the youth are in contact with, as well as reasons for immigration, determine how the decisions and preparation for immigration are made, either independently, or dependently, by their parents. While future and current non-traditional school-going youth discussed not informing their parents of their plans to immigrate, youth who were oriented towards and ended up in traditional schools had these decisions and plans made for them. Thus, these two groups of youth exhibit different levels of autonomy in the deciding, planning and undertaking of their immigration. These differences in decisions and preparation suggest that Mexican youth who immigrate and follow different pathways to the labor market or education may also following differently timed transitions to adulthood across borders. For work-oriented youth, leaving home and the financial independence that is normally associated with home is yet another marker in their transition to adulthood; however, for youth whose immigration is decided and paid for by their parents, such immigration would be better characterized as merely part of a family move, not the latest stage in youth's transition to adulthood.

For Mexican immigrant youth, it is this intersection of immigration, social reproduction and the transition to adulthood that may determine how the youth are, or will, experience shifts in their transnational habitus. For Mexican youth receiving information that encourages their unaccompanied immigration and subsequent entry into the unskilled labor market, such youth envision escaping agricultural and other low-paying unskilled work in Mexico to enter into the

unskilled labor market in New York. Then with the monies they send to their households back home, they can help improve their families' Mexican household income and socioeconomic status in their home communities. Their transition to adulthood will continue across borders, beginning at home when they leave their traditional schools and homes, and continue as they transition into the labor market in New York. For Mexican youth reuniting with their families in New York City, however, they may well avoid farm work or unskilled work in Mexico, and continue their studies, which, at least in theory, will help them escape unskilled work in New York, as well as put them on a pathway to college in the United States. In addition, immigration allows the youth to imagine a decelerated transition to adulthood, allowing them to rejoin their parents, as well as to continue their studies. In this way, both groups of youth can imagine challenging both local and/or transnational social reproduction. For future and current non-traditional school-going youth, they imagine that their escape from their home communities and entry into the New York labor market will not only enable their own improved position in the transnational labor market, but also enable them to improve their Mexican households' socioeconomic status, as well as, in some cases, enable the longer school-going of their siblings. In the case of future and current traditional school-going youth, by imagining joining their parents in New York and continuing their studies, they are imagining surpassing the educational levels of their peers in Mexico; rather, some are even imagining becoming college graduates.

Chapter 7: The Social and Economic Organization of Youth's Spaces: New York

By using the sole measures of academic achievement and rates of educational attainment to discuss immigrant youth incorporation, scholars have mistakenly made several assumptions about immigrant youth. For one, studies have assumed that immigrant youth are predominantly 1.5 generation youth who have arrived to join parents in the US and whose incorporation is highly dependent on the characteristics of parents. Secondly, previous studies have assumed that the only field that immigrant youth are interested in and participate in is the educational field, or in schools, ignoring the other fields that the youth find in their receiving context that may interest them, including the labor market field. This has erroneously led to the [inaccurate] suggestion that all immigrant youth have enrolled in traditional schooling, i.e. high school, at one time or another, absent only upon dropping out. As discussed earlier, both Hirschman (2001) and Fry (2003) have released reports suggesting otherwise, but scholars have been largely unwilling to move away from the schoolhouse to explore other fields in which immigrant youth may be participating in to define their own success, as well as other institutions within the educational field that youth may be enrolling in. Thirdly, by only examining success as U.S. scholars have defined it, via academic achievement and formal educational attainment in the United States, they have assumed that the United States is the last geographical stop in the youth's life course and that the youth's life success is only measured by standards privileged in the postindustrial United States.

Even if this becomes true, as it is for many prior immigrants, many youth do not believe that the U.S. is the last geographical stop in their life course, and as demonstrated by my research, are not behaving as such. Instead, they behave in ways in which their success in the United States is not measured so much by their socioeconomic attainment in the United States,

but rather, in their communities in Mexico – communities to which they believe they will return. Whereas previous scholars have rightfully been concerned with these immigrant youth's academic achievement and educational attainment and its meaning in the United States, this has merely been one moment in the youth's lives, in the United States, and not a comprehensive examination of the youth's lives or the meanings of their educational levels over their life course and across geographic settings. Lastly, Mexican teen migrants' immigration and arrival in New York City, especially from rural areas, has been characterized as a time during which the youth's life course trajectories, rooted in their home communities' notions of age and the life course, shift to reflect the "extended, urban assimilative adolescence" (Smith, 2006). Again, this largely depends on the fields and institutions with which the youth are engaging, especially those which subscribe and reinforce the notion of extended periods of adolescence, i.e., intact families, traditional high schools, and the part-time labor market.

Additionally, although some educational sociologists have recently emphasized not only immigrant youth's possession but their use of capital, specifically social capital, these discussions have also focused only on the immigrant youth as traditional school-goers, and has examined the acquisition and exchange of social capital in settings that are normally attributed to teenage youth, including the family and traditional high school settings (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

This chapter attempts to challenge these assumptions by examining the immigrant youth's lives, not their parents' lives, as they live them in their receiving contexts and across national borders. A close examination of first generation Mexican youth's lives in New York illuminates the heterogeneity of these youth's experiences in New York City, starting not only with their participation in various fields in New York City, but also with their decisions to either

enter or bypass formal education, or to participate primarily in other fields. These decisions, based not only on their orientations and worldviews that were formed prior to their arrival, but also on their interactions with conditions found in New York City, are also informed and impacted by their commitment (or lack thereof) to transnational activities within a space that spans between New York City and their home communities.

In addition to differences in choices about which activity will dominate their lives, work or school, or in Bourdieuan terms, which field they will participate in, differences also exist around the conditions of their field entry, participation and exit. The fields with which the youth are engaged, how they gained access to these fields [what capital is used and its exchange value], the conditions that impact, block or challenge access to these fields, and how long they may remain in the fields before exit or reentry all impact the youth's lives and create differences among first generation Mexican youth in New York City. Although numerically the youth fall between the oft-accepted age parameters of the life course category of *adolescence*, these Mexican youth, with their varied experiences of field participation, also differed in the ways they conceptualized and were living their current life course categories.

Whereas I originally organized my analysis to consider the three groups separately by the youth's relationship to the educational field (no participation v. participation in nonformal educational institutions, and participation in traditional educational settings, i.e. "traditional" high schools), upon analysis I found that the first two groups of youth behaved similarly, barring the short amount of times that the second group of youth were enrolled in and attending English as a Second Language classes. For the most part, the living and work experiences of the non school-going youth and those who were attending English courses were very similar, varying,

only briefly, as youth attend English courses. Traditional school-going youth demonstrate the greatest differences apart these other two groups of youth in their relationship to all three fields.

In this chapter, I will explore the different groups' relationships to the three fields of household, the labor market, and lastly the educational field in New York City to explain how the contours of the fields, as well as the youth's practices and possessions of capital in these other fields impact their school-going, both formally and informally. Additionally, I examine how their age and life course perceptions are shaped by, and may reinforce, the youth's relationships to these fields. Challenging mainstream ideas about what comprises "normal" participation with these fields for individuals their ages, namely adolescents and the recent "emerging adults," as well as the circumstances of these participations and their outcomes, discussion of these Mexican youth's experiences shed light on the heterogeneity existing between individuals residing in the United States during this age range, as well as between individuals who comprise the recently arrived and unauthorized Mexican immigrant youth population.

Organization of Chapter

This chapter is comprised of two main sections: non-traditional school-going and traditional school-going, and five sub-sections per each main section: the organization of Mexican immigrant youth's lives in New York City, the Household field, the Labor Market Field, the Educational Field and Future Fields. In Section I, I argue that because of similar orientations and ideas about immigration, work and school, as well as access to social capital, youth who do not go to school and who attend ESL classes share similar experiences in the household and labor market fields. These youth not only do not live with their parents in New York City, but they live semi-independently, paying rent and for their own expenses in mostly

the homes of relatives. They live in transnational households, as they are living with siblings and/or extended family members in New York City, but also participating in their natal homes back home by sending money to their parents. Both groups of youth also participate in the secondary labor market under similar conditions, working long hours, under poor conditions, and for little pay. These youth's experiences diverge only when the latter group of youth enters into the educational field, only to converge again shortly, once this group exits the educational field. To demonstrate this divergence and then convergence, I discuss the two groups separately when discussing the educational field. I include both groups only in the discussion of the conditions that cause these youth to remain outside of the educational field, followed by a discussion of the entry and experiences of only the "English as a Second Language" school-goers in the educational field, as well as the reasons for their exit. To conclude this section, I turn to both groups' discussions of the future to examine the fields they believe they imagine participating in, and how their activities in New York City are impacted by this, especially their school-going.

In Section II, I turn to the lives of traditional high school-going youth. More closely resembling the lives of "mainstream" adolescents, these youth mostly lived with their parents, worked only part-time, and attended traditional high schools, full-time. Possessing completely different relationships to both the household [local and transnational] and labor market fields, as well as the educational field, these youth were able to attend high school full-time, and ultimately, had different ideas about the future fields they would participate in.

The post-immigration Mexican youth who participated in this study, as discussed in previous chapters, were a heterogeneous group. All of the youth arrived in New York City during their teenage years, between the ages of thirteen and eighteen, but were interviewed when they were no older than nineteen and had lived in New York City for less than five years.

Although discussions of the youth were organized according to their places of origin, both rural or urban in Chapter Five, upon immigration and field entries, these differences diminished in importance. While these characteristics are still important – matching places of origin with types of school-going – the areas of origin are evenly distributed across both groups of youth.

Instead, in this chapter, the youth are organized by their actual relationships to the educational field: non school-going, informal school-going, and traditional school-going. Within and across these groups, however, other similarities and differences existed. The vast majority of those youth who were not in traditional high school had arrived slightly older, and were mostly male and unaccompanied, who, leaving their parents behind, had immigrated alone to join mostly older relatives, brothers, uncles, aunts and cousins, with whom they would live. Only one of the English class students was female. Of the traditional school-going group, only two of the traditional high school going youth could be considered as unaccompanied. These differences affected the youth's movements, and ability to participate or not participate in particular fields, especially the educational field. To begin an exploration of these differences in youth and their movements, I examine how the lives of non-traditional school going youth, both informal school and non-school-going youth's lives are organized.

Section I: The Lives of Non-Traditional School-Going Youth

Like other Latina/o ethnic immigrants, Mexican youth found themselves living in linguistic enclaves, or neighborhoods where the residents were predominantly Spanish-speaking.

Mexicans were usually not the majority Latina/o group living in these areas, as Caribbean Latinos such as Dominicans and Puerto Ricans had resided in these areas prior to the arrival of Mexicans. As documented by various scholars including de Genova and Ramos (2003) in their discussion of Mexican and Puerto Rican interface in Chicago, as well as Smith (2006) and

Bourgois (1995) in their discussions of Mexicans in New York, living in Spanish-speaking Latino neighborhoods translated into some benefits for the youth, namely being able to patronize businesses with workers who spoke Spanish; however, there were also troubles, including harassment by others there. Several of the youth discussed the general ethnic makeups of their neighborhoods as well as the advantages and disadvantages of living in these mixed Latino/o neighborhoods.

Luis recalled being very uncomfortable living in his building. Although some Mexicans lived in the building, Puerto Ricans appeared to control the public spaces on the block, including in front of his apartment building. Mexican residents had to pass through groups of Puerto Rican residents, and in several instances, Luis had been harassed by the Puerto Ricans when he passed through these spaces. This made him feel very uncomfortable coming and going out of his building.

Luis: I was in this place where there were a lot of Mexicans, with Puerto Ricans, a place well, it is uncomfortable to live with those people too. [Why?] Because they discriminate a lot, they mix with their race and all, and then they see you, like you are not one of them, more so they tell you not to mix with them, they tell you not to mix with them, they can even tell you things, but like they do not understand you. [Can you talk about what happened to you?] Well they, each time that I would leave the building where I lived, they lived there too, and well they go outside and stay there outside at night too, you enter, and each time that they could they would bother you, well, but each time that they could they bother you, but yes, it was very uncomfortable like that, like that.

Yo estaba en un lugar donde habia muchos Mexicanos, con Puerto Riquenos un lugar, bueno, es incomodo de vivir con esa gente tambien. [Porque?] Porque ellos discriminan mucho, ellos se mezcla con su raza y todo y luego te ven como no eres de ellos, mas te dicen que no se mezclan entre ellos hasta te pueden decir cosas, pero como no te entienden. [Puedes platicar sobre lo que te paso?] Pues ellos, cada vez que yo salia del building donde yo vivia, alli vivian tambien, y bueno salen y quedan alli afuera en la noche tambien, entras, y cada vez que podrian te molesta, bueno, pero cada vez que puedan te molesta, pero si era muy incomoda asi, asi.

While living in an linguistic enclave allows Mexican youth the comfort of being able to at least to communicate in the language they are most familiar with, sharing public spaces with other Latina/o groups who may resent the ethnic transformation of their neighborhoods and spaces

[like other ethnic groups before them] provides distress for the Mexican youth. As discussed in Mexican New York, harassment from Puerto Ricans is a significant anxiety and is attributed, partly, to the increase of Mexican youth gangs in New York City. There was a double edge to the incongruous conditions Mexican immigrant youth reported in their neighborhoods: they were comforted by a familiar tongue, but threatened by other Latina/o ethnic groups.

Outside of their neighborhoods, however, Mexican youth were overwhelmed the sheer size, organization and language of the city. Unfamiliar with the layout of the city, but more importantly, unable to speak English, they reported that their first and current days in the city were difficult, as they got lost and were unable to understand what other people were saying. At first, relatives would meet them, so that they would not get lost, but eventually, the youth had to navigate themselves around the city and in several cases, found themselves lost. Finding themselves in a new city shaped differently, not only by geography, but also by language limits the ability of the study youth to maneuver themselves in the city.

Narciso recalled arriving to the city and being unsettled by not only the magnitude of the city, but also its pace.

Narciso: [Talk to me about when you arrived here in New York, how were you?] Disoriented, because nothing was how I had thought. [Like what?] The way of life. [Platicame sobre cuando llegaste aqui a Nueva York, como estabas?] Desorientado, porque nada era como yo pensaba. [Como que?] La forma de vivir, edificios tan grandes.

Diego also recalled being very uncomfortable as he arrived in New York. Unable to speak the language, he could not understand what people were telling him nor could he speak back. Unlike Mexico where everyone is the same, or “todos son iguales” and speaks his language, Spanish, everyone was different in New York, and he was unable to speak or understand anything.

Diego: Well, when I arrived here, I felt very uncomfortable, because there are a lot of people here, well, different, here you see everything, many people here as a change to what is in Mexico, well everyone is the same, well we all speak the same and all, and here, well

you arrive and the first is that you do not understand, you cannot understand the language of here and oh, it is bigger here, you arrive, and you cannot, this people tell me this thing, but what do they tell me? Nothing. There can, well, the change most important that I see, that yes it is difficult, I did not understand anything.

Pues cuando yo llegue aca, yo sentia muy incomodo, porque hay mucha gente aca, bueno, diferente, aqui ves de todo, mucha gente aca en cambio de que en Mexico, pues todos somos iguales, pues todos hablamos iguales y todo, y aca, pues llegues y el primero es que no entiendes, no puedes hablar el idioma de aca, y ay, esta la mas grande de aca, llegues, y no se puede, este gente me dice esta cosa, pero que me dicen? Nada. Hay puedo, bueno, el cambio mas importante que yo vi, que si es difiçil yo no entendia nada.

Julio also recalled his first days in New York. He remembered not only getting lost geographically, but, like Diego, also being lost linguistically. Not possessing linguistic capital that could be exchanged easily in New York City, he was unable to understand or communicate with others. This proved to be especially challenging at his job, as his boss did not speak Spanish and he did not speak English.

Julio: Well, the first day that I arrived, I could not find [it/myself], the majority of the people speak English and I did not know how to answer them, I only knew how to speak Spanish, and where I began to work, my boss was Chinese, and spoke only English.

Bueno, el primer dia que yo llegue, no me hallaba, porque la mayoria de la gente hablan ingles y yo no sabia como contestarlos, yo no mas sabia hablar espanol, y donde yo empece a trabajar, el quien era mi patron, era chino, y hablaba puro ingles.

In the case of Pedro, he vividly recalled how, not knowing the spatial organization of the city, the routes of the subway system or the language, he would find himself lost in the subway system for hours. Unfamiliar with the spatial, East-West organization of the city or the subway lines, unable to read signs and communicate in English, he spent most of the morning following his second all night work shift finding his way back home. He tried to obtain help from Mexicans he encountered on the street, but without knowing that streets differed by whether or not they were located on the west or east side of New York, their assistance was of little use. Eventually, he remembered the layout of the city, a layout he had seen in pictures his cousin had shown him

on postcards, and he knew he had to travel west to get home. Afraid to get lost in Central Park, he remained on roads that cut across the park.

Pedro: The second day, they went to leave me, but they did not go to bring me, and since I got out [of work] at six in the morning, I went in, like at four in the afternoon, no, at eight at night and I got out at six the morning, and since I took the train that same day, and I got lost, and then I was about to get the train, and then I took another train, that I should not have taken, and then I got off, and then I got the wrong train, I arrived to 42nd, and I got [the train] to go to Queens, but I did not go all the way to Queens, I got off in Grand Central, and I got the six train, and I went to the other side, the East side, on the other side was 106, and there, I got off, and I asked a Mexican, on 42nd, well, why don't we get off at there at 42, we got off on one side, but we got off because it was Grand Central, but I got off at Times Square, but I did not know anything, since it was my second day, and well, I, because I tried to speak with a person and they did not understand, and I encounter a Mexican, well, and I asked him and then I asked him where the train that went all the way to 103 passed by, and he asked me "but on what side?," and I told him to just tell me to 103, but he tells me, ,but I live on the other side, and I told him to go, and we went to a stop going to Queens, and then we got on the six train, and there, already getting the six train, if you are going to get off here, but I saw the train and I got off, when I got off, it was not there, but I don't know, but and I had a photo that my cousin took to me, of Manhattan, and then, more or less, I got the idea of how was Manhattan, and because of that I had the idea of how was Manhattan, and then I got off, and there no, well, I thought that it was on the other side, and I crossed the park, but I did not go into the park, since my brother-in-law told me that it was large, and I would get lost, and I did not want to go through, but I did, I crossed the park and then I got out on 100th street, and then, it was when I got out, all the way straight, I walked one block, that is when I arrived just at the door of the building, I said that I already arrived.

El segundo día, me fueron a dejar, pero no iba por me para traer, y como yo salía como a las seis de la mañana, entraba, como a las cuatro de la tarde, no, ,a las ocho de la noche y yo salía a las seis de la mañana, y como yo tome el tren eso mismo día, me perdi, y luego en el tren me iba agarrar, y luego yo agarre el otro tren, que no debería agarrar, y luego, me baje, y luego agarre mal, llegue a las 42, y me agarre el de ir a Queens, pero no llegue hasta Queens, en Grand Central, yo me baje, y me agarre el tren seis, y fue al otro lado, al East Side, para del otro lado para 106, y allí me baje, y yo me pregunte a un Mexicano, en el 42, bueno porque no nos baja allí en el 42, nos baje en algun lado, pero salimos porque era Gran Central, pero por el Times Square, yo me bajia, pero yo no sabia nada, como era mi segundo día, y pues, yo me, porque trate de hablar con una persona y no entiende, y encuentre un Mexicano, pues, y yo le pregunte, y luego le pregunte donde pasara el tren que llega hasta el 103, y me pregunte, "pero a que lado?," le dije nada mas dime para 103, pero el me dije, pero yo vivo para el otro lado, y me dijo que vete, y ya fuimos a una parada, llendo a Queens, y luego subimos al tren seis, y ya llegando al tren seis, si vas a bajar aca, pero yo vi el tren, y me sali, cuando salia, no era allí, pero no se, pero y tenia un foto, que mi primo me llevo de Manhattan, y ya mas o menos, me daba el idea de cómo era Manhattan, y por eso yo tenia el idea de cómo era Manhattan, y luego yo Sali allí, y yo no, pues yo pense que era en el otro lado, y cruce el parque, pero no meti al parque, como mi cunado me ha dicho que es muy grande, y si me perdía, y no queria pasar, pero pase, atravesé el

parque y luego sali como en la calle 100, ,y luego es cuando Sali, todo derecha, yo camine una cuadra, ya es cuando yo llegue casi a la puerta del building, ya dije que ya llegue.

Not knowing the language limited the youth's behaviors beyond going to work and led to feelings of discomfort when they found themselves in spaces where Spanish was not spoken.

Living here already for three years, and having completed one English course, Carolina found that she still was hesitant to go downtown for leisure.

Carolina: I hardly go out, there are times that I do go out, but to go downtown, to go to 42nd, but it is a little difficult since one does not know much English, you can't go around/walk around.

Casi yo no salgo no me, hay veces que si salgo, pero para ir para abajo, para irme a 42, pues es poco dificil como uno no habla mucho ingles, no puedes andar.

Immigrating and arriving to New York is a significant spatial and linguistic disruption in the lives of Mexican immigrant youth. The entire city is a quagmire to them, especially during their first days of arrival, and their movements are severely restricted. Immediately, the youth are thrust, alone, into a foreign city and forced to figure out/cognitively and physically learn how they will live/get around in this city. Highly unsettling, sometimes master this significant hurdle/test, at least spatially.

While over time the youth may become more comfortable and familiar with the city, their limited linguistic proficiency continues to limit their maneuvers, especially if unrelated to work/search for work. Restricted to spaces where they can best communicate, and, as discussed later, their worksites, the Mexican youth have little interaction with linguistically different spaces and neighborhoods, unless related to work. For the most part, as has been discussed in scholarly literature examining ethnic enclaves, acting on these discomforts may lead to their refusal to leave their Spanish-speaking neighborhood for reasons other than work. With their movements limited to their Spanish-speaking neighborhoods, they may create their own [linguistic] ethnic trap, exposed only to the institutions and actors in these neighborhoods. This becomes more

significant to those living in areas in which only limited services and resources exist, especially for youth. Additionally, these areas usually only possess low-wage work so the only opportunities and examples youth see, if they spend most of their times in these spaces, are not ones that can lead to social mobility. By avoiding other areas in the city, they may never observe contradictions to this “normality, nor will they assume positions so that may join other social networks where they can obtain social capital leading to other forms of information. As seen later in the case of Pedro, this section, and Herminda in Section II, the ability to observe contradictions and acquire social capital outside of their families and neighborhoods assists in accessing educational fields, at the very least.

In New York City, Mexican immigrant youth tend to befriend or resume friendships with other Mexicans, who, although are older, share similar characteristics. Mexican youth who do not enroll in traditional high schools belong to social networks comprised predominantly of slightly older, unaccompanied, single non school-going Mexicans. By unaccompanied and single, I am describing immigrants who are in New York either alone, are with their parents, aunts and uncles and/or siblings or in some cases, if possessing wives and children, they are in Mexico. These individuals, mostly men in the case of males, and females in the case of the females, shared the same social locations and had similar schooling histories in Mexico and in the United States. Additionally, they were employed in similar jobs in New York City.

When asked to name their three closest friends in New York City, most of the non-school-going youth named slightly older Mexican friends, with the greatest difference in age being fourteen years older. These friends were also unaccompanied, and had similar years of formal schooling, in Mexico, as they did, and were working in unskilled jobs.

Their friends possessed approximately the same average years of schooling as their

friends, between one to two more years, and in some instances the same. In Mexico, the highest year of schooling any of these youth's friends had attained was the first year of *Bachiller*. In the United States, only one youth reported having friends who had taken English as a Second Language classes.

Most of the Mexican youth who had taken English as a Second Language classes showed similar characteristics as the non-school-going youth. They also reported having friends whose ages ranged from same age to twelve years older than the study youth. Among these friends, the level of formal education attained was slightly higher than their non school-going youth. In Mexico, many of their friends had completed *preparatoria* in Mexico. In the United States, youth possessed more friends who had taken English as a Second Language classes. In some cases, it had been these friends, who were also their relatives, who had encouraged and accompanied the youth to enroll in English as a Second Language classes.

Discussed separately in this section only to highlight the differences in friends' enrollment in English classes between the two youth, in all other factors, the youth's friendship networks are similar. Across these two groups, the youth are all friends with older, single [in New York] Mexicans whose lives closely resemble their own. The youth's friends have left families behind, both parental and married, have completed low levels of education in Mexico, and now in New York, also have low levels of educational attainment. The youth who attend English courses reported having more friends who had taken English classes, while the opposite was true for the non school-going youth. Their friends had remained outside of schools. Having friends who had taken English classes, however, made a difference in the lives of Mexican youth as those youth whose friends had gone to English schools possessed knowledge about the classes and in some cases encouraged and attended English classes with them.

Being embedded in these older friendship networks lead youth to continue along their trajectory of acting in “adult” ways, avoiding any real challenge to their orientations and practices, either directly by confrontation, or indirectly, by observing their friends behave differently from them. Additionally, because these friends are adults with low levels of education who are also employed in similar jobs as the youth, the social capital that they are able to provide youth with is only useful in similar social locations and in existing labor queues. At best, these friends can provide them with information and recommendations for low paying jobs, and information and motivation to enroll in English classes, but they are unable to provide them with alternative models of being or resources that may enable their acquisition of higher positions, in either the labor market [better work conditions] or educational field [high school].

Leisure Time in the Lives of Non Traditional School-Going Mexican Immigrant Youth

In discussions of mainstream adolescence in the United States, researchers have claimed that adolescents spend most of their (waking) time engaged in leisure activities (Czikszentmihalyi, et al., 1993; Mahoney and Stattin, 2000). These blocs of time are defined as the time outside of school hours where youth can freely choose their activities. More recently, there have been changes, however, in expectations about these time periods: supplementing long periods of time relaxing, hanging out with their similarly-aged friends and peers, is the accelerating phenomenon of highly regulated and scheduled time: tutoring, music and sports lessons, etc. (Zeijl, et al., 2002).

These discussions are highly classed, with sociologists not only making assumptions about school-going, but also about the adolescents’ possession and availability of leisure time, and also about the effects of an absence of leisure time on youths’ behaviors (Mahoney and Stattin, 2002). Youth who possess leisure time are those who have few if any obligations to

their households. Rather this shift from unstructured to structured leisure time is most reflected in the lives of well-resourced families, where adults can afford, both economically and temporally to enroll their children in these activities (Mahoney and Stattin, 2002; Zeijl, et al., 2001).

In the lives of the study Mexican immigrant youth, however, dissimilarities exist in the ways they conceptualize leisure time, including when it occurs and what activities the youth engage in during this time. For one, youth define leisure time not in relation to school, but in relation to their employment, occurring mostly on their day off. Additionally, because of the particularities of their participation in the labor market field, i.e., their long work hours and six to seven day work weeks, non-traditional school-going Mexican youth discussed not only having very little free time, if any, but also spending their free-time very differently from mainstream adolescents, as well as their traditional Mexican school-going counterparts. These youth spent their days engaged in personal domestic chores, including doing their laundry and cleaning their rooms, as well as calling home. Very different from the ways conceptualized in mainstream literature, as well as by their traditional school-going counterparts, these youth experienced very limited free time that rarely occurred outside their homes, much less their rooms, in New York.

Many of the youth plainly stated that they did not have any time for leisure. Many of the youth reported working six to seven days a week and twelve hours a day. With such long weeks and days, they really were unable to engage in active leisure activities. Most times, these youth used their day off to just rest.

Julio: [Okay, do you have free time?] Sometimes, well, this time that I have worked, sometimes I work the seven days.

[Okay, tienes tiempo libre?] A veces, bueno, este tiempo que yo ha trabajado, a veces trabajo los siete dias.

Likewise, Teofilo does not count on having free time during the week. If he does, however, he takes advantage of the time off to rest.

Teofilo: If I have free time, during that time, usually I rest.

Si tengo tiempo libre, durante este tiempo, usualmente yo me descansa .

Even if youth own devices which they could play, such as video games, they are usually too exhausted to use them. When Mexican youth go home at night, they are often too tired to do anything but bathe, eat, watch a little television and go to sleep. In the case of Narciso, even though he owned video games, after work, he no longer had the desire to play games, or much else for that matter. Any activity requiring movement or thought is simply too exhausting.

Narciso: [And like video games?] Ah, yes, I have video games, I do not know the names, but I do have them at home, I hardly play them. [Why not?] Because I get home from work and the act of playing doesn't interest me, no more.

[Y como juegos de video?] Ah si, tengo juegos de video, no se los nombres, pero si tengo en la casa, casi no juego. [Porque no?] Porque llego del trabajo y ya no me traiga el hecho de jugado, ya no.

If they engaged in other activities besides resting, these activities had little to do with fun and took place close to home. Rather, most of the youth reported spending their free time engaging in personal domestic chores, including cleaning their rooms, doing their own laundry, and going shopping. Oftentimes, this free time was also used by youth to call their homes and in fewer cases, their friends in Mexico. Rarely did the youth discuss leisure activities such as playing soccer or hanging out with their friends.

Manuel: [What do you do in your free time?] Well, I arrange my room and the bathroom, and I have to wash my clothes...talk with my mama.

[Que haces tu en tu tiempo libre?] Pues yo arregla mi cuarto y el bano, y tengo que lavar mi ropa...hablar con mi mama.

Likewise, Narciso discussed taking care of personal chores during his days off.

Narciso: I go to wash clothes, and all of my time goes there, already because time goes by rapidly during the day...sometimes I go out to buy, there in Manhattan, or in Queens, sometimes yes, and sometimes no.

Voy a lavar la ropa, y hay va todo mi tiempo ahí, ya, porque el tiempo se va rápido al día... a veces salgo a comprar, por hay en Manhattan, o por Queens, a veces sí, y a veces no.

Some youth reported engaging in activities that are more associated with adolescence and leisure, such as downloading and playing music or playing on the computer. Still however, the youth remained in their homes, and spent little leisure time outside. Both Marco and Jose Luis described staying at home on days off, passing the time by chatting online or downloading music.

Marco: [Sometimes I go out, sometimes I stay at home...I go to buy things, get to know more, play on the computer, watch the television, or many times just put on music alone.]
[A veces salgo, a veces quedo en mi casa...voy a comprar cosas, conocer mas, juego en la computadora, ver el tele, o muchas veces no mas pongo musica solamente.]

Likewise, Jose Luis spent his days off on his computer or talking with friends.

Jose Luis: The majority of my free days, I pass in the house, downloading music from the internet, talking on the telephone, or chatting.

La mayor parte [de mis días libres] le pase en la casa, bajando musica del Internet hablando por telefono, o chateando.

These Mexican youth's discussions of leisure time counter Western discussions of how time is spent during adolescence. They are devoid of any discussion about interacting with other social institutions, aside from work, or with other similarly-aged peers. Rather, their discussions of free time center around not only their homes and rooms, but also around what mainstream adolescence would probably call chores. In the few instances where "pure" leisure is discussed, Mexican youth discuss engaging in activities that do not take them outside of their homes or rooms – playing music or on their computers. Interestingly enough, it is also during their leisure time when they visibly/concretely act out their transnational lives, as well as allow their parents/relatives back home to participate as well. It is during their day off that they call home, speaking with their parents and relatives so that they may be updated about goings-on at home, and they, at least orally and cognitively, may be transported across national borders.

The Life Course and Mexican Immigrant Youth in New York City

In Hiding: How age impacts Mexican Youth's activities upon arrival

Many of the youth arrive at ages in which being outside of school is at best, undesirable, and at worst, illegal. During school hours, these youth, for all intents and purposes, should be attending school. Relatives who have been in New York City longer are aware of this, and instead, youth were told to adjust their activities to avoid suspicion of being underage and not in school, or wait before seeking employment. While some youth merely remained out of public sight during school hours, other youth were enrolled into English schools by their parents and/or relatives once they arrived. Eventually, however, usually after a month, the youth were no longer afraid of being detected and either dropped out of classes and/or began to work full-time.

In New York City, youth under the age of sixteen are expected to participate in educational institutions during daylight hours. In New York City, age restrictions defining participation in educational and labor market fields follow stricter age restrictions and enforcement than in Mexico. Between September and June and between the hours of eight in the morning to three in the afternoon, youth up until the age of sixteen or so are expected to participate in the educational field. Being outside of this field, Mexican youth who arrive with the idea of working were aware of these laws and practices, either prior to immigration or after, and limited their movements during most of the daylight hours.

After their arrival in New York City, several of the non school-going youth remained out of both the labor market and the educational field for approximately one month. During this month, the youth stayed at their relatives' homes while they gained their bearings and rested from the grueling journey. This resting period, however, coincided with the New York City school calendar and some of youth's relatives feared that the youth would be arrested if they

were seen out on the streets during school hours. Mexican youth, then, participating in neither the labor market nor in schooling, were forced to stay indoors between the hours of eight and three o'clock, so that they would remain out of sight and out of the reach of truant officers and others. Several of the youth recalled being bored and eventually gathered the courage to go outside during these hours to seek employment.

Marco was one such youth. Arriving in New York in January 2008, Marco described his first month in New York City much like being on vacation [**For me it was like being on vacation/Para mi, era como estar en vacaciones**]. At first, however, he was forbidden to go outside during the day. He would not go outside until after three in the afternoon for fear that the police would see him and arrest him.

Marco: “I did not go out to the street until after three o'clock in the afternoon. If the police would see me, they were going to get me.”

“No salía a la calle hasta despues de las tres de la tarde. Si la policia me veía, iba agarrar.”

Marco recalled how he had to stay in the house all day long watching televisión, where he soon became bored. “**All day, bored...watching televisión**/Todo el día aburrido...viendo la tele.”

Other youth were forced to participate in the educational field, in informal schooling, for fear that they would not be able to immediately participate in the labor market field. In the cases of Diego and Jose Luis, Diego's uncle and Jose Luis' father were concerned that they would be arrested if out on the streets. As a result, they enrolled the young males in English as a Second Language classes so that they could be mobile and be engaged in an appropriate field, if not the correct institution.¹⁴²

Diego: When I arrived here, I could not work, I could not, I arrived here when I was sixteen years, I could not work, I did not try to do it either, work. I entered to study, one

¹⁴² As discussed in Chapter 4, the age requirement to participate in English as a Second Language class in most schools is age 18. Due to lax regulations, however, these schools, according to the youth, do not check closely to ensure proper minimum age. Luis was only sixteen when he attended this school, and Jose Luis was even younger, age fifteen.

day. I entered into an English school, here, and there I was like three months, no more. [How did you know about that school?] Well, my uncle took me there.

Cuando yo llegue aqui, yo no podia trabajar, yo no podia, yo llego aqui cuando yo tenia los diez y seis anos, no se podia trabajar, yo no trate de hacerlo tampoco, trabajar. Yo me metio para estudiar, aquel dia. Me metio en una escuela de ingles aca, y alli yo estaba como tres meses, nada mas. [Y como supiste de la escuela de ingles?] Bueno, mi tio me llevo alli.

Likewise, Jose Luis' first days in New York were also spent indoors, as his father did not allow him to roam around outside during the daylight hours either. Unwilling to enroll into traditional, full-time high school, he and his father negotiated and he entered into English courses.

Jose Luis: No, I stayed there, I did not know, nor could I go out, maybe to drink a coffee, etc., no? I stayed there with my cousin, and what do we do, no? Us, staying there. Listening to music, well there, nothing more, or like, we could not even go out to drink a coffee, go around over there, to the park. The first days seemed very difficult for me, but when I started to go to school, I began to pass the time.

No, yo me quedaba ahi, yo no conocia, ni me podia salir, quizar tomar un café, etc., no? Yo me quedaba ahí con mi primo, y que hacemos, no? Nosotros quedando ahí. Escuchando musica, pues ahí, nada mas, osea, ni podriamos salir, a tomar un café, darnos una vuelta para alla, al parque. Los primeros dias parecian muy dificil para mi, pero cuando empeze de ir a la escuela, yo ya pase el tiempo.

Age restrictions associated with participation in the educational and labor market fields in New York City cause Mexican youth and their families to be nervous about the youth's activities upon arrival. Some Mexican youth who arrive to work stay out of sight at first, avoiding truancy charges as well as being suspect of working underage. Eventually, however, youth, bored with staying indoors and/or of taking classes, and feeling the desire to do what they immigrated to do, gather courage and leave their houses to find their way into the labor market field even if they are underage.

General Ideas about the Life Course in New York

Reflecting the correspondence of particular life course categories with age parameters, or more specifically, adolescence with particular age parameters, most Mexican youth believed themselves to be adolescents in New York City. Other fewer, non-traditional school-going

Mexican youth responded that they believed themselves to be either adults, young or otherwise, or transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. However, upon further interrogation of what these named life course categories meant to the youth, their responses revealed a much more complex reality in which their lives also resembled those associated with adults.

According to the youth who believed that they were adolescents, they were not yet adults because of their self-proclaimed uncertainty about their decisions and **ways of being**, or *maneras de ser*, and their lack of responsibilities. In spite of having been certain in their unaccompanied immigration, and in their exits from and absence from age-appropriate behaviors and activities, in Mexico and the United States, namely living with one's parents and guardians, full-time traditional school, and financial dependence, as well as their own support of their families back home, they believed that they were still living experiences and acting in ways that, according to them, characterized adolescence. In spite of engaging in the aforementioned behaviors, Hilaria and Narciso, both age 17, believed that they were still adolescents due to other behaviors and the things they did. Narciso elaborates on what this may mean – doing things without thinking is one act that youth engaged in that contributed to their beliefs that they were still adolescents.

Narciso: Well adolescent. [And why?] Because I still think like a child, I do not think things, sometimes I do things without thinking.

Pues adolescente. [Y porque?] Porque todavia pienso como nino, no pienso las cosas, a veces yo hago las cosas sin pensar.

In the case of Gabriel, he described the advancement through the life course as a progression of worry, or when one moved from worrying about nothing as a child, to having multiple worries as an adult. Gabriel believed that he was an adolescent because he was only beginning to worry about some things, like working *and* having fun, but not other things, like a family.

Gabriel: [And why an adolescent?] More than anything for the things, thoughts that I now have in my mind, the thoughts, they are not like before, before, I did not worry about anything, I did not worry about anything, no, only to play, and now, well, I worry about some things, to work, to have fun, and that.

[Y porque un adolescente?] Mas que nada por las cosas, pensamientos que tengo ahorita en mi mente, los pensamientos, no son como antes, antes no me preocupaba por nada, no me preocupaba por nada, no, no mas para jugar, y ahorita, pues preocupes por algunas cosas por trabajar, por divertirme y eso.

Jose Luis also believed that adolescence was a time when one worked, but still engaged in some leisure. Adolescence was the time when both of these activities occurred simultaneously, although work was definitely his primary activity and of primary importance to him. When he would become adult, he thought, all leisure would disappear.

Jose Luis: Because I like to goof off, go with my friends on the weekends, go around there a little like, how can you say, a little trouble, you could say well, to always be responsible in the work, that is first, but outside of that, go relax in the street.

Porque me gusta hechar relajo, voy con mis amigos los fines de semana, andar ahí un poco de, como puede decir, un poquito vagito, te puede decir pues siempre estar responsable en el trabajo, eso es el primero pero afuera de eso, andarme de relajo en la calle.

These youth, however, believed that there was no contradiction between being an adolescent and being financially independent. In the case of Lalo, age eighteen, he believed that he was an adolescent *because* he was financially independent.

Lalo: [What do you consider yourself in this moment?] Adolescent [laughs]. [And why?] Because I am, well right now I am earning my own money, paying my own rent.

[Como te consideras tu ahorita en este momento?] Adolescente [laughs]. [Y porque?] Porque yo estoy, pues ahorita estoy ganando mi propio dinero, pagando mi propia renta.

In many cases, the Mexican youth shied away from calling themselves adults because they most associated adulthood with marriage and reproduction. Because he had not yet achieved a particular marker of the transition to adulthood, family formation, nor did he feel prepared to do so, Manuel, age 18, believed that he was an adolescent.

Manuel: Mmmm, I consider myself like still an adolescent because I am not like an adult, for [inaudible] a larger responsibility. Because I say, since I still lack, like to form a family, I still lack, I am not prepared for that, and for that I consider myself an adolescent.

Mmm, yo me considere como adolescente todavia porque yo no estoy como un adulto para [inaudible] una responsabilidad mas grande. Porque yo digo, como todavia me falta, como para formar una familia, todavia me falta, no estoy preparado por eso, por eso me considera un adolescente.

The remaining half of the youth believed themselves to be adults in New York City. They associated adulthood with their particular participation in the household, labor market and educational fields.

Carolina believed that she became an adult even before leaving Mexico. Independently deciding to immigrate to New York, she felt that she was entering into adulthood. She also imagined how her life would be in New York, as an independent single woman and concluded such.

Carolina: [And since when could we say that you have felt like an adult? Since what age or event?] Since I took the decision to come over here, because one time, leaving, or, crossing to this country, I realized here, once arriving here, there was no one telling me “go to school, I will pay everything, I will pay your expenses, do not worry, depend on me.” I believe that the act of depending on someone makes you feel like more dependent and it makes you less in the concept of an adult.

[Y desde cuando podemos decir has sentido como un adulto? Desde que edad o evento?] Desde que tome esa decision de venir para aca, porque una vez, dejando osea, cruzando a este pais me dio cuenta aquí, una vez llegando aquí, no habia nadie diciendome, “vete a la escuela, yo te pago todo, yo te pago tus gastos, no te preocupes, depende en mi.” Creo que el hecho de depender en alguien te hace sentir mas dependiente y te hace menos en todo el concepto de un adulto.

Other youth believed that although they had arrived in New York City identifying as adolescents, they had become adults while living in New York City. Pedro and Samuel were two such youth. Pedro believed that one became an adult upon undergoing hard experiences through which one learns and moves forward. He also partially explained the transition from adolescent to adult as one of anger management, where an adolescent is brash and angers quickly, and an adult is calmer.

Pedro: [And why do you think that you arrived as an adolescent and why do you think there was a change?] Because I did not know anything, well, I knew a little, but not really like taking how people are into account, or like, a woman, or that, adolescence, that you

know, you want nothing more than to have fun, you get mad for whatever thing, and now, I think that now I am calmer. [But why do you think you have had this change?] I have had various hard experiences, that is what makes you feel, that makes you feel stronger, you go learning things.

[Y porque crees que llegaste como adolescente y porque crees que habia el cambio (a adulto)?] Porque no sabia nada, bueno sabia poco, pero no de veras como tomando en cuenta la gente como son, osea, una mujer, o eso, la adolescencia, eso sabes, nada mas quieres ir a divertirse, te enojas con cualquier cosa, y ahora ya, yo creo que yo estoy ahorita en siento mas tranquilo. [Pero porque crees que has tenido esta cambio?] Ha tenido varias experiencias duras, eso es que te vuelva que te sientas, que te hace sentir mas fuerte, vas aprendiendo mas cosas.

Samuel, age nineteen, had lived in New York City for approximately one year and eight months.

During this time, he believed that he had gone from being an adolescent to being an adult. Even though he himself was from an area just outside of Mexico City, he believed that living his life in New York City, alone, without anywhere to go or to depend on, has made him into an adult.

Samuel: Well, already, already, I think about things differently. When I came from Mexico, I still thought like an adolescent, but already with living here, I know about living life, and in this little time that I have here, I know how to live life, and when moments are good and when moments are bad, and like that, like I know that there are good moments and bad moments, like that. No, one learns to put up (with things), and how one says, since I am alone here, to where do I run?

Pues ya, ya, pienso en las cosas diferente. Cuando yo me vine de Mexico, yo todavía pensaba como un adolescente, pero ya con vivir aquí, ya sabe de vivir la vida, y en este poquito tiempo tengo aquí, se como es de vivir la vida, y cuando son los momentos buenos, y cuando son los momentos malos, y asi como yo se que hay momentos buenos yo se que hay momentos malos y asi. No, uno aprende aguantarse, y como uno dice, como yo que soy solo aquí, a donde corro?

Echoing Carolina's thoughts about independence, other youth believed that they were adults because they were in New York alone and had to support themselves. In spite of his young age, Armando was one such youth. Arriving at age seventeen and residing in New York for nine months, he believed that he had already become an adult not only because he depended on himself, but also because his parents were depending on him as well.

Armando: Well, I think that I'm already an adult. [Why?] Because of the weight (on self) that I have, no? Because of the responsibility. [Explain a little bit more]. Well, I have to pay my way, nobody pays for me, I have to help my parents, and all of that. I already consider myself an adult even if I don't have the years. Simply because I have, no one helped me, I have to pay for my own things here, no? I have to buy my own clothes, mmm,

rent, the light bill, food, all of that...things that I did not do in Mexico, all that I earned I would give it to them, but if I needed something, I would ask for it. I felt like a child over there. And here I don't because of the responsibility is on me, I have to watch out for myself, and also for my parents.

In the case of immigration, the Mexican youth were divided about whether or not the act of immigrating to New York City, by itself, had made them feel like adults. Whereas approximately half of the youth responded that it had not, the other half of the youth believed that immigrating had made them feel like adults. Of the naysayers, Cesar believed that because he saw all ages of people crossing the border, including the elderly as well as young children, immigration was ageless. Gabriel also had not believed that immigrating had made him feel like an adult. Instead, he felt like an adolescent, as he viewed the crossing like an adventure.

Gabriel: Yes, well, when I came, [it was] like an adventure more than anything, no? Like an adolescent who wants to live an adventure.

Si, pues, cuando yo vine como una aventura mas que nada, no? Como un adolescente que quiere vivir una aventura.

All of the youth, however, believed that they were treated like adults in the particular activities, and/or fields in which they participated in New York City. Immigrating, working, earning money, sending money home and living independently in New York City, both as a series of events and standalones, were all acts that most of the youth engaged in which they felt like adults, even if overall, they did not believe themselves to inhabit that particular life course category. In addition, those youth who had reentered the education field to take English as a Second Language courses, reported being treated and feeling like adults in these classrooms.

Mexican youth use different criteria to assess which life course category they believe themselves to be currently experiencing in New York City. Youth who responded that they believed themselves to be adolescents drew from affective, intrinsic indicators. Mexican youth who believed themselves to be adults drew from extrinsic experiences they have had to undergo

as independents, as well as from changes in their responses to these experiences since they were in New York City. Without their parents, these youth discussed being both financially as well as emotionally independent and having to adjust to these realities, material and affective. It was undergoing these adjustments, in addition to the realities, that made them identify as adults.

Changes in Family Structures

Upon immigration, most of the non-traditional school-going youth left the homes of their parents and/or grandparents behind and joined their older relatives' homes: either siblings, aunts and uncles, and/or cousins. This restructuring disrupted not only an emotional comfort and trust the youth enjoyed living with their nuclear families (parents and siblings) but also triggered their forced emotional independence. In some cases, this restructuring leads to conflicts and misunderstandings between relatives, as the youth are sometimes sexually harassed by non-blood relatives, are treated like "children" but still expected to contribute to the households like adults, and subject to expectations that conflict with their former household roles back home in Mexico.

Upon her arrival in New York City, Hilaria lived with her brother-in-law in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Not related to him by blood, and not as close to her as one of her brothers, she felt strange living with him and accepting his help.

Hilaria: I lived with my brother-in-law, after, he helped me, well, yes, it was something difficult, because he was not my brother like that, so then, it is something strange to be far from your family.

Vivia con mi cunado, despues el era que me ayudaba, pues si, era una cosa tal vez difcil, porque no era un hermano así, entonces es algo extraño de estar lejos de mi familia.

Carolina frankly discussed problems she was having with her sister's husband. He had propositioned her sexually, and she had not known what to do. After telling her other sister, she believed that the best thing to do was leave and live with her aunt and uncle. She had not told her sister, her brother-in-law's wife, and did not intend to.

In some cases, while the youth felt like adults because of their full-time entry in the labor market, they had expected to be treated differently at home because of their ages and birth ordered roles in their families. They soon found that this was not the case. Practically overnight, the youth go from living under their parents' roofs and financial dependence (and in many cases, in spite of their economic contributions to the household) to living as family boarders, managing their own monies with the expectation that they are to act less as a family member and more as a boarder.¹⁴³ In these cases, youth who relied on their parents' household organization which was both gendered and collective, with multiple, differently gendered members performing different chores in Mexico are now expected to engage in the performance of their own chores, regardless of gender, including cooking and washing their own clothes.

This restructuring, or more specifically, living in family structures that perhaps were no longer "headed," but instead made less hierarchical due to their paying of rent rather than age, led some of the youth to feel more like adults. This was the case with many of the youth, as they reported feeling like adults because they were living away from their parents and managing their own finances. In the case of Narciso, he was living with and paying rent to his older brothers, but he still felt like an adult because he no longer depended on his parents to buy his goods. No longer with them, he had only himself to depend on and felt like an adult because of it.

Narciso: Yes, because you already depend on yourself, if you want to buy something, well it comes from yourself, well not any more, from yourself, not like Mexico anymore, when they gave you money for everything, here no, you have to buy it yourself.

Si, porque ya dependes en ti mismo, si quieres comprar eso, pues es de tu mismo, pues ya no, de tu mismo, ya no como Mexico, cuando para todo te dan dinero, aqui no, tu tienes que comprar tu mismo.

¹⁴³ Even in the cases in which youth worked, they reported giving most of their earnings to their parents, only staying with spending money so that their parents would manage the monies [See the cases of Armando; Carolina; etc].

In the cases of non-traditional youth, they are leaving their natal homes to join relatives in New York City. Leaving at least part of their nuclear families behind, they are often joining their older relatives, most who are not immediate family members. In this reconfiguration of family, the youth are leaving the security of their parents and blood siblings, with whom they feel close, to join family members, which, in some cases, the youth have not seen in years, or in some cases, do not know very well. This unfamiliarity may breed discomfort and challenges the youth did not experience in their natal homes. Additionally, although kin, because of their practices in New York, including working and paying rent, the youth may experience an automatic raise in age status and be considered as adults in these new family configurations.

Fields in New York City: Housing

Unaccompanied youth who do not enter into traditional schooling in New York City face a different household field via different living arrangements than youth who arrive and enter into traditional middle or high school. Most of the Mexican youth who arrive in New York City and enter into the labor market are arriving not to join parents, but uncles, aunts, or older siblings who in most cases, are supporting their own families. Although youth are invited by these family members, and in most cases, have had their passages paid for by these family members, the youth are expected to begin paying for rent and their household expenses as soon as possible. Youth who are either expected to or enter directly into traditional schooling are usually joining parents or older siblings who do not expect the youth to work, and are willing to support the youth for the duration of their schooling. Which living arrangements the youth are able to enter into has a significant impact on whether or not youth can or will enter into the labor market field or the educational field, or both.

For those youth who were joining relatives other than their parents, some reported paying rent immediately [as they found work immediately], while others were granted a grace period during which they rested and then eventually looked for work. This grace period ended upon their entry into the labor market field.

Faced with living expenses, including rent, utilities and food, Mexican youth face financial demands that require them to work full-time to pay for these expenses. Most youth reported being charged and paying between \$250 and \$350 dollars a month for rent. All of the non-traditional school-going youth except for Jose Luis, who was living with his father, reported being quite responsible in paying their rent, utilities and food. In most cases, they made these payments to older relatives with whom they were living.

Gabriel: I got there where my uncles lived, and then, after a month, from there, we got our own apartment.[Just your first month, you did not pay rent, nor your food, nothing of that?] No, my uncle was supporting me, the expenses, my uncle.

Llegue alli donde vivia mis tios, y luego, despues de un mes, de alli conseguir nuestro propio departamento. [Solo tu primer mes, no pagaste tu renta, ni tu comida, nada de eso?] No, me estaba manteniendo mi tio, los gastos, mis tio.

When Carolina first arrived in May, she lived with her sisters and was left to rest for a month. After that month, however, her sisters began to urge her to look for work, cleaning houses so she could begin to contribute to the household. Still domestic work, they offered the alternative to take care of her sister's child while she continued to get to know the city.

Carolina: [When did you arrive?] The 22nd or 21st of May. [And when did you begin to work?] In June. My sisters told me to go look for work, but to know a little more of the city, she told me to look to clean a house or take care of a child, or that my sister would work and I would take care of her child while I got to know the city a little more.

[Cuando llegaste?] El 22 o 21 de Mayo. [Y cuando empezaste a trabajar?] En junio. Mi hermanas me decia "ya, buscar trabajo, pero conocia poquito mas la ciudad ella e decia de buscar a limpiara una casa o cuidaba un nino, o que mi hermana trabajaba, y yo le cuidaba su nino mientras conocia poquito mas la ciudad.

After problems with her sister and brother-in-law, however, she moved on to her uncle's home.

At the time of the interview with her she was living with her uncle and his family, including her aunt and cousins. Carolina stated that she was supporting herself, working as well as paying for all of her bills and rent.

Carolina: [And to live there, do you pay rent, utilities?] Yes, yes, yes, I support myself, by myself, and I pay all of the things.

[Y para vivir ahí, pagas renta, útiles?] Si, si, si, yo me mantengo yo sola, trabajo, y pago todas las cosas.

Arriving in New York City on November 19th, Lalo was also able to stay with his uncle for two months, resting, before he looked for and found work. During these two months, his uncle allowed him to stay at his home rent-free. When he found work, he said, he could pay them back.

Lalo: I was resting a for two months and I found a job. [And who did you live with?] With my uncle. [And how did you pay for food?] No, they invited me, that when I worked, I would pay them back, but they did not charge me.

Estaba dos meses cansando, y conseguí un trabajo. [Y viviste con quien?] Con mi tío. [Y como pagaste para tu comida?] No, ellos me invitaron, que cuando yo trabajaba, yo les pagaban, pero no me cobraron.

In a few cases, Mexican youth lived with friends, and in fewer cases, strangers, also paying rent. Felipe lived with a friend in Astoria, and he paid \$300 a month for rent. Samuel had also lived with friends he made at work who became his closest friends, and then he went to live with other friends he made through work, in Brooklyn. He now resided in the Bronx, renting a room.

Samuel: Because each [one of us], I arrived here, and I lived with them [older friends he met through work] until May, of last year. After that, I went with those with whom I went to work (Monticello), I returned, and went to live with some Honduran friends. From there I came over here.

Porque cada quien, yo llegue aquí, y vivi con ellos hasta mayo, del otro año. Después de eso yo me fui con los que fui a trabajar, regrese, y fue a vivir con unos amigos hondureños. De allí vino para acá.

Pedro reported living with strangers, including an older Mexican, with whom, he said, he rarely

spoke and had little in common. After his brother-in-law told him that he had to move out, he looked for a room for rent and had to live with strangers. Living with a stranger was uncomfortable, as one of his roommates, he said, was oftentimes drunk when he arrived home.

Pedro: After, I left [from my brother-in-law's house] because he told us that we could not be three in the same room, well, I looked somewhere else with a man who I did not know. It has not been very comfortable, because it has not been very good because I did not know him, there are times that I did not want to arrive there [go home] because I did not know them, I did not want to talk with them, well, I did talk with them, but only a little, about work, since we were not, well, also I went over there with the other man, but we talked very little, since he drank a lot, when I arrived, he was drunk, we barely talked, only sometimes, sometimes when he was more or less [sober], like daily he was drunk, and we talked, about where we were from, about that and the other.

Despues yo me sali [de la casa de el amigo de mi cunado] porque nos dijo que no podiamos que hacer tres en el mismo cuarto, bueno busque en otro lado con un senor que yo no conocia. No ha sido muy comodo, porque no estado muy bien porque no lo ha conocido, ay veces que no queria llegar alli porque no los conocia no queria platicar con ellos, pues si platicaba con ellos pero solamente muy poquito, sobre el trabajo, como no eramos, bueno tambien fue para ya con el otro senor, pero hablabamos muy poquito, como el tomaba mucho, cuando yo llegaba el estaba borracho, ,casi no platicabamos, nada mas a veces, algunas veces cuando el estaba mas o menos, como diario estaba borracho, y platicabamos, de donde eramos, de eso y el otro.

These Mexican immigrant youth experience a gamut of living situations upon arrival to New York. While some youth may have the security, both emotional and financial, of living with a parent, other youth discuss living in a greater uncertainty, living with strangers, and even relatives whose habits may be bothersome and worrisome. Contrary to common depictions of adolescents who live in relatively stable, comforting and secure households in which they are not depended on for economic support, these living situations demonstrate the insecurity in which these young people live.

Who one lives with also may be the difference between access [and quality access] to particular fields or not. While living with family members may provide youth a cache of resources based on kinship, such as a recommendation for a job, or even support and cash during one's first month of residence in New York City, when youth live with friends and strangers

they may not be able to tap into the same resources, emotional, social and economic. As discussed in Chapter Six, relatives tended to assist the youth the most, something that becomes even more important upon living in New York.

Intersection of Housing Field Conditions and Life Course

The ways in which Mexican immigrant youth participate in the housing field had significant effects on whether or not the youth reported feeling like adults or adolescents. Where and with whom, as well as whether or not and how much youth are contributing to household expenses have much to do with which life course category the youth identify with. For example, Armando discussed earlier in the section, how living independently significantly contributed to youth's feelings of adulthood. Slightly different, in spite of calling herself an adolescent, Hilaria believed that being alone, away from her parents and taking care of herself on her own caused her to feel like an adult. Likewise, Narciso, also a self-proclaimed adolescent, believed that paying for his rent and own expenses made him feel like an adult because he had to take care of himself. This feeling persisted despite his living with [and paying] his older brother.

Non-traditional school-going youth maintain living arrangements where they act more as boarders, paying rent, utilities, and food, either in their families' homes, or as roommates with both friends and strangers. In all cases, however, the youth must pay, oftentimes totaling almost a week's worth of their pay. Regardless of who they were paying their rent to, all of the youth reported that these living arrangements where they had to pay for their housing, made them feel like adults.

Living in Transnational Housing Fields

As discussed in Chapter Six, Mexican youth immigrated with the idea that they would send money back to their households in Mexico. Even prior to immigration, Mexican youth reported

that they would fulfill this obligation, and after immigration, all of the non school-going youth reported that they were either currently, sending money home, intended to send money home, or due to unforeseen financial circumstances, such as unemployment, were currently not sending money home but would resume sending money as soon as they could find employment.

Although in many cases, sending money home could be sporadic and decrease over time, the expectation remained that remittance monies would flow from New York City into the youth's households in Mexico. A matter of obligation, as well as a necessity to their Mexican households, youth were expected to send money home and had observed, prior to their departure, how their older siblings, as well as other relatives had sent money home to their families. This was a learned expected behavior that was not supposed to end, as long as their parents or siblings remained in Mexico. Many times, the start of one's own family would diminish, if not end, the flow of remittances south.

An act of not only their financial independence, the remittances marked the shift of dependence of the household onto the youth. Indeed, Mexican immigrant youth were sending money home in significant amounts. Not considered in mainstream discussions of the transition to adulthood nor emergent adulthood, contribution to the household economy, I believe, demonstrates a movement into adulthood, as now the burden of dependence either shifts, or continues to shift in terms of fiscal support, away from the parents towards the aging youth. Whereas for many youth, this shift began even prior to their immigrations, the dependence may only increase with immigration as the youth is a) no longer in Mexico and able to contribute Mexican earnings to the household, and b) now able to contribute significantly larger amounts of money to the household than when s/he was in Mexico.

These contributions, however, may not be as consistent as one would hope, and largely depend on the youths' employment (or unemployment), living arrangements, and in the cases of some youth, school enrollment, with traditional school enrollment most affecting youth's ability to send money home. The youth reported that these remittances paid for various household needs, including food, their siblings' schooling, as well as what some may deem luxuries, including new homes and savings for their future schooling in Mexico, or future businesses the youth would establish upon their return.

In the case of Armando, he reported sending significant amounts of money home while he was working. Unemployed at the moment, he had not sent home money for two months, but he stated that he would resume sending money home as soon as he was able to.

Armando: Right now, since I have not worked in two months, well the truth is that I am a little broke, I have debts, what I have sent home is very little, no, I have sent maybe eighty, maybe seventy no, because like construction is outside, and sometimes it rains, and I have to stop one day, and no, no, I don't get to work the full five days, I haven't earned that much.[But let's say when you are working full-time, how much do you send home?] When I arrived here, I did the possible to send them right away, and after, and what I gathered in two or three months, one thousand, three hundred, it was because I gathered it just like that, and right away, I sent it.

Cuando yo llegue aca, hizo el posible para mandarles luego luego, y despues, y lo que yo junte en dos o tres meses, mil tres cientos, fue por lo junte no mas asi, y luego luego les mande.

Samuel also reported sending money home, the amount depending on his salary, and whether or not he had been successful that month. In a good month, he could send approximately \$300 home. In a poor month, however, he could only send around \$100.

Samuel: It's that, well, it also depends on the salary. If it goes well for me, then I send them like \$300 dollars. If it goes badly for me, I don't send them more than \$100 dollars.

Es que, luego, depende tambien en el sueldo. Si me va bien, luego yo los mando como \$300 dolares. Si me va mal, nada mas los manda como \$100 dolares.

Likewise, Samuel reported sending money home when things were going well and he was employed. He reported sending money home approximately three times a week; he skipped

sending monies home during the week that his rent was due.

Samuel: [And do you send money over there?] Yes, when I work and it goes well for me, I send them money. [Is it regular, like a particular day each month?] Like that, let's say some three times [a month] because then the week to pay rent arrives, and I cannot send them anything. My mama already knows. And when I do not have work, just two times a month.

[Y mandas dinero para alla?] Si, cuando trabajo y me va bien, yo las mande dinero. [Es regular, como tal día al mes?] Asi, al mes, ponemos como unas tres veces, porque luego llega la semana de pagar renta, y yo nos los puedo mandar nada. Mi mama ya sabe. Y cuando no tengo trabajo, no mas dos veces al mes.

Additionally, the youth reported that their families used their remittances for various activities ranging from basic immediate household needs like food stuffs or to pay for their siblings' schooling, or what some may consider investments, such as the construction of a new home or for savings for the future or future activities that the youth intend to engage in upon their return, including schooling and opening businesses.

In the case of Julio, he responded that his family used the money to buy food to eat.

Julio: [And do you know on what they are using the money?] Well, I know that she [mama] uses it to continue eating and just that.

[Y sabes en que esta usando el dinero?] Pues yo se que ella [mama] la use para seguir comiendo y solo eso.

Narciso's remittances were also being used for not only household needs, but also directly for his sister's education. Unable to complete schooling himself, his parents were using his money to pay for his sister's continued studies.

Narciso: [And are you sending (money) to your home?] Yes, I am sending to my mama and papa. [And how many times?] Every month, every fifteen days, if I don't send every fifteen days, every month. [And for what do they use the money?] For my sister who is studying, for things for the house, if they need.

[Y estas mandando a tu casa?] Si, estoy mandando a mi mama y mi papa. [Y que tantas veces?] Cada mes, cada quince dias, si no lo mando cada quince dias, cada mes. [Y para que usan el dinero?] Para mi hermana que esta estudiando, para cosas de la casa, si necesitan.

Some youth, however, were already thinking of their returns to Mexico and wanted to ensure that they would have improved living conditions, for themselves. This was the case of

Felipe who reported sending money home. When asked why he was working, Felipe responded that not only did he like working, but he was also working so that he could send money home for the construction of his own home.

Felipe: [Why are you working?] Because I like working, and I have to earn money for what I need, to send to my family, to make my house, well...

[Porque estas trabajando?] Porque me gusta trabajar, y tengo que ganar dinero para lo que yo necesito, para mandar a mi familia, para hacer mi casa, pues...

Lastly, Jose Luis reported sending money home so that it could be deposited into his bank account. With dreams of returning and owning his own property and business, he wanted to ensure that he had enough savings to be able to do such when he returned.

Jose Luis: [And do you send money to your home in Mexico?] Yes, I have a little saved here, and a little in Mexico. I have a bank account here, and in Mexico too. [And why are you working?] Eh, because I want to have something, yes, or maybe, what do I know, for when I return to Mexico, buy a lot/land/property, you could say, buy a property, construct a house, well those are my goals, to have a small but comfortable house [in Mexico].

[Y mandas dinero a tu casa en Mexico?] Si, tengo poquito guardado aqui, y poquito en Mexico. Yo tengo aqui mi cuenta de banco aqui, y en Mexico tambien. [Y porque estas trabajando?] Eh, porque yo quiero tener algo, si, osea, que se yo, para cuando yo regrese a Mexico, comprar un terreno, se puede decir, comprar un terreno, construir una casa, pues esos son mis metos, no, de tener una casa chiquita pero comida.

Sending money home on a regular basis, or participating in a transnational household field, however, interferes with the youth's ability to enter into the educational field. Some youth believed that one could not go to school and send money home to their parents at the same time. Going to school, in his eyes, would limit the youth's ability to earn a sufficient salary to pay for one's housing in New York, as well as send money home. This is the case for traditional school-going youth, as seen in Section II of this chapter.

Felipe: [Can you work and go to school at the same time?] For one, you cannot support your mother and father and go to school.

Por alguno, no puede mantener su madre o su padre, y irse a la escuela.

Perhaps the most concrete, visible and economically significant ways that Mexican youth engage in a transnational household field is by sending money home to their parents and sometimes, grandparents. Non-traditional school-going youth reported sending hundreds of dollars back home a month, amounts that are not only economically significant in the United States, but also in their Mexican households and communities. Earmarked for household expenses, as well as for investments that will facilitate their returns, these remittances not only allow the Mexican youth to remain active participants in their families back home, but they also honor the expectations that their parents [and communities] have of them as they immigrate to the United States. Choosing to work and support their families back home, or engage in transnational household fields, Mexican youth are well aware that this choice effectively prevents them from entering the educational field full-time.

Intersection of the Life Course and Household Contributions

Most of the non-traditional school-going youth stated that sending money home to their families made them feel like adults. Sending money home to their families made the youth feel responsible, as if they were taking care of their parents, as Armando previously stated. Samuel sent money home to his family so that neither his mother nor his family would have to work. In addition to making him feel good, he also felt like an adult.

Samuel: [Send money home to your family?] Yes because to me, I have always liked to see, no, I like to see that not my mama nor my sister work, I have always liked to give them money, not that they give to me, that makes me feel good. [Okay, but good, but like an adult or man, or just feel good?] Well, it makes me feel good, and it makes me feel like an adult, a responsible person.

[Mandar dinero a tu familia?] Si, porque a mi me siempre me ha gustado ver si, no me gusta ver que ni mi mama trabaja ni mi hermana trabaja, siempre me ha gustado a darles dinero, no que ellos me da a mi, eso me hace sentir bien. [Okay, pero bien, pero como un adulto o un hombre, o no mas sentirse bien?] Pues me hace sentir bien, y si me hace sentir como un adulto, como una persona responsable.

Shifting the foci of financial earnings/dependence to the immigrant child also suggests a shift in life course categories, from child to parent to parent to child, as the youth are also acquiring and fulfilling more responsibilities often associated with adulthood.

Upon immigration, traditional school-going youth in New York City undergo a significant restructuring of the spatial organizations of their families, as well as experiencing significant financial and emotional consequences that accompany these reconfigurations. All but one of these youth reported leaving their parents/or grandparents behind to join either siblings, aunts and uncles, or brother-in-laws in New York City. While the majority of the youth chose to join their extended households, several youth struck it out on their own, living with friends or strangers. All of these living configurations produced emotional disruptions in the youth's lives, as several youth described the discomfort associated with living away from ones' immediate families, as well as negotiating inappropriate behaviors within families and among strangers. Perhaps partly as an emotional buffer to counter the solitude they feel in New York, as well as to support their parents, youth opt to live in transnational households, participating in their households back home by sending remittances to their parents.

These household arrangements also shaped the youth's participation in the labor market and schooling. Regardless of who they lived with, the youth were required to pay for their living expenses, including rent, utilities and food and were expected to participate, albeit financially, back home. Additionally, they are sending money home. To cover all of these expenses, youth were forced to work full-time, as these costs often totaled a week's pay. Charged this much, this expense effectively prevented the youth from entering into traditional schooling.

Fields in New York City: Labor Market

Even if underage, non-traditional school-going Mexican youth enter into a labor market field that is characterized by segmentation (Hudson, 2007). In most cases, non-traditional school-going youth use social capital to enter into this segmented labor market that is divided by citizenship status (Hudson, 2007; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). Even if secondary, this labor market in New York City/United States is an improvement, according to the youth, than that in Mexico. Here, work is found easily and the wages can be “good” for them, even though conditions such as work hours/days are not ideal.

Finding work in New York City

Most of the non-traditional school-going youth reported arriving in New York City and, if they were so inclined, found work immediately. Although some youth did not work immediately, this was mostly by choice, as some youth reported taking a month to recuperate and rest at their families’ homes. Other youth, however, reported finding work within hours after arriving or within a few days. While mostly relying on their family members to help them find employment, some youth used the highly exploitative and expensive employment agencies to find work.

Julio arrived in New York City, unaccompanied, at the age of fifteen. He found employment through his uncle within three days of arriving in New York City.

Julio: [But how many days after arriving here did you find work?] Mmm, like three days. [And how did you get that job?] My uncles got it (for me). They knew where there would be work for me.

[Pero cuantos dias despues de llegar aqui encontraste trabajo?] Mmm, como tres dias. [Y como conseguiste ese trabajo?] Lo conseguieron mis tios. Ellos sabia donde iba ser trabajo para mi.

Likewise, Felipe found work as a food preparer within a week of arriving in New York City. At this job, Felipe would cut vegetables for salads and other dishes.

Felipe: Well, a week did not even pass and I found work. [And in what did you work?] As a food preparer.

Pues, ni pase una semana y encuentre un trabajo. [Y en que trabajaste?] Como preparador [de comida].

Even though he had arrived at dawn, Pedro struck out soon after arriving and was able to find work on the same day that he arrived in New York City. He had arrived at six in the morning, and soon found work as a dishwasher and started working that same afternoon in downtown Manhattan.

Pedro: And I arrived, and that same day I started to work on 4th street, downtown, on Sixth Avenue. [You did not rest?] No, I did not even rest, arriving at six in the morning, by afternoon, I went to work, and there I worked. [And what kind of job did you have?] Dishwasher, uh, huh.

Y llegue, y eso mismo dia empezo a trabajar por la calle cuatro, abajo, en la sexta avenida. [Ni descansaste?] No, ni descanso, llegando a las seis de la manana, por la tarde yo fui a trabajar, y alli trabaje. [Y en que estabas trabajando?] Dishwasher, uh, huh.

Whether they arrived and worked immediately or after some time, the majority of Mexican youth relied on their connections to relatives and friends to help them obtain work. Through these connections, Mexican youth not only obtained information about jobs, including the availability of jobs, as well as ways to behave on the job or to obtain a job, but through their contacts, they could also obtain a “way in” to a work site. Their relatives and friends would recommend their friends to their employers, and because of these personal recommendations, employers could hire the youth with more certainty that they would be productive, unproblematic workers (Aguilera, 2003).

Especially for their first jobs, Mexican youth obtained employment through their relatives’ contacts and relationships with their employers. In many cases, family members found the youth employment at their own worksites where their own reputations were sufficient for their employers to hire the youth. As in Mexico, however, most of the youth discussed weaning

themselves off of dependence on their relatives for work, and eventually looked and found work on their own, by merely asking.

Although he was only fifteen, Felipe was able to obtain his first job as a food preparer through his brother. Jose Luis also obtained the two jobs, both at Japanese restaurants, through his father who was also in New York City. Communicating transnationally, across borders, Armando's family also was able to help him secure his first job as a plumber's assistant. Armando's family put a call into a family friend who was from his hometown, Tecumatlan, who was already living in New York City and asked him to find work for Armando. The family friend, a plumber, was able only to give Armando temporary work, as his assistant, while he continued to gain his bearings and adjust to New York.

Armando: [And did you know him before you got to New York City?] Yes, in Tecumatlan. [And how did you start working with him, did he ask you?] Umm, he asked me, well, they got me in touch with him, my family, when I was already here. He went over there and they told him, he talked with my mama, that I was over here, and uh, he told them that he could give me work, and so he told me that the truth was that he could probably give me work for a little, for a little while, while I recuperated, and so yes, I was working with him close to a month, more or less...something like that. Over there, with him, while, because the work stopped after it got cold here.

After this job ended, however, Armando was able to obtain work at a construction site for two months through another family contact, his uncle's friend. His work there, however, only lasted two months, due to the onset of winter.

Reflecting other immigrants' ability to obtain resources through their co-ethnics (Zhou, 2009) other youth reported obtaining employment through their *paisanos*, or people who were from their hometowns and were now in New York City. Pedro was one such youth who ended up working at popular *taqueria* by Columbia University because of his chance encounter with a *paisano*, or hometown resident.

Pedro: I worked like a month [on Franklin Street], from there, I encountered one of my countrymen, from the same town, from where I am, I ran into them, and no, he works there with me, here, and he told me, that if I wanted to come over here, so we could be together, and well, I saw it as good.

Trabaje como un mes [en Franklin Street], de ahi, encuentre unos de mis paisanos, del mismo pueblo, de donde yo soy, le econcontre, y no, el trabaja alli conmigo, aca, y el me dijo, que si quiero pasar para aca, para que estamos juntos, y bueno, yo lo vi bien.

Other youth described using the highly exploitative immigrant employment agencies to find work. Located primarily in immigrant communities, these agencies were staffed with Spanish-speakers who placed individuals with employers, for high fees. If hired, these fees were removed from individuals' pay check on a weekly basis, leaving little, according to the youth, for themselves. The youth's experiences with these agencies were mostly negative, as youth were placed in less than favorable jobs that were often short-term and owned by exploitative employers.

In the case of Carolina, her sister told her about the employment agency which she used to find jobs, several times. She was able to obtain several jobs through the employment agency but each job was unpleasant, and she would end up quitting after questionable behaviors from co-workers and employers.

Carolina: Yes, in Queens, I looked for an [employment] agency, there they gave me a job, with Jews, but I did not like it.

Si, en Queens, ahi busco una agencia, ahi me dan trabajo, con judeos, pero no me gusto.

While employed at that job, her friend, Paulina, was able to obtain a job with a woman who hired her because she was Paulina's friend. At this job too, however, she felt mistreated and underpaid, and she soon found herself back at the employment agency. This time, they sent her to work in a fish market where she soon found herself sexually harassed. She stopped relying on the employment agency for work soon after.

Samuel was also displeased with the types of jobs offered by employment agencies. The jobs were always short-term and lasted only a few days. When the agency sent him to interview for jobs that were long term and stable, they always paid less than jobs he could find without the assistance of the agency.

Samuel: Well no, the agency just sends you three days to work, and then the job ends, they are short jobs, maybe they send you to jobs, like that, permanent, but like that like those that I tell you, to work six days, twelve hours, six days a week for \$300, some do not even pay \$300, they pay \$250, well, I tell them, “well no, I have work” and I go to look for another (job) and I go for another. Like that there are, and then there aren’t any. Well, there are, but they are very poorly paid, they pay very little.

Pues no, la agencia no mas te mande tres dias a trabajar, y luego se acaba el trabajo, son trabajos cortos a la mejor te mandan a trabajar en trabajos asi fijos, pero asi como los que yo te dijo, de trabajar seis dias, doce horas, seis dias a la semana por \$300, algunos ni pagan \$300, pagan \$250, pues yo les digo, “pues no, tengo trabajo” y me pongo a buscar otro y voy por otro. Asi, de hay, y luego no hay. Pues si hay, pero son muy mal pagados, pagan muy poquito.

In some cases, he also complained, the agencies sent him to jobs where the employers advertised for the potential employees to do one job, but once there, required them to do other, more difficult work for the same pay. After Samuel complained, the employer threatened not to pay him at all.

Samuel: There are people who make the job more difficult, like the agency sent me to do a job of deliveries, and so then I arrived there, and they passed me to another, to a bakery, and they wanted me to clean the ovens and utensils, and I told them that if you want for me to clean everything for \$300, but I told them, you’re crazy, I told them to pay me more, because I came to do deliveries...and he grabbed me and told me that he was not going to pay anything, and then I told him well pay me what I worked and I will go...they put me to do something else and I went for another. And like that, there are jobs like that too...you are already there, they send you for something and they make you do something else.

Hay personas que te hacen hacer el trabajo mas dificil, como la agencia me mando para hacer un trabajo de deliveries, y entonces yo llegue ahí, y me pasaron a otra, a una panaderia, y querian que yo limpiaba los hornos y tenezos, y yo les dije tu quieres que yo limpio todo eso por \$300, pero yo les dije, no, tu estas loco, yo le dije que me pagaba mas, porque yo vino por hacer deliveries...y me agarro y me dijo yo no voy a pagar nada, y le dije pues pagame lo que trabaje y ya me voy.. me pusieron hacer otra cosa y yo iba por otro..Y asi es, hay otros trabajos asi tambien...ya estas aquí, te mandan por algo, y te hagan hacer otra cosa..

Eventually, however, Mexican youth begin to look for jobs without the assistance of their relatives, friends or agencies. After relying on social contacts, by the second or third job, with work experience in New York, Mexican youth reported finding work after going, by foot, and asking for jobs on their own. This was the case of Julio and Marco, both who found work that they believed were improvements over their previous jobs.

Julio worked for four months at his first job, stocking clothes and letting the manager know when they were low on inventory. Believing that he was working too much and earning too little, Julio began looking for another job while he was working at his first job. He walked from store to store, asking the owners if they needed workers. He was hired in a shoe store where not only did he earn \$40 more a week for the same amount of hours and days, he also believed that the owners treated him better. Whereas at his first job, the manager made him stand outside, even if it was cold, at his current job, he could stay inside, and even drink coffee when it was cold.

Marco also left his job and looked for another job on foot. Dissatisfied with his job as a delivery boy at Montezuma, Marco went walking with his friend in Inwood, looking for a job. His friend was looking for a job, but he did not want to make deliveries. They went from business to business, asking if they needed workers. When they went into a café and asked if they needed someone, the manager said that they needed someone who could make deliveries. Marco accepted. Now, in addition to making deliveries, he works in the kitchen, helping the cook, cutting vegetables for salads, and as a busboy. After six months, he is earning \$400 to \$420 a week, over a hundred dollars more a week than his previous job, working eight to ten hours a day.

Mexican immigrant youth are generally able to find work within days of arrival and have

various resources at their disposal to find work. The most useful resource for the youth is social capital present through their relationships with relatives and friends that are readily exchanged in the labor market. Relatives and friends not only tell the youth about available jobs, but in many cases, bring the youth with them to their worksites so that they can be interviewed and/or hired, or contact friends directly who can help the youth obtain jobs. In addition, specific institutions are established in immigrant communities that match immigrants with employers. Although for-profit, these institutions are also organized to meet the needs and limitations of immigrants, able to connect them to employment in the secondary market. Although economic capital is exchanged for these services, youth also find their ways to these institutions through their relatives and friends. Thus, all of the youth reported being hired through the activation of social capital, at some point or another in their short employment careers in the United States.

At some point, however, some Mexican youth strike it out on their own and obtain work through their own persuasion and practices. Some scholars have begun to theorize about the effects of ethnicity as social capital, arguing its utility both within and across ethnic groups (Zhou, 2009). Although predominantly discussed as a way that ensures social capital with and among co-ethnics, both individuals and institutions (Zhou, 2009), it may be useful to begin to think about the employer preferences attributed to individuals as a result of their ethnicity. The facility with which the youth obtained employment on their own had nothing to do with social capital, but rather was dependent on the youth's own individual traits as well as notions employers possessed about individuals "like them." In a secondary labor market where the preference for Mexican immigrants is vastly documented and explicit, as it may then be, the traits assigned to Mexican workers (hard-working, accepting of low pay and harsh conditions) may actually work in youth's favor so that they may readily secure employment on their own.

Types of work available to Mexican Youth in New York City

Employment in the secondary labor market consists of low wages poor working conditions, high labor turnover, limited opportunities for advancement, few fringe benefits, and little formal supervision (Doeringer and Piore, in Hudson, 1971). Although historically segmented by race and gender, more recently, nativity and citizenship status delineate the composition of workers in the primary and the secondary labor markets. Considered as “bad jobs” or, as former Mexican President Fox stated in his now infamous speech about the Mexican immigrants involvement in the cleanup after Hurricane Katrina cleanup, “the jobs that not even Blacks will do” (Fox, 2005) the secondary labor market includes all of the jobs that the non-traditional school-going Mexican immigrant youth find themselves employed in New York City. Less dependent on educational credentials and high skill, employment in these sectors is more highly reliant on social capital via personal contacts, and employer preference (Aguilera, 2003; Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2007).¹⁴⁴

The study’s underage, unauthorized Mexican youth in New York City participated in the secondary labor market and were eligible for the same sorts of jobs as their adult counterparts: unskilled and low waged employment. The sectors where Mexican youth found the most work included the restaurant industry, construction, and retail. None of these jobs required that the youth possess or present any sort of cultural capital i.e. educational credentials so that the youth would be hired. Rather, to be hired in these jobs Mexican youth usually relied on social capital found through their personal connections.

For most of the Mexican youth, like their adult Mexican counterparts, at some point in their relatively short work careers in New York City, they had been employed in the restaurant

¹⁴⁴ Interestingly enough, however, the division of the labor market into a primary and secondary labor market was originally based on race and sex. African Americans and women, as well as U.S. born Latinos and Native Americans were long relegated to these jobs. After, Hudson (2007) writes, that the markets began to shift towards division by citizenship status, with employers preferring immigrant workers to native-born workers.

industry. Although low-paying and demanding long hours, this industry is relatively safe and stable, and provides opportunities for promotion (Herrera Lima, 2001). The restaurant industry is characterized by an internally differentiated and gendered job market where upward mobility can occur over a relatively short period of time. This job market is ideal for these youth because advancement does not rely on formal educational credentials. Retention and advancement instead relies on many of the orientations towards work and skills that the youth learned working in Mexico: being a hard worker, putting up with long hours and harsh conditions without complaint, as well as being willing to learn the tasks and practice these tasks that could lead to their advancement up the labor queue (Herrera Lima, 2001). Their ability to call on these learned orientations and skills guaranteed their “success” in this particular sector of the labor market field. In addition, advancement could occur not only in the same work site, but also across work sites, as youth exhibited high levels of job turnover in search of more optimal work conditions, including hours, pay and responsibilities.

Mexican immigrant males discussed entering into the restaurant industry as dishwashers or delivery boys, and advancing through the labor queue after obtaining on the job skills by watching and/or apprenticing with workers who filled higher positions in the same queue. This advancement, however, largely depended upon which of the two tracks the youth were on in the restaurant industries. While one track stays in the kitchen, and another leads to public interaction.

Although starting in the kitchen as dishwashers, Mexican youth would often move up to become busboys, clearing dirty plates from the dining room and serving water, or act as food preparers, chopping vegetables and other items for cooking. From these positions Mexican youth usually advanced to become waiters or some type of cook, respectively. Females were

oftentimes not hired to do kitchen work, but instead were hired to interface with the public, hired as waitresses and hostesses. In smaller restaurants/businesses, sometimes youth did not follow a straight-line upward advancement, but worked according to the needs of the business, sometimes working in several of the positions. Switching to the track in which one could engage with the public required additional schooling, namely English language schooling.

Although Narciso had only been in New York City for a little more than a year, he appeared to be working up and within the restaurant hierarchy within the one restaurant he had worked. At first, he worked alongside his brother to learn the work, unpaid, but within a short time, he was hired. Although formally a busboy, he was also learning and asked to perform other positions in the restaurant, including being a food runner, or taking plates of food to tables. While working as a busboy, Narciso was also invited to learn how to prepare and cook food on the job, obtaining skills that could eventually lead to his advancement in the industry, in this job or another. This diversification of positions, as well as the invitation to learn additional skills had led to his belief that he was advancing in the restaurant.

Narciso: [And as what are you working?] Like a busboy. [And is it the only work that you have had in New York?] Yes. [And since when have you worked?] Since May, because my brother took me, every Saturday with him, and well, he got me that job. [And in this year, have your responsibilities or salary increased?] Yes, yes, well, I am taking the food to the table...runner? [Okay, so you started as a busboy, work, and higher than busboy is a food runner?] No, no, I am working every day as a food runner, sometimes, when they need, I get into the kitchen to help. [And why did they pick you to be in the kitchen?] Because they told me, if you want, come to the kitchen to learn, and well I want to learn. They taught me more to work in the kitchen, to cut and cook.

[Y de que estas trabajando?] Como un busboy. [Y es el unico trabajo que has tenido en Nueva York?] Si. [Y desde cuando has trabajado?] Desde mayo, porque mi hermano me llevo cada sabado con el, y pues, me consegui ese trabajo. [Y entre este ano, ha subido, como de responsabilidades o salario?] Si, si, pues estoy llevando la comida a la mesa...puron? [Okay, so empezaste como busboy, trabajo y arriba de busboy, ya estas puron?] No, no estoy trabajando todos los dias a puron, a veces, cuando se necesita, me meta a la cocina para ayudar. [Y porque te escogieron para estar en la cocina?] Porque mem dijieron, si quieres, vente a la cocina para aprender, y pues yo quiero aprender...me ensenaron mas de trabajar en la cocina, cortar y cocinar.

Marco appeared to be moving up the restaurant hierarchy by switching jobs. Earning \$350 a week, Marco's first job had been as a packer in a Bronx pizzeria. After working at the pizzeria for three months, his employer found out that he was underage and he was fired. He next found work making breakfast deliveries also earning approximately \$350 a week. Here, he also worked approximately three months. After working again making deliveries for a Bronx Mexican restaurant, he was able to find work at a café in Upper Manhattan. Here, not only did he make deliveries, but, he was also a busboy, a food preparer, and a cook's assistant. On more than one occasion, I also saw him make and serve coffee and smoothies, ringing up the customers as well. Of all of his previous jobs, he had been here the longest – six months – and was earning over \$400 a week.

Although some Mexican youth had only been employed in the restaurant industry, other youth wove in and across different jobs within the general range of industries and occupations available to (unauthorized) Mexican immigrant youth. For example, Armando's first jobs were as a plumber's assistant and in construction where he was paid \$9 and \$10 an hour, respectively. With the onset of winter, he was forced to seek employment as a dishwasher because it was simply too cold to work outside. At this job, Armando took a significant pay cut, earning only \$3.75 an hour.

Carolina also wove across industries until finally settling into childcare. Over three years she had worked in various jobs, including housesitting, waitressing (which also included cooking and cleaning the restaurant), and housecleaning. She also worked in a fish market, and finally as a nanny. She had been the nanny for several families, including a graduate student in the past several years and currently, for a professor.

Lastly, some youth remained outside of the restaurant industry altogether. Julio had only worked in two jobs during his two years in New York City, both in retail. His first job had been at a clothing store where he worked primarily as a stock boy. He was in charge of carrying boxes of merchandise, as well as keeping track of merchandise, ensuring that they had enough clothes on display. While working there, he found employment in a shoe store and he left his first job. At his second job, he arranges and dusts the shoes, as well as helps prevent theft.

Manuel had also remained outside the restaurant industry during his two years in New York. During these two years he worked in three jobs, none of them dealing with food preparation. Like Julio, he also began his New York occupational career in retail, working for only one week in a store. He was also responsible here for preventing theft of the clothes. Dissatisfied with the pay at his first job, he left after a week and began working at a florist's shop. Here, he would work between eight and twelve hours a day, depending on how busy it was and earned approximately \$8 an hour, plus tips when he made deliveries. After having an argument with the owner's brother over drinking coffee in the store, he quit and worked for one month painting tennis courts. After this job ended, he ran into his previous boss who had liked his work ethic. The owner's brother had left, and the owner asked him to return to work, which he did.

Restricted to the secondary labor market, the youth's social capital then, obtained through their relationships with adult, working kin, as well as other Mexican friends and institutions established for immigrants, is only exchangeable to attain a particular position in the secondary labor market field. Useless in the primary labor market, and for entry at higher positions, Mexican immigrant youth are limited to specific positions and segments in the labor market field, of which the restaurant industry appears to dominate. After entry, it is the youth's

exhibition of ‘good worker skills’ at these jobs, as well as the acquisition of additional skills on the job (human capital) that enables their mobility within a restricted labor market queue.

The Mexican youth are exhibiting significant agency, however, as they frequently search for improved work conditions including higher pay, better hours, and more amenable tasks. Their movement within this labor market is partly reliant on social capital, but after they attain some familiarity with the market, as well as gain confidence, some of the youth strike out on their own and are able to find work themselves.

Conditions of work in New York City

The conditions of the labor market sectors where Mexican youth are employed highly restrict their ability to participate in the educational fields, much less to enroll in a traditional high school. Low pay and excessive hours do not allow Mexican youth to attend traditional nor non-traditional schools. Paid low wages, they must work long hours to earn enough to pay their rent and meet their Mexican household obligations, creating significant obstacles for their participation in the educational fields. In addition, these excessive hours do not align with most formal and informal school schedules. Mexican youth reported as such, that although they would like to attend classes, the conditions of their employment simply did not allow their school-going.

Most Mexican youth earned between \$250 and \$420 a week for working twelve hours a day, six days a week. Averaging a little over \$5.83 an hour, in the best case scenario, and \$2.97 an hour in the worst case scenario [\$250/week, seven days a week, twelve hours a day], the youth were being woefully underpaid and overworked, and several of the youth reported quitting after earning too little. According to the youth, \$400 to \$450 a week was “more or less” good pay, which still figured to be less than the federal standard of minimum wage.

When asked what was “too little” pay, Mexican youth reported that less than \$350 a week for working six days a week and twelve hours a day was insufficient. Julio reported earning \$280 a week at his first job as a stock boy and Manuel earned \$300 a week as a security officer at a store, both believing they were underpaid. Jose Luis discussed what kind of pay was considered “more or less” as he was discussing how learning English would lead to satisfactory pay. With this salary, a youth could cover all of his/her expenses, including telephone costs, as well as dress somewhat decently.

Jose Luis: Well, \$450 a week, I think that that is an amount more or less that lets you save for the whole week, telephone, all of the expenses of the house, that serves you that you might not be so well dressed, but with some few clothes that are brand-name, you could say, it helps you a lot with that.

Pues, \$450 a la semana, yo creo que eso es una cantidad mas o menos que te deja alcanzar para toda la semana, telefono, todos gastos de la casa, que te sirve a ti que andas no tan bien vestido, pero con una ropita que esta hecho de marca, puedes decir, te ayuda mucho con eso.

On average, Mexican youth reported working seventy two hours a week [twelve hours a day, six days a week], almost twice the time of a normal work week. Mexican youth are employed in jobs that, illegally, require them to work long hours and in some cases seven days a week. Mexican youth are subject to work conditions that are unexpected for teenagers in the United States. Marco was one youth who was for ten hours a day.

In July 2008, Marco’s cousin took him home, and he told him that another restaurant, Montezuma, was hiring. Montezuma is in Kingsbridge. His cousin asked the chef and the chef said they needed help. At Montezuma, he worked ten hours a day and earned \$300 a week. He did not like working there because first of all, he did not like being on the street [he was making deliveries]. Secondly, he did not like his hours. He worked from 5pm to 3am and was always tired. (Interview Notes, February 2, 2009)

Most youth discussed the inability to find a job where one could work for a number of hours and still be left time for school or other activities. In other words, for this particular population of youth, conditions of their positions in the labor market field did not allow them to work the legal number of hours individuals are allowed to work a day: eight hours a day.

Instead, for these youth, the only jobs available were those in which one worked for more than eight hours a day, and usually, six to seven days a week. Such was the case for Diego and Julio.

Diego: [And so, do you think working in New York City, has it influenced your decision to go to school, or no?] Of course. After working here in the United States, you don't have time to do anything, or after working, or even to think about doing other things.

Julio also discussed how his work schedules interfered with his ability to attend school.

Julio: It is difficult to find a job that is eight hours so that you can attend school.
Es difícil de encontrar algun trabajo que te da ocho horas para asistir a una escuela.

It is obvious that these businesses are exploitative, requiring youth to work for many hours, all week long. Although perceived as an act of trust and honor, leaving the youth in charge for long days and hours is actually exploitative. Manuel's boss would leave him in charge during his own vacation, extending his work week to seven days a week, over twelve hours a day.

Manuel: Where I work, it is a business, I have to wake up early to go and open, and then I have to close, because sometimes he [boss] goes, when he goes on vacation, then he says no, you have to work seven days, you are going to open, close and everything, work seven days, and sometimes, I don't know, working so much.

Donde yo trabajo, es un negocio, yo tengo que levantar temprano para ir y abrir, y luego tengo que cerrar, porque a veces se va, cuando se va en vacaciones, luego me dice no, tu vas a trabajar siete dias, vas a abrir, cerrar y todo, trabajar siete dias, y a veces no se, trabajar tanto.

Aside from earning low wages and working long hours, some youth described working in jobs that were characteristically physically demanding. These jobs made the youth physically tired not only because of the long hours but also because of the heavy manual labor they had to engage in. Incongruent to their age and size, the youth complained about having to perform these physically demanding tasks.

Samuel's first job was in construction, and he believed that although the pay had been good, he had been overworked, and was killing himself physically. But, in Samuel's words, that is what work is like in New York.

Samuel: Me too, and then very dead/killed, I was in a construction job, \$10 an hour, but they also overwork you. That is what it's like in New York.

Yo tambien, luego bien matado, yo estaba en trabajo de construccion, \$10 por la hora, pero te ponen a sobretrabajar. Eso es lo de aquí en Nueva York.

Julio also complained that at his first job, he had to lift heavy things. Comparing his first job with his current job, he deemed his current job as better because he no longer had to lift heavy boxes.

Julio: [And of work, would you say that [this job] is better than the other or no?] Well better, better, no, because here it is easier and I work less, less heavy. It is not as hard because we don't carry heavy things. There, they made me lift heavy things, like doing [physically] heavier/harder things.

[Y de trabajo, dices tu que es mejor que el otro o no?] Pues mejor, mejor, no, porque aquí es mas facil, y trabajo menos, menos pesado. No es tan duro porque no cargamos cosas pesados. Alla, me hicieron levantar cosas pesadas, como hacer cosas mas pesadas.

To most youth, however, hard work was better than no work at all. While some youth were able to earn “good” money doing construction work, these jobs were seasonal, and in the winter months, if they had stayed in these jobs, they would have found themselves unemployed. Used to construction job wages, the youth were highly dissatisfied and restless during the winter months as they sought jobs that paid comparably. Eventually, they were forced to work lesser paying jobs. This led to the youth's inability to send money home as well as create further economic hardship.

Armando: Right now, since I have not worked in two months, well, the truth is, I am a little broke, I have debts, what I have sent home is very little, no. Because, like, construction is outside, and sometimes it rains, and I have to stop one day, and no, no, I don't get to work the full five days, I haven't earned that much.

Additionally, Mexican youth reported that they engaged in high levels of mobility as they participated in the New York City labor market. Subject to jobs that provided long hours and low pay, Mexican youth oftentimes moved from job to job in search of better work conditions, including better work hours, more agreeable bosses and better pay. On average, the youth had

worked in at least three jobs within a year's time. In the case of Marco, in the span of a little less than a year and a half, he had worked in four jobs, working as a pizza packer, a food deliverer, a dishwasher and a café server/jack of all trades. Within three years, Carolina had worked in approximately six jobs, using both social contacts and an employment agency to find work.

Employers

In spite of working under illegal conditions [low pay, excessive hours], the youth described having few problems with their employers, and in some cases, believed that their employers treated them like family and cared for them. In some cases, the youth described their employers as benevolent, and who, although not Mexican, were immigrants themselves and sympathetic to the youth's conditions – i.e., not knowing English, in New York to have a “better” life than they would in their home countries, being without one's family, etc.

The owner of the café where Marco worked was a thirty-something, Dominican woman named Lola. Compared to how he was treated at his other jobs, Marco believed that Lola treated him better than just as an employee.

Marco: She likes me more than in the other jobs. With her, I have had more trust than with other owners. They treated me like a worker and with her, no.

Ella me quiere mas que en los otros trabajos. Con ella yo ha tenido mas confianza de con otros dueños. Me trataron como un trabajador y con ella no.

Likewise, Manuel's employer, the owner of a flower shop, had also taken a liking to Manuel. He had also been a teenager when he immigrated from Ecuador, and shared this experience with Manuel. Although Manuel had quit earlier under unpleasant circumstances involving the owner's brother, after a reencounter, his boss invited him to work for him again, this time. He seemed to like Manuel and treat him a bit better than just an employee, and Manuel trusted him.

Some of the youth, however, had negative and sometimes fearful experiences with their bosses. Carolina described two jobs in which her experiences, both arranged by her employment agency, that had been unpleasant and led to her quitting. In the first case, she was sexually harassed by a man in the fish market where she worked. She had worked there for two months when a man tried to kiss her, and she quit immediately.

Carolina: I was there two months, but I left because of the accost of a man who wanted to kiss me. Well, I left from there, horrible, I got out of there.

Estaba ahí dos meses, pero me sali por acoso de un señor que quiso besarme. Pues de ahí me sali, horrible, me sali de ahí.

She went back to the employment agency where she had obtained the job at the fish market and was able to obtain another job as a live-in-maid for a woman in Far Rockaway. Here, however, she had another frightening experience as her employer wanted to adopt her and began to prevent her from visiting her family in Jackson Heights. Perhaps a case of miscommunication as Carolina did not know much English, or of how youth may be more vulnerable without their parents or guardians, she was afraid that the woman was trying to force her to cut off all of her family contacts and enter her into prostitution.

Carolina: And then she, with the illusion that she wanted to adopt me, but I did not understand what she told me, I did not understand English, then the moment/point arrived that she prohibited me from seeing my family, she does not want that I see my family, come live with me, and well, the idea scared me, if she wants me, if she wants me, um, to enter me into prostitution, who knows?

Y luego ella con la ilusion que me quiere adoptar pero no entendia lo que me decia, no entendia ingles, y llega al punto que me prohíbe a ver a mi familia, ,no quiere que yo vea a mi familia, ven a vivir conmigo, ,y pues a mi me asusto el idea, ,si me quiere, si me quiere, este meterme en prostitucion, quien sabe?

Other complaints about employers had more to do with being cheated out of fair wages. Samuel quit working at a party supply warehouse after having more responsibilities than other workers, but being paid less than what he believed he deserved.

Samuel: No, well, I only lasted a month and a half because the Jew who was paying me was only paying the minimum of what I was doing, and I was working more, and I told him, if you are leaving me to be responsible here, you have to pay more, you cannot just pay me that, and one day I did not go, and two of the boys [workers] completed the order wrong, and then they told me “why did you let them fill out the order wrong,” and I told him that if I don’t come, and I started like that and he did not want to pay me, and I told him well, pay me, and I told him, I don’t want to work here. If you are leaving me to be in charge here, that I do this, that I do the other, well you have to pay more, you cannot pay me the same as what you pay him, a helper, that you pay me.

No, pues no mas dure un mes y medio porque el judeo que me estaban pagando a mi no mas me estaba pagando el minimo de lo que yo estaba haciendo, y yo me estaba trabajando mas, y yo le dije, si tu me estas dejando de ser el responsable yo aquí, tu me tienes que pagar mas, no me puedes no mas pagarme eso, y un dia yo no fui, y sacaron los dos muchachos una pedido mal, y luego me dijo “porque dejastes sacar el pedido mal,” y le dije si yo no viene, y me empezo asi y no me queria pagar, y yo le dije pues pagarme, y yo le dije, yo no quiero trabajar aquí. Si tu me estas dejando de estar encargado aquí, que yo haga eso, que yo hago el otro, pues tu me tienes que pagar mas, no me puedes pagar el mismo de lo que tu te pagas a el, un ayudante, que me pagas a mi..

Between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, Mexican youth who are not attending traditional high school work full-time under unfavorable, unpleasant, illegal conditions. Participating in a highly exploitative segment of the labor market field, the Mexican youth navigate and adjust through this segment as best as they can, with an eye to improving their conditions [albeit only in this segment, the secondary market]. By activating and exchanging social capital, as well as acquiring human capital at their jobs and being willing to move from job to job, the youth are able to negotiate for higher pay and better work conditions. Although still exploited, the youth interpret the fruits of their efforts as arriving at positions that are improvements to the possibilities back home. Only in a few instances do the youth report serious challenges to their ideas of what their participation in the labor market should and should not include, to which they merely search for and obtain a new job.

Intersection of the Labor Market and the Life Course

In spite of age restrictions about full-time employment in New York City (see Chapter 4), all of the non-traditional school going youth found employment without much problem.

Although some youth initially stayed out of the labor market field because of their own fears/understandings about their ability to participate in the labor market fields at young ages, other youth merely lied about their ages to immediately obtain work. Julio was one such youth who, after three days in New York City, was able to find work by lying about his age. Although only fifteen, Julio told his would-be employers that he was nineteen, and he was hired. Later his employers found out that he was younger than the nineteen years he had originally told them, but did not fire him. His employers did not fire him immediately, however, because he was able to complete tasks rapidly. Just as in the case of their adult counterparts, being cheap and being a “good” worker, trumped the employers’ compliance with the law.

Julio: They [of the place] asked me if I was nineteen, and I told them yes, to obtain the job, and then after, they found out that I was not nineteen, and that I was a minor, and he wanted to fire me, but he told me that he wasn’t going to fire me because I worked quickly, I knew how to do things quickly, and he was not going to fire me.

Ellos [del lugar] me decían si yo tenía diez y nueve años, y yo les dije que sí, para obtener el trabajo, y luego después, unos días después, enteraron que yo no tenía diez y nueve años, y que yo era menor de edad, y él me quería correr, pero me dijo que no me iba a correr, porque yo trabajaba rápido, yo sabía como hacer las cosas rápidos, y no me corrió.

In Marco’s case, however, his first employer was more fearful of consequences associated with hiring minors. After twenty days of seeking work, Marco’s brother found him a job as a pizza packer at a pizzeria in the Bronx. He ended up working there three months, earning \$7 an hour.

The owner of the pizzeria, however, found out he was underage and fired him.

Marco: The owner did not want to say that I was a minor.

El dueño no quería que decir que estaba menor de edad.

As was discussed in a previous section, as well as just above, the youth’s age, especially upon arrival, creates challenges for the youth’s ability to obtain, and then retain work. While some youth stayed out of the labor market while they learned ways of being that would make them appear employable, i.e. older, other youth merely lied about their ages when asking for a job.

Being underage seemed important to some employers, who fired the youth upon finding out, but other employers who were impressed by their skills, opted to ignore their age and risk the legal consequences. Ultimately, being underage did not significantly hinder their participation in the New York City labor market. Rather, as demonstrated before, their social and human capital trumped any formal age requirements to participate in the New York City secondary labor market.

Being treated and feeling like an adult in the Labor Market

In addition to being allowed to participate in a secondary labor market under conditions that are normally reserved for adults, several of the youth discussed also being treated and feeling like adults in the workplace. In their places of employment, youth not only were surrounded by other adult employees, but they were also expected to perform tasks they believed that adults would engage in, such as lift heavy boxes. Additionally, largely uncharacteristic of jobs associated with the secondary market, the youth discussed that their employers left them alone to perform their tasks at the workplace and in some cases, left them in charge to perform these tasks alone. Their employers were not constantly telling what to do, they trusted them. This led to their feelings of adulthood.

In the case of Hilaria, she believed that she was treated like an adult at her job, cleaning offices and houses because she was working with other adults. It was the age of her co-workers that made her feel older. They were all adults and since she was working alongside them, she was treated like they were, like an adult. As a result, she too felt like an adult in the workplace.

Hilaria: Because, well yes, maybe I am a minor, but they treat me like an adult because I work with people who are of age.

Porque pues sí, tal vez soy menor de edad, pero me tratan como adulta porque trabajo con gente de mayor de edad.

Some youth performed physically demanding work at their jobs that most would say did not correspond with their physiological ages. This misalignment in biological or chronological time, however, caused some youth to believe that they were being treated and felt like adults in the workplace. Charged with lifting heavy boxes and moving heavy objects, some youth, including Julio, based his feelings of adulthood on how physically demanding job tasks were in his workplaces. Julio believed that he had been treated like an adult at his first job because his employer expected him to engage in physically strenuous work, including lifting heavy boxes.

Julio: In the first job that I worked, they treated me like an adult because they made me lift heavy things, like do harder things. Where I am [now], they treat me like a young adult, sometimes like a child, because sometimes they do not want for me to carry boxes, just unpack them, since because they are large boxes.

En el primer trabajo en que yo trabaje, me trataron como un adulto porque me hicieron levantar cosas pesadas, como hacer cosas mas pesadas. Donde estoy [ahorita], me tratan como un joven, a veces como un niño, porque a veces no quieren que yo carga cajas, solo que yo les descargue, como porque son cajas grandes.

Being trusted in their workplaces and possessing serious responsibilities led the youth to feel like adults at their jobs. In the case of Marco, he believed that he was treated like an adult at his workplace. Even though he was only sixteen, his employer, Lola, left him in charge of overseeing several operations in the café, including making sure the establishment was clean, that they had sufficient food inventory, as well as keep an eye on his fellow employees.

Marco: I do things like an adult at work because I am in charge of everything, that everything is okay, everything is clean, that my coworkers do their jobs well. I am in charge of the kitchen, I have to tell them what we need more of, in front, I do things when me co-workers do not want to do them, I have to correct, she [employer] always tells me that I have to correct them so that they do things well.

Hago cosas como un adulto en el trabajo, porque me encargo de todo, que todo esta bien, todo esta limpia, que mis companeros haga sus trabajos bien. Yo me encargo de la cocina, tengo que decir a ellos que hace falta, de la en frente hace las cosas cuando mis companeros no quieren hacer, tienen que revisar, ella siempre me dice que tengo que revisar que ellos hacen las cosas bien.

Manuel also reported being treated like an adult at the flower shop in which he worked. They were not the responsibilities associated with waiting on customers and charging them that made him feel like an adult, but rather, being entrusted with and supervising the money that the flower shop made during the day that made Manuel feel like an adult.

Manuel: And since he deposited trust in me, but not to take it like that, already like an adult, there is the money, but, do not get it, I will pay you, okay, so like that, I feel like that, like an adult...that money is not ours, do not touch it, a lot of money, I cannot touch it, I only would take it, put it in, and give change back...be responsible for yourself, no, already, like an adult.

Y como el me dio la confianza se deposito en mi, pero para no tomar asi, ya como un adulto, ahí esta el dinero, pero, no lo agarres, yo te pago, okay, entonces asi, yo siento asi, como un adulto..eso dinero no es tuyo, no lo toques, bastante dinero, no lo puedo tocar, yo solo le tomo, meto, y les da cambio para atrás..hacer como responsable de tu mismo, no, ya como un adulto..

Being left alone to do their work without constant supervision also caused several youth to feel like they were treated like adults in the workplace. It appeared as if their employers trusted them to do their tasks satisfactorily.

Jose Luis: Because I would go in to do my job, they no longer have to tell me to do this, do the other, because of my position and because of the job that I have to do, they do not have to be showing me.

Porque yo me metia para hacer mi trabajo, ya no me tiene que decirme has esto, has otro, por mi posición y por el trabajo que tengo que hacer, no me tienen que estar enseñando.

Lastly, the way that the youth were spoken to in the workplace, outside of their responsibilities, led to feelings of adulthood among the youth. In the case of Felipe, his belief that he was being treated like an adult in the workplace was based on the respect that others, co-workers and employers demonstrated. This respect, according to him, was most prominently observed in how they spoke to him.

Felipe: [Give me an example of how they treat you like an adult.] Well, how they greet me, they respect me, or they call you to eat, with respect, you arrive, greetings, they respect you.

[Dame un ejemplo en como te tratan como un adulto]. Pues como me saluden, me respetan, o te llaman a comer, con respetos, llegas, saludos, te respetan.

Although as discussed earlier, the youth were torn between which life course category they most identified, adolescence and adulthood, the youth spend significant blocks of time being treated and feeling like an adult in New York City. In a seven-day week of twenty-four hour days, approximately half of the week/hours are spent at their worksites, where the youth reported that they were treated and felt like adults. In other words, the youth reported being treated and feeling like adults in the field in which they primarily participated. In these cases, not only did employers view them or treat them as adults due to the responsibilities they placed on them, but the youth were also perceived as adults because in the workplace, they were surrounded only by adults.

When considered as part of their entire week's activities and field participation, including the housing field, where they also said their participation made them feel like adults, leisure time and sleeping, one could safely say that in New York City, the youth spend most of their waking time treated and feeling like adults, not the adolescents Czikszenmilhalyi, et al.,(1993) wrote of. If the youth both quantitatively and qualitatively assessed their life course categories based on both their treatments and feelings in the fields in which they primarily participate, then all of the youth would respond "adulthood."

Between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, non-traditional school-going youth act and feel like adults in the New York City labor market and are also treated as such. Arriving with the idea to work full-time, and unconcerned that their youthfulness could be obstacle to employment in New York City, the youth are not deterred by the documented age requirements that define the New York City labor market. Instead, Mexican youth employ various strategies, including waiting to familiarize themselves with the city and gain confidence, and relying on their families and friends to negotiate their labor market entry. In most cases, these strategies

work, with very few employers caring about their underage status or even finding out, and, if necessary, the youth will misrepresent their ages to help secure employment.

Believed to enter the labor market as “adults” then, by default of the age requirements of the labor market, the youth are treated and reported feeling like adults. They work with adults, they are asked to perform “adult” tasks, and they are also granted “adult” responsibilities associated with trust. All of these work conditions lead to their feeling like adults, a feeling that they possess for the majority of their “waking time.”

Fields in New York City: Education

For Mexican immigrant youth who did not drop into traditional high schools in New York City, one of two pathways characterized their time in New York City. In the first, Mexican immigrant youth had not entered into the educational field at all. Although perhaps interested, they had yet to take a single class in the city. In the second, Mexican youth entered into the educational field to attend only English classes, but their duration in these classes was short, with most of the youth only completing only the first level of courses. The reasons and conditions for these varied pathways differed in several ways. For one, approximately a third of the youth who attended English classes did so immediately after their arrival, before they entered into the labor market field and during the grace period during which their relatives took care of their expenses, but were wary of any idleness. Secondly, these relatives paid for these English classes, all administered at professional schools. The rest of the youth, however, found their way to English classes by receiving concrete knowledge about English classes [location, costs, etc.] as well as encouragement to attend. Employers, co-workers, friends, relatives, and even strangers found their way into the lives of these youth and provided varying levels of information, encouragement and accompaniment so that the Mexican youth could attend English class. Those

youth who remained outside of the educational field had not been so advantageous, and, in spite of interest, had yet to enroll in any type of schooling.

In spite of these differences, overall, most of the English school-going youth share many similarities with the non school-going youth, including orientations to the educational field in New York City in general, including possessing limited knowledge about it, as well as their reasons for not attending traditional high schools, and, upon leaving them, no longer attending English classes. Lack of time and money topped their list of reasons for their current absence from the educational field, as well as from a particular segment of the educational field, traditional high school-going.

Community Messages about school-going

In general, non-traditional school-going Mexican immigrant youth did report receiving encouragement from various sectors to enter into the New York City educational field.

Older/adult employers, coworkers and friends all encouraged the youth to enter into classes in New York City. Only in a few instances did youth report that relatives had encouraged their entry into the educational field, mostly in the cases where the older relatives were concerned about their idleness in the city. In these cases, not only did they encourage the youth to attend classes, they also researched and paid for their classes.

In the cases of most of the non-traditional school-goers, they were encouraged to go to school by adult employers, co-workers and friends. In the case of Carolina, her Latina/o immigrant bosses and co-workers encouraged her entry into the educational field.

Carolina: [And how did you decide to enter to take English classes?] Because of the influence of other people, because of the influence of other older people with whom I work, who in this restaurant see that I am really young, just working and I see around me that other young girls are single mothers, um, or are young girls who are only working and sending money to Mexico, so that they can continue maintaining their families in Mexico, to their parents, or their brothers...and they ask me what am I going to do with my

life?...these older people, they begin to give me advice. [Were they your bosses or were they other workers?] Some were my bosses, others were workers whose histories inspire me...to return back to school.

[Y como decidiste a entrar a tomar clases de ingles?] Por la influencia de otras personas, por la influencia de otras personas mayores con quien yo trabajaba, de en esta restaurante, de ver que yo tan jovencita, solamente trabajando y ver a mi alrededor que otras jovencitas son madres solteras, este, o son chicas que solamente estan trabajando y mandando dinero a Mexico para que pueden seguir manteniendo a sus familias en Mexico, a sus papas, o sus hermanos...y me cuestiona que voy hacer con mi vida?, estas personas mayores, empiezan a darme consejos. [Eran jefas tuyos o eran otros trabajadores?] Algunas eran jefes mios, otros eran trabajadores que sus historias me inspiraban...a regresar a la escuela.

Other Mexican youth recalled that their older friends encouraged and invited them to return to school and enroll in classes with them. In the case of Samuel, some of his older friends were already attending English classes and invited him to attend the same school. In his case, he did not want to go now, but would think about attending in the following year.

Samuel: Yes, I have some friends who invited me to go with them to the English school, but I told them that I did not want to. And now they're telling me to go, and maybe yes, next year, yes, I will enroll in school.

Si, yo tuve unos amigos que me invitaron a ir con ellos a la escuela de ingles, pero yo los dije que yo no queria. Y ahora me estan diciendo que vaya, y a la mejor si, por el otro ano, si me meto en la escuela.

Only one youth reported being discouraged from entering English classes. One of Manuel's bosses, an Ecuadoran immigrant who himself had immigrated at age sixteen, had learned English not by going to school, but rather by listening and paying attention to his employers where he was working as a young immigrant. He believed that he could teach Manuel English there at work, without him attending school. While Manuel had learned some words, sometimes he believed that it was not enough and that maybe he should also attend school.

Manuel: where I work, the owner was an immigrant, and yes...[Is he Mexican?] No, he is Ecuadorian. But he says, he says that he never went to school, what was, "I, where I worked, spoke English, spoke English and spoke Greek, and I had to learn by force," and he also immigrated when he was sixteen years old, and he did not go to school, he just listened, like to say "good morning" and "good afternoon," and you work in a restaurant, you have to learn the food, and say, I don't know, like with him, I also earned a lot of trust, and he told me, "I am going to teach you, like that, things, I am going to be teaching you,

even if you did not go to school, you have to learn and you are going to learn here, principally at work, and sometimes I think, I have learned many things here at work with him, no, but sometimes, I think that it is not sufficient to only learn here.

Donde yo trabajo, el dueño, fue inmigrante, y sí...[Es Mexicano?] No, es ecuatoriano. Pero él dice, él dice que él nunca fue a la escuela, lo que, yo lo que donde yo trabajaba, hablaron inglés, hablaban inglés y hablaron griego, y yo tenía que aprender a fuerzas, y él también inmigrante a los diez y seis años, y él no fui a la escuela, no más escuchaba, como decir “buenos días” y “buenas tardes,” y tú trabajas en un restaurante, tienes que aprender la comida, y dice, no sé, como con él, yo gané también la confianza, y él me dijo, yo te voy a enseñar, así, cosas, te voy enseñando, aunque no fuiste a la escuela, tienes que aprender y vas a aprender aquí, principal en el trabajo, y a veces yo pienso, yo he aprendido muchas cosas ahí en el trabajo con él, no, pero a veces, yo pienso que no es suficiente para aprender solo aquí.

Knowledge about the New York City Education Field

Mexican youth vary in terms of the amount of knowledge they have about the educational field in New York City, including the conditions of the field and its institutions, who is eligible to be a student, how difficult it is, what the fees are and more. What appeared to be most critical regarding the accuracy of the information the youth gathered about schooling, was whether the youth possessed friends or relatives who themselves had attended and completed English classes.

The majority of the non school-going youth did not have friends who had attended English schools and thus possessed very little information about schools in New York City. When asked if they knew anything about schools in New York City, most replied “no.” Uninformed, they believed that they, [unauthorized] Mexicans, could not attend school in New York, and that it would be difficult to attend a New York City school.

Solomon: [And why have you not entered into a school here in New York?] Well, my thought is that here we [unauthorized Mexicans] cannot study, no, that it is difficult, I believe that, I don't know...

[Y porque no has entrado a la escuela aquí en Nueva York?] Bueno, mi pensamiento es que aquí no podemos estudiar, no, que es difícil, yo creo eso, no sé...

Knowledge differs by the type of school in question. Although Mexican youth possessed very little (and [mis]) information about New York schools in general, they possessed more

information about English schools than traditional high schools. The youth, and their relatives then make choices about school enrollment based on this limited information.

When Diego arrived, his uncle decided to enroll him in English classes instead of high school because he thought that one had to pay to attend public high schools in New York City. Under this impression, his uncle believed that he could not afford to enroll him in high school and instead enrolled him in English courses.

Diego: He [uncle] did not, since he already knew about the expenses that he would have to make to go to high school, and he could not do that. He also has family. [But high schools do not cost, did you [and your uncle] know that?] I did not know that.

El no, como el ya sabia los gastos que tenia que hacer para irse al preparatoria, y el no podria hacer eso. El tiene familia tambien. [Pero las preparatorias no se cuestan, sabian?] Yo no sabia eso.

Other youth received information about schools and their characteristics from co-workers who themselves had attended classes. Julio learned, however, from some of his co-workers, that one had to pay to attend some classes, namely English classes.

Julio: Well, they have told me that you have to pay to go to school. [And who told you that?] Well, my friends and the boys with whom I have worked.

Pues a mi me han dicho que tienes que pagar para ir a la escuela. [Y quien te ha dicho esto?] Pues mis amigos y los muchachos con quien ha trabajado.

Samuel was the only non-school-going youth who could provide me with, more or less, specific information about a particular institution in the educational field: English classes.

Samuel knew where and when English classes were offered, and that they did not cost much money. Samuel was friendly with several older Mexican men who were attending English classes and they had invited him to attend classes with them on more than one occasion.

Although he did not take them up on their offer, they shared information about the supplies he would need and more or less what happened during the class.

Samuel: Well, I found out when I was living there in Brooklyn, when I lived there, that the classes were Monday through Friday, from eight at night until ten at night. Where they

were giving [classes], this guy told me, I don't remember, but he was not paying a lot for the week, and he had to buy his books and they gave him a CD and everything to learn English.

Pues me supe cuando yo estaba viviendo ahi en Brooklyn, cuando yo vivia alla, que alli las clases eran lunes a viernes, de ocho de la noche hasta diez de la noche. Donde estaba dando me conto este chavo, no recuerdo, pero no estaba pagando mucho a la semana, y tuve que comprar sus libros y le dieron su disco y todo para que aprendara ingles.

Non-traditional school-going Mexican immigrant youth reported having limited information about schools in New York City. Non school-going youth knew less about schools in New York in general and even possessed misconceptions about their eligibility for school-going. Alternatively, youth who ended up attending English courses, as well as some of the non school-going youth possessed information about English schools, even prior to their enrollment. Mexican immigrant youth who possessed this information were more likely to have relatives and friends who were taking English classes more than non school-going youth and thus acquired knowledge about classes this way. Both groups, however, knew little to nothing about attending traditional high schools.

Interests in schooling

Youth's interests in schooling usually negatively corresponded with their commitment to work. The more youth worked, the less interested they were in attending classes. Perhaps partly explaining the gaps in knowledge that the youth possessed about different types of schooling [no knowledge about traditional high schools, some knowledge about English classes], all of the non school-going Mexican youth reported being interested in some sort of informal classes, such as English or computing, to assist them in the workplace, and only if their work schedules would allow them to take these courses.

All of the non school-going youth discuss wanting to attend English classes so that they could learn skills that are valued in the labor market field. When asked why she began to think

about enrolling in English classes, Carolina responded that once in New York, she began to realize that not knowing English limited one's employment choices in the city.

Carolina: I began to worry about the language [English] because not knowing English, and that limited me in the work because for example, working in the city requires English, even if it is very diverse, English is required there.

Empezo a preocuparme por el lenguaje porque no sabe ingles, y ese me limite en el trabajo porque por ejemplo, de trabajar en la ciudad se requiere ingles, aunque es muy diverso, se requiere ingles ahi...

Felipe, although never having attended English classes had already observed the exchange rate for knowing English in the labor market. He knew that speaking English helps you get a job easily.

Felipe: [Is there something you would like to learn?] English because it helps you more, if you go, they give you work, you know.

[Tienes algo que te gustaria aprender?] El ingles porque te ayude mas, porque si tu vas, te dan trabajo, tu sabes.

Interestingly enough, only one youth who had taken English courses was interested in continuing her studies to achieve a more valuable educational credential. After leaving her English classes, Carolina was interested in obtaining a GED and had searched for programs around her neighborhood. After finding a program and enrolling, the program inexplicably closed down. She was in the midst of searching for a new program or school.

Alternatively, many of the youth who had taken English courses had no interest in continuing their studies and obtaining a high school or equivalency education. In the words of Jose Luis, if that was what he wanted, he would have stayed in Mexico. Likewise, Narciso had no desire to spend more time in school, away from work. Following his original orientation and reason to be in New York City, to work and earn money, he had no interest in attending traditional high school.

For the majority of the non traditional school-going youth, their only educational interests were in taking English classes. These youth had observed and heard that possessing English language skills could earn the youth higher wages and advance them in the labor market queue. With knowledge of only the secondary labor market which really does not value higher educational credentials, and in fact, may penalize them [as many unauthorized immigrants with advanced educational credentials have found], the youth were unaware of the benefits more advanced schooling could bring them. Advanced schooling would have benefits in the primary labor market, a sector of the educational field they were unfamiliar with, had no access to, and knew little to nothing about.

Enrolling in English Classes

Among the Mexican youth who either were currently taking or had taken English classes in the past, three reasons, sometimes overlapping, emerged for their enrollment. First of all, family members with whom the youth were staying feared that their absence from the educational field would lead to suspicion and/or arrest, so these family members paid for and enrolled the youth into the English schools. Secondly, relatives, friends, or even customers of the stores where the Mexican youth worked either provided the youth with information about English classes, or in the case of Pedro, accompanied the youth to the English school's registration site. Lastly, some Mexican youth reported that it was their inability to communicate effectively, as well as the knowledge that more effective English communication may lead to higher pay that led them to seek out information and ultimately enroll into English classes.

The use of social capital to enter into the educational field

Mexican immigrant youth utilize different connections including kin, friend and customers to make their way into the educational fields. Depending on the agent who informs,

encourages, and sometimes provides economic capital to enter into the field, the youth are able to access different types of ESL schools and programs in New York City. In the cases of the youth who attended for-profit ESL schools (the majority of cases), the youth not only were informed about these schools by their older relatives/guardians, but these relatives also paid for their registration, enrollment and books. Like leading a horse to water, not only did these relatives bring the youth to the edges of the field, but provided them with resources to participate in it so that the youth could obtain valuable cultural/linguistic capital.

Approximately a third of the English class-going Mexican youth were enrolled in English classes by family members. In these cases, family members with whom they were staying researched the schools and paid for the English classes, mostly to prevent them from truancy suspicion or arrest, as they waited to enter into the labor market. In the case of Narciso, his brother enrolled him in English classes. Arriving at age 17, his brother had taken English classes at ZONI and, in Narciso's words, made him take classes there as well.

Narciso: [How did you know about this school?] My brother, he studied there, he sent me there. My brother told me, he made me take...that I went to study.

[Como conocias de este escuela?] Mi hermano, el estudio ahí, el me mando alla. Mi hermano me dijo, me hice tomar...que fuera estudiar.

Likewise, Gabriel was enrolled in an English class provided by a non-profit because his uncle and brother attended classes through the same organization.

Gabriel: [How did you find out about the school?] Ah, because my uncle goes there, and also my brother. [And why did you register?] Because my uncle took me, because they studied there.

[Como enteraste de la escuela?] Ah, porque mi tio va ahí, y tambien mi hermano. [Y porque inscribiste?] Porque me llevo mi tio, porque ellos estudiaron alla.

Worried about his underage presence in New York, Marco's older brother had tried to enroll him in a high school, but faced major opposition from Marco. He had researched the

school, knew its location and registration date, but Marco rejected this plan. He simply had no interest in school.

Additionally, the youth reported having older friends and acquaintances who were enrolled in English classes and invited the youth to attend with them. Mexican immigrant youth also found their ways into English courses through the interest of customers who patronized their stores and restaurants. In the case of one Mexican youth, Pedro, the proximity of his place of employment, as well as its popularity with young college students and perhaps their urgings (and social consciousness), led to his enrollment in English classes

Pedro: Aha, so some from Columbia, since many go there to eat, no, they told me that there was an English school, why don't you enter, [sponsored] by the university, and then I told him that I was going to go look, and already, I am in my second semester. And like that I went, we went, he accompanied me, I don't remember his name...

Aha, unas de Columbia, como van muchas a comer alli, no, me dijo que hay una escuela de ingles, porque no entras, de la universidad, y luego le dije que yo iba ir a ver, y ya, estoy en mi segundo semestre. A ahí me fue, fuimos, me acompaño, no recuerdo como se llama...

Likewise, although not yet enrolling in English courses, Manuel reported receiving encouragement and information from a customer who frequented the store where he worked to enroll in classes and gave him information about classes that were being taught at a nearby library.

Manuel: [And now do you know of a school here in New York where Mexicans can go?] Well just recently a woman entered [into the store] and was talking, there in the store, and they say over there, there is a library, on Saint Nicholas, and it is free.

[Y ahora conoces tu escuelas aqui en Nueva York donde puede ir Mexicanos?] Bueno apenas entre y estaba hablando una senora, alla en la tienda, y dice que por ahí, hay una biblioteca, por San Nicolas, y es gratis.

Mexican immigrant youth find their ways to English as a Second Language classes in different ways and for different reasons. The youth primarily capitalized and utilized social capital to find their way to English as a Second Language classes. While family members could, in some cases, also provide the economic capital needed to attend these classes as well, which, in

most cases, led to enrollment in for-profit schools, other youth were able to rely on the information and encouragement/motivation that their friends and in some cases, customers, provided to register in cheaper, not for profit English classes. Even without individuals providing resources leading to enrollment, other youth registered and took English classes based on the knowledge that obtaining of English skills, ie cultural/linguistic capital, could be transferable in the labor market for higher wages. This knowledge was enough to drive them to enroll in English courses.

The English Schools Mexican Youth Attend

Mexican youth reported taking English courses in a variety of educational institutions, including for-profit and not-for-profit educational institutions. Almost half of the Mexican youth reported taking English classes at a for-profit educational institution such as the New York Language Center or ZONI, whereas another third of the youth reported taking courses through community based organizations. Only one Mexican youth took classes through a nearby Ivy League university's community outreach program.

For-Profit English Schools

Mexican youth who reported attending for-profit English schools attended one of two schools: New York Language Center or ZONI. These schools charged between \$135 and \$180 to register per class, with each class lasting between six and eight weeks. In addition to the course fee, they had to pay \$45 every eight days, as well as approximately \$40 per course book, which totaled between \$80 and \$120. They enrolled in classes which took place two hours a day, five days a week.

Advertised widely on New York City subways, many immigrants know of these schools. When asked why she picked New York Language Center, Carolina said that it was well known and well-attended among her friends and other immigrants.

Carolina: Well, that school, it was not difficult to find the school, because it is a school very, very known in the immigrant community. [Which is it?] It is called New York Language Center, which is in the Hotel Pennsylvania which is very known that many immigrants, or many people who I know, went there, to learn a little English.

Bueno, esta escuela, no se fue difícil para encontrar la escuela, porque es una escuela muy, muy conocida entre la comunidad de inmigrantes. [cual es?] Se llama New York Language Center, que es en el Hotel Pennsylvania que esta muy conocida que muchísimos inmigrantes, o muchos conocidos míos, fueron ahí, para aprender un poco de inglés.

Although Carolina said that the school was well-known and attended in her [Mexican] community, the youth described taking courses in diverse classrooms, with, not other Mexicans, but with adults from many other countries including China, Poland, and others. This ability to interact with people of diverse backgrounds from other countries was a characteristic of the classes that all of the youth who attended for-profit schools mentioned and seemed to enjoy.

Carolina: Yes, the students, with the students, yes there was more diversity, um, there were in a classroom of twenty-five, there were four or five Latinos, the majority were Europeans, white Europeans who came from Poland, Greece...um, they came from Russia, all of those countries.

Si, los alumnos, con los alumnos si habia mas diversidad, este, habian como en un salon de 25, habia cuatro o cinco latinos, la mayoria eran europeos, blanco europeos que venian de Polonia, de Grecia...este venian de Rusia, todos esos paises.

Jose Luis believed that the diversity of nationalities represented in his classroom and the ability to interact with people from other countries was one of the advantages of his taking of English classes.

Jose Luis: The classes were good because you related with people from other countries, Japanese, Polish, from various countries.

Eran buenas las clases, porque relacionaste con gente de otros paises, japoneses, polacos, de varias paises.

Not for-profit English Schools

Mexican youth who attended not for profit English classes sponsored by community-based organizations were unsure of the names of the sponsoring organizations. In several cases, the classes were held after hours in public schools and youth would merely sign in and go to their classrooms. These classes were free, with youth only having to pay for books.

Cesar: [Where did you go? Do you remember the name of the place or if it was a school?] No, it was help for all of the people who wanted to learn English, and they did not charge, it was free. You would go there, you just signed in, and you would pass to the classrooms. [Donde fuiste? Recuerdas el nombre del lugar o si fue como una escuela?] No, fue una ayuda para toda la gente que querian aprender ingles, y no cobraron era gratis. Ahí ibas, no mas te apuntabas, y te pasabas para los salones.

Gabriel also could not recall the name of the organization that sponsored his English classes, but like many community-based organizations who did not have their own classrooms in their facilities, the organization was using public school classrooms to hold their own classes.

Gabriel: Well, it is like two or three floors, but I think it is a school but in the afternoons they give English classes.
Pues, es como dos o tres pisos, pues creo es una escuela pero en las tardes le dan clases de ingles.

In spite of differences in the type of school attended, Mexican immigrant youth reported undergoing similar experiences at both types of schools. Conducted entirely in English, the classes were difficult at first, but as the youth spent more time in the field and in these particular courses, students acquired linguistic knowledge and the courses became easier.

Jose Luis: Practically, you did not practice Spanish there, there, it was pure English, the teacher just spoke in English, and well, it was to pay attention, no? [And how were the classes?] At first, the classes were difficult because, you know, you come here with fear, you do not know anything, only the language that is practiced in Mexico, of Spanish, and you have to try, they don't teach what you want, at first it was a little difficult, but I continued and it began to be easier for me.

Practicamente no practicaste el espanol ahi era puro ingles el maestro solo no hablaba en ingles, y pues era de poner atencion, no? [Y como eran las clases?] Al principio las clases eran dificiles porque que tu sabes, tu vienes aquí con miedo, no sabes nada, solamente el idioma que practican en Mexico, del Espanol, y tienes que intenter, no se enseñar los lo que tu querias, al principio era poquito difícil, pero sigio y empece de ser mas facil para mi.

Regardless of the type of institution, for profit or not for profit, the Mexican immigrant youth were also mixed in their evaluations of their own learning in their English classes. None of the youth described learning a lot, and they mostly described learning experiences in which they felt that they learned very little.

Both Narciso and Carolina described learning experiences in which they learned little English in their classrooms. Mexican youth were critical of their instructors and were unsure whether they were to blame or they themselves could be blamed for their limited English learning.

Narciso: Well, it was good, I learned a little, not much, eh..
Pues era bien,, aprendi poco, no mucho, eh..

Both Carolina and Jose Luis were disappointed with their teachers. Not only did the youth believe that the teachers were not effective, they also complained about the teachers' chronic tardiness to class. Carolina was suspicious that her teachers were uncertified volunteers.

Carolina: So then, the quality of my teachers, well, the teachers who I had, they were horrible, because the majority were volunteers, they were not certified for that. [And they did not pay them?] Yes, I think that they gave them something, but some were volunteers and were not certified for the job.

Entonces, la calidad de mis maestros, bueno, los maestros que yo tuve, eran malisimas porque la mayoria eran voluntarios,, no estaban certificados para eso. [Y no pagaron a ellos?] Si, creo que les daban algo pero algunos si eran voluntarios, y no estaban certificados por el trabajo.

Jose Luis also complained about his English teachers. Reminiscent of some of the complaints about their teachers in Mexico, these teachers also arrived tardy to class. Jose Luis believed that this was particularly unjust because he, or his father, was paying for the class.

Jose Luis: And that the teacher sometimes arrived a little late, like twenty minutes, it did not seem just because someone is paying and they do not give you a complete class, it doesn't seem right.

Y que el maestro a veces llego un poquito tardado, como veinte minutos, no se me hizo justo porque alguno esta pagando y no te dan clase completo, no me hace bien.

Mexican immigrant youth who attend English as a Second Language classes enroll in

both for-profit classes, as well as the less expensive, not for profit courses. Youth who enter into for-profit institutions are usually able to do so because of a family member who funds their education, while youth who attended ESL classes in not-for-profit institutions usually did so after being encouraged to enroll by friends or acquaintances who knew of these, largely free or inexpensive institutions. Regardless of the types of institutions, however, the youth largely reported having mediocre experiences where they felt that they learned little. Their teachers were unprofessional in some cases, arriving late, or were outright difficult to understand, which led to diminished learning in their classrooms.

Dropping out of English classes

Ultimately, however, Mexican youth dropped out of English courses after only a few months of enrollment. None of the youth reported attending classes for more than six months, and only one of the youth was still taking classes at the time of interview.

All of the youth had continued to take classes beyond the first level of English courses, but in all of the cases except for one, left soon after for various reasons, the most common being a lack of time.

Jose Luis: I reached the second level, I finished it, and I took like two weeks to the third level, but I went to work and I left the school.

Llegue hasta el segundo nivel, lo termine, y tome como dos semanas al tercer nivel, pero me fui a trabajar y deje a la escuela.

Luis stopped attending English classes because his uncle could no longer afford to pay for his studies, nor was he interested in paying for his own studies. He wanted to just work, so he left the courses to focus all of his time on working. Maybe later he would return to take more classes. Carolina dropped out of English as a Second Language courses because she felt they were a waste of time. Taught by an incomprehensible teacher, she was soon bored and felt that she was not learning much. She dropped out soon after.

Carolina: Carolina: Yes, I went for the first level, and I was going to enter into the second level, but I did not like it. I felt like I was not learning anything, I felt very bored. [and were you bored in the first level, or no?] Yes, well, the first level was much better because of her accent, you could understand it. In the second level [because of the teacher] I considered it a waste of time, that I learn nothing here, and I did not know if it was me, or the professor, or it was the course, so then I decided to stop.

Si, fue por el primer nivel, e iba entrar al segundo nivel, pero no me gusto. Senti que no aprendia nada, senti muy aburrido. [Y en el primer nivel sentias aburrido o no?] Si, bueno el primer nivel fue mucho mejor por que su acento, podrias entender.

Pero en el segundo nivel [por la maestra], yo le considera como un gasto de tiempo, que yo aprendo nada aquí, y no sabia si era yo, o la profesora, o era el curso, entonces decidi a parar.

Mexican immigrant youth left the educational field, or English as a Second Language classes after short periods of time for various reasons. Mostly importantly, the youth were restless to work, and only work, and earn money – all reasons why they immigrated in the first place. They wanted to focus on this endeavor and maybe, return back to English classes later. The delayed value of English acquisition was not as attractive as the immediate acquisition of wages and money, and they opted to pursue the latter. Lastly, in the case of one youth, due to the poor quality of teaching, she soon was bored, upset and discouraged, and just left the program.

Ideas about exchanging Cultural Capital in the New York Labor Market Field

In the United States, the idea that educational credentials, or at least a high school diploma are needed to obtain any full-time job, is widely circulated and used to motivate American youth, immigrant and native, to complete high school. Additionally, for most U.S. born youth, employers do ask for proof of high school completion to fill even minimum-wage, unskilled jobs. For unskilled immigrants, the secondary labor market has emerged where, more important than educational credentials, is the immigrants' citizenship status, which has been equated with a willingness to work for longer hours than the legal weekly limit, for less than minimum wage. These immigrants are hired to perform jobs that rely less on skills learned and accredited through

a diploma or certificate, and more on the immigrants' orientations towards hard work, i.e., willingness to work long hours and in sometimes physically demanding work, for low pay.

Most of the non-traditional school-going Mexican immigrant youth, both those who had never entered into the educational field and those who had taken English classes, did not believe that formal education, or the skills obtained from formal education were necessary to obtain and retain a job. When asking the youth about their ideas regarding the levels of education that Mexicans needed to have completed to work in the United States, most of the youth did not believe that one needed many years of education, in Mexico or in the United States. They knew this because they had not been asked to produce any sort of proof of educational credentials in their own workplaces.

For this reason, Gabriel did not believe that the number of years they had studied prior to or after immigration mattered to obtain a job in New York.

Gabriel: [What is the highest school or educational level that you have seen that Mexicans need to complete to work in the United States?] Eh, well, I have not seen that they ask [for], studies from over there from Mexico. [So you do not think that they are necessary?] For the jobs here, well they do not ask for studies from there, they do not know if they are finished, like in construction and that, they do not ask.

[Que es el mas alto nivel escolar o de educacion has visto que los mexicanos necesitan cumplir para trabajar en los Estados Unidos?] Eh, pues, yo no ha visto que les piden, estudios de alla de Mexico. [So no crees que es necesario?] Para los trabajos de aca, pues no te piden estudios de alla, no saben si acaban, como en construccion y eso, no te lo piden.

Likewise, Narciso observed that no one needed any formal studies to obtain work in the United States. One only needed to ask for work to be hired.

Narciso: And to work in the United States, what level of education do you think you need to work here? Without studies, just ask for work and that's it. [But do they ask you for your studies, papers or something?] No, you just ask for work and that's it.

[Y para trabajar en los E.U., que nivel de educacion crees tu que necesitas para trabajar aqui?] Sin estudiar, no mas pedir trabajo y ya. [Te piden tus estudios, papeles o algo?] No, no mas pides trabajo y ya.

Instead of needing to possess formal educational studies or the mastery of skills that accompanied participation in formal educational institutions, Mexican youth believed that, in the jobs in which they were employed, being intelligent and possessing common sense was sufficient enough to perform their work responsibilities. Manuel was working in a flower shop where he believed that without studies, he was able to draw upon his own intelligence to perform his job well.

Manuel: Well me, where I am, I say that no [you do not have to go to school to perform my job], because all you have to do is use the mind to do different things, like we say, like put flowers, there is pure mind, no, it's like in the kitchen, that, um, you have to be with this to prepare the food, there, to sell flowers, you only have to more or less calculate the price to sell the flowers, that the people too are used to selling, fifteen dollars, twenty dollars, but only the prices to do.

Bueno yo, donde estoy, yo digo que no, porque solo tienes que utilizar la mente, para hacer diferentes cosas, como diriamos, como poner las flores, ahi es puro mente, no, es como en la cocina, que, este tiene que estar con este para preparar la comida, ahi, para vender las flores, no mas tienes que mas o menos calcular el precio para vender las flores, que la gente tambien, que estan acostumbrado a comprar, quince pesos, veinte pesos, pero no mas los precios para hacer.

Samuel also believed that being intelligent, working hard and following directions, or essentially, being a “good worker,” skills not usually explicitly discussed or privileged as learned in school, were sufficient enough to successfully perform the jobs where he had been employed.¹⁴⁵

Samuel: Mmmm, no well, the school is not as important as the intelligence that one has, and the effort that one puts in their job, more than anything, the effort, because if you go, look at me, and then I go to work and they ask me, do you know how to do this, and I say no, but if you tell me how to do it, you only have to tell me what to do, what you put, and I do it. Show me that and I will do it.

Mmm, no pues, no es tan importante la escuela si la inteligencia que uno tenga y el esfuerzo que uno pone en su trabajo, mas que nada, el esfuerzo porque si tu vas, ve como yo, luego voy a trabajar y me preguntan, sabes como hacer esto, y le digo no, pero si tu me dices como lo hago, tu no mas me dime que lo hago, que lo eches, y yo lo hago. Ensename eso y yo lo hago.

¹⁴⁵ Although not discussed as being the primary focus of school curriculum, these skills compose part of the Hidden Curriculum (cite!) in which usually working class youth are taught skills to be good workers for jobs in which they will be performing rote tasks and they will be working for others, taking orders. Although I was unable to observe whether or not these skills were learned in Mexican schools, the youth did learn these skills through their early involvement in unpaid and paid work in Mexico.

Additionally, instead of learning skills that would lead to their workplace advancement in school, youth believed that they were able to learn the skills needed to advance in their jobs at their workplaces. Felipe was working in a restaurant where he was learning to cook food and make cakes and ice cream.

Felipe: [Okay, do you think it is important or necessary to go to school to do the jobs that you are doing now?] No. [No?] No. Where I am learning is here [in my work], and that is what is helping me. [And how has it helped you?] Well it helps me because I am learning things to raise me up. [When you say, “up,” you are referring to...?] To learn more things and have a better job position.

[Okay, piensas que era importante o necesario de irse a la escuela para hacer los trabajos que estas haciendo ahorita?] No. [No?] No. Donde yo voy aprendiendo es aquí [en mi trabajo], y eso es lo que me esta ayudando. [Y como te esta ayudando?] Pues me ayuda porque estoy aprendiendo mas cosas para subirme pa’ arriba. [Cuando dices “pa’ arriba,” refieres a...?] Aprender mas cosas y tener mejor posicion de trabajo.

Other youth did believe that they needed some sort of schooling was necessary to be hired in New York City. The youth who responded that they believed education was necessary to perform job responsibilities were very specific in naming which skills they believed one had to obtain in schools to work in the jobs they desired: English. Several youth believed that it was necessary to attend school in New York so that they could learn English and eventually work in particular work positions that required interaction with the public, including customers.

Julio was currently working in a shoe store where sometimes he helped tend to customers, but more frequently he was able to observe shoe salesmen help customers. When asked whether or not it was necessary for Mexican youth to attend school in New York, he responded that he believed that it was necessary to attend school in New York but only so that one could learn English and improve one’s performance in their workplace. If one learned English, one could better interact with others at work, including employers and customers.

Jose Luis partially credited his English classes that he took prior to his entry into the labor market in New York with his ability to land a job working in a Japanese restaurant. Although he was hired as a dishwasher at this first job, he was required to go through an interview, in English, with the restaurant owners, both Japanese but English-speaking. The language skills he learned in his English classes helped him get through it and eventually land the job.

Jose Luis: [In the job that you are doing right now, do you believe that it was necessary or is necessary to attend school?] Yes, because if I had not attended school [English], I would not have this position [cook], maybe, because in school I began to develop a little more with the people, I wanted to start in the kitchen, now that I interviewed, they told me how much you are going to earn, you are going to earn this tip money, you are going to do that, you are going to do another, I went to speak with the chef, I told him “what is going to be my position?” and he told me that I was going to do this, you are going to have to do that, you are going to be in charge of doing this, and I was a little nervous doing the interview, it was in English.

[En el trabajo que estas haciendo ahorita, crees tu que era necesario o es necesario asistir a la escuela?] Si, porque si yo no asistia a la escuela [de ingles] no iba tener esta posicion [cocinero], quizas, porque en la escuela yo me empeze a desarrollar poquito mas con las personas, yo queria empezar en la cocina, ahora si que yo me entreviste, me dijo, cuanto te vas a ganar, vas a ganar este de propina, vas hacer esto, vas hacer otro, fui para hablar con el chef, yo le dije, “cual va ser mi posicion?” y me dijo que iba hacer esto, vas a tener que hacer esto, vas estar encargado de hacer esto, y fui poquito nervioso hacer la entrevista, era en ingles.

Additionally, Jose Luis especially believed that one had to take English classes in New York to earn higher wages. In contrast to working in businesses owned by Latinos or Spanish speakers, one would be able, he thought, to earn more money working in establishments where the owners were other races and ethnicities, namely those who spoke English. In that case, one should go to school only to learn English so that one could communicate with these owners, be hired and earn higher wages.

Jose Luis: [And do you think that Mexican immigrants need to go to some type of education here in the United States, if it is a necessity to work?] Eh, because if you want to have a salary, not very low, you have to interview, at least in the Mexican or Latino places, they do not pay very good salaries, you have to look for those of other countries, well, the owners of other countries, they are the ones who pay a little more, you have to handle

English, for an interview, you have to do it in English, by force, and that is very necessary here.

[Y crees que los Mexicanos inmigrantes necesitan irse a un tipo de educacion aqui en los Estados Unidos, si es una necesidad para trabajar?] Eh, porque si tu quieres tener un salario, no muy bajo, tu tienes que entrevistarse, a lo menos en los lugares Mexicanos o Latinos, no te pagan bien los salarios, tu tienes que buscarlos de otros paises, pues, los duenos de otros paises, ellos son que se pagan poquito mas, tienes que manejar tu el ingles, para una entrevista, tienes que hacerlo en ingles, a fuerzas, y eso es muy necesario aqui.

Julio also believed that one needed to go to school to learn English to be able to work at his job, waiting on customers, a type of job that other Mexican immigrants were employed in. Going to school and learning English would enable Mexicans to engage with other individuals in this particular type of workplace, namely customers and clients.

Julio: [Okay, um, do you think that it was or is necessary to go to school for these jobs?] Mmm, well, to help people. [How?] To help the people, to ask for things like with the people who go to ask, maybe, they speak English, and then you do not speak English, and then you cannot know that, like since you speak Spanish, and they speak English.

[Okay, este, piensas tu que era o es necesario de irse a la escuela para estos trabajos?] Mmm, bueno para ayudar la gente. [Como?] Para ayudar la gente, para pedir cosas como con la gente que van a pedir, a la mejor, hablan ingles, y luego tu no hablas ingles, y luego no puede saber eso, como que tu hablas espanol, y ellos hablan ingles.

In New York, the majority of the Mexican immigrant youth were unaware of a primary labor market in which formal educational credentials were necessary for work. When asked about needing school to obtain employment in New York City, the Mexican immigrant youth provided responses that reflected the rules associated with obtaining secondary market jobs, or the jobs that they are employed in. These non-traditional school-going Mexican immigrant youth knew that they did not have to attend high school to obtain and retain employment. Employers did not ask to see credentials, and instead of credentials, Mexican immigrant youth believed that their intelligence and hard-work, as well as the acquisition of human capital/skills on the job were sufficient for their employment and mobility. English, though, in some cases, was needed not only to obtain a job, but also to perform it better. Employed by English speakers

whose clients were also English speakers, some Mexican immigrant youth knew that speaking some English would not only assist one during an interview but with customers as well.

From the youth's responses, and as evidenced in other sections of this chapter, it is clear that the youth know very little about the primary labor market, and instead operate and either acquire or think about acquiring skills that are only valuable in the secondary labor market. Although participating in the overall labor market field, the youth have acquired particular positions in a particular sector/segment that does not rely on formal educational credentials--the secondary labor market. Without formal educational credentials, it would be very difficult to switch into the higher paying, higher status primary labor market within the New York City labor market field. The youth however, did not appear to consider switching, either now or in the future, as their point of reference during these responses was the labor market they were currently working in.

Remaining Outside of High School Classes

Youth who either had not attended traditional classes, or had not intended to take traditional classes but had, for various reasons, taken English courses, were staying out of traditional course at the time of their interview because they were in New York City to work. Working was their primary activity, and the labor market field was the primary field in which they were going to participate. It is a fact that for these youth – due to characteristics including their age, their independence, their legal status and the types of jobs they are employed in – their engagement with the labor market and their expected engagement with the educational field are in conflict with each other. In other words, the labor niche in which Mexican youth are participating, where they work at all hours of the day and night for eight hours or more to support themselves on meager earnings, place particular demands on them that are in conflict

with the ways in which schools are organized. This is the case not just for youth of this age, but, frankly, even for adults with similar credentials. Because these youth are here to work, then, their participation in the labor market field will dictate whether or not, and how, they will participate in the educational field – and not the other way around as it is for other similarly aged youth. It is only when participation in the educational field can contribute to their improved positioning in the labor market field, without disrupting their current positioning, that Mexican youth even entertain the idea of school-going.

Acting like adults, they decide for themselves in which fields they will participate, as well as which will be their primary fields and their secondary fields of participation once they arrive in New York. In the cases of non-traditional school-going youth, they are unambiguous in their plan to immigrate to New York to participate only in the labor market field, not in the educational field, and more specifically, a particular segment in the labor market. In some cases, the youth must compromise and enter into the educational field, but only for temporary periods of time. When asked why he had not entered into high school, Luis makes it very clear that he immigrated to participate only in one field, the labor market, and not in anything else.

Luis: Well, because I came with the idea of working, no, to be able to do something, no? Bueno, porque yo venia con el idea de trabajar, no, poder hacer algo, no?

Likewise, when his father tried to convince him to attend a public high school in New York, Jose Luis told him that he had no desire to attend high school in New York. If he had wanted to continue participating in an educational field, or continue his studies, he would have stayed in Mexico.

Jose Luis: Because my papa, the idea was that I was going to enter to study, in high school, and I was going to wait, no, some months until classes started in September, the high school, no, but I told him no, that I just wanted to study a little English, and enter to work, that's why I came. If I was going to continue studying, better that I would have stayed in Mexico.

Porque mi papa, el idea de el era que me metia a estudiar, al high school, y iba esperar, no, unos meses hasta que empezaba los clases en Septiembre, el high school, no, pero yo le dije que no, que yo no mas queria estudiar un poquito de ingles, y meterme a trabajar, por eso me vino. Si iba seguir estudiando, mejor me quedaba en Mexico.

With the idea that their primary field will be the labor market, they arrive and if they enter into the labor market first, they organize their schedules around this participation. Immediately, they are aware that they have no time to participate in the educational field. For some youth, this meant foregoing not only high school, but also foregoing English as a Second Language classes.

Felipe: [And why have you not attended school until now?] What has happened is that I enter [into work] early and it does not give me time to go to school, I have to look for one [English school] in the afternoons.

[Y porque no has asistido a la escuela hasta ahorita?] Lo que pasa es que entra temprano y no me da tiempo para ir a la escuela,, tengo que buscar uno de las tardes.

Most of the Mexican youth believe that it is very difficult to participate in both fields, even if it is only English classes. Again, Mexican youth blame the rigidity of the two fields' rules, namely temporal rules, for the difficulty of simultaneous participation.

Jose Luis: It is possible, but it is very difficult. You can, a lot of that gets difficult, so to say, like the arrangement that I have, it would be very difficult for me because if I want to continue studying, I would have to wake up at seven in the morning, to enter into school at eight and leave at ten to go to work, and well, the time that I would have seems very short to me, more to sleep, I get home at one in the morning, and after, I take a bath and all, I go to bed like at two or three, to get up at seven, it is too little time for me.

Es posible, pero es muy dificil. Si puedes, se dificulta mucho eso, por decir, ,como el arreglo que yo tengo yo me hace muy dificil porque si yo quiero seguir estudiando, tendra levantar a las siete de la manana, para entrar a las ocho a la escuela y salirme a las diez para irme a trabajar, y pues, me hace muy corto el tiempo que yo tendria, mas para dormir, yo llega a mi casa a la una de la manana, y después que me bano y todo, me acuesta como a las dos o tres, para levantarme a las siete es muy poco tiempo para mi.

Of course, it is not merely lack of time that prevents Mexican youth from attending classes

whether English or traditional high school classes. Of critical importance here are the excessive work schedules that Mexican immigrants face entering into the post-industrial, New York City labor market, as well as the conflicts existing between this field and the educational fields in New York, in terms of their temporal rules.

Work and Class Schedules

Unfortunately for Mexican youth who would like to go to school and work, the temporal rules of the two fields, or the times at which each field demanded maximum participation, during the day time, conflicted with each other. While most participation in the educational field, especially for teenage youth, occurs during the day and early night, most jobs also required that the youth work during the day and night. If youth were not working during the day, they were most likely sleeping before they would enter into work later that day, and then would work well into the night and/or early morning.

Mexican youth, then, were unable to participate in both fields. For Mexican youth working full-time, their work schedules conflicted with schedules for both traditional classes and informal classes such as English or computing. Julio was one such youth who found it difficult to both manage both a work and school schedule.

Julio: Well, here too it is a little difficult to hope [for] because there are only times, in the morning and in the afternoon [for classes], and it doesn't give me time, I don't see how to attend school.

Pues aqui tambien es poco difcil que espera porque no mas hay horarios, en la manana y en la tarde, y no me da tiempo, no veo como asistir a la escuela.

Likewise, Armando also believed that his work schedule and class schedules conflicted.

Armando: Well, I think, that maybe, yes, that maybe I could do that [go to school and work at the same time], but what I want to do is work, and maybe study, but only if I could find a study, or a high school at night, or in the afternoons, if I could find that. But I don't know, I have asked, the truth is that I have asked, but...[Who have you asked?] My sisters, my sister-in-laws, they say that it is difficult to find something like that, more or less, at the high school level.

Lastly, not only did the hours of classes conflict with the youth's schedules, but the weekly organization of the course and the rules regarding the start and end of the different levels of courses, in relation to the nature of the job schedules the youth worked also prevented Mexican youth from attending English courses. The youth had little control over their weekly work

schedules and employers could change them at any moment. Without the ability to have a set work schedule, or even a schedule that could include school-going, they could not commit to a set school schedule.

Even though Jose Luis had attended English classes before and believed that going to school to learn English was necessary to work in New York City, he was no longer taking English courses. Because of his work schedule, he would end up paying for classes he would miss, as well as miss valuable instruction that he needed to advance his language skills. Although he paid for a full week of English classes, he was only able to attend classes two days per week, missing three days of classes.

Jose Luis: Umm, like I told you, it is because of time, if I worked only from four until eleven thirty, I could enter into school from ten in the morning to one in the afternoon, but now, because of time, it is because I cannot, for example, right now [during interview] I could be in school, but it is not convenient for me to pay the entire week, to go only Mondays and Tuesdays, on my days off, but it is because it is not convenient for me. Umm, como te dije, es por el tiempo, si yo me trabajaba solo desde cuatro hasta los once y medio, me podria entrar a la escuela desde las diez hasta la una de la tarde, pero ahorita, por tiempo, es porque no puedo, por ejemplo, ahorita yo podria estar en la escuela, pero no me conviene de pagar todo la semana, para irme solo lunes y martes, en mis dias libres, pero es que no me conviene, por eso.

In Samuel's case, he has never been able to coordinate his interest in English classes with the starting date of the courses. He complained that when he was ready to take English classes, classes had already started. However, Samuel was not well informed about start dates, even if he expressed sincere interest. The strict rules that require enrollment and attendance by a particular date, and his inability to keep track of these schedules kept Samuel from ever having taken an English class, even though he was interested.

Samuel: [Okay, um, so why have you not attended a single class?] I don't know, if I knew, I don't know the reason for not having attended, and then when I want to go, to the English schools, I cannot because they are no longer registering at that time that I want to go, in the time. And when I do not want to go, no.

[Okay, este, porque no has asistido a ningun clase?] No se, si te supiera, yo no se la razon por no ha asistido y luego cuando quiero ir, a las escuelas de ingles, no puedo porque ya no estan inscribiendo en ese tiempo cuando yo quiero ir en el tiempo. Y cuando no quiero ir, no.

Likewise, the youth's unaccompanied status and economic independence also create difficulties for their school-going. In order to support themselves and their families back home on meager wages, the youth must work long hours in jobs without schedule flexibility. These financial obligations, then, also created a strain on their ability to go to school, both English as a Second Language classes or traditional high school programs.

Manuel: How can I tell you? Because apart, I worked here like twelve hours, and then they only give me one day of rest, besides the rent that I have to pay monthly, and here, no one pays for you, here, each person pays their own rent, food, I live with my brother, but each person has to pay what they consume, that for me, here, it has been difficult, to go to school.

Como te dire? Porque aparte, yo trabaje aqui como doce horas, y luego solo me dan un dia de descanso, aparte la renta que tengo que pagar mensual, y aqui nadie te la paga, aqui, cada quien paga tu renta, la comida, yo vive con mi hermano, pero cada quien paga lo que consume, lo que entonces para mi, aqui, ha sido dificil, para ir a la escuela.

The labor market field, and specifically the segment comprised of low-wage and low-skill jobs is not designed for simultaneous participation with the full or part-time educational field. Likewise, the educational field, specifically traditional formal schooling, but also English courses, are not designed for simultaneous full-time participation in the labor market field. In addition, the act of living independently in New York City, as well as sending money home, does not allow for much time to do other activities besides working.

Characterized by long hours with unstable schedules that can run well into the wee hours of the morning, as well as by low wages that demand long employment hours just to meet one's expenses, the jobs in which Mexican immigrant youth are employed do not take into account the possibility of their school-going. In addition, traditional high school schedules, operating on mainstream, Western ideas of dependent adolescence, do not take into account the possibility of

the necessity of full-time employment for financial independence. As a result, these fields are misaligned and incompatible, and more importantly, the positions in the employment fields that the youth hold make participation in both traditional and/or non-traditional educational fields extremely difficult, if not impossible.

How Length of Stay in New York City impacts School Enrollment

In spite of stereotypical and inaccurate characterizations of Mexican immigrants wanting to “anchor” themselves in the United States, these Mexican youth discussed staying here for only short periods of time, and behaved accordingly. Hence, Mexican youth had not learned English because of the short time they had planned on staying in New York City. Having planned on being here for less than three years, several of the Mexican youth viewed learning English as a significant time investment that would not have a worthwhile payoff if they were returning to Mexico soon. In addition, entering into the educational field for whatever type of schooling/whatever position might very well have symbolized a greater commitment to staying for a longer period of time in New York. Rather, by learning English in schools, perhaps the youth were running the risk of establishing roots in the United States, something that these Mexican youth were trying to avoid.

The perceived length of time that Mexican youth believed they would stay in New York City impacted their thinking and their decisions to enroll or not enroll in schooling. Since most of the Mexican youth, like their adult counterparts, believed that their immigration was to be temporary and short, some Mexican youth opted to avoid enrolling in classes. It was when they began to think that they would remain in New York City for longer periods of time that some Mexican youth began to think about enrolling in classes, especially English classes. After

participating in the New York City labor market field, they began to understand the value of knowing English.

Although Manuel had not yet taken English classes, he believed that it was necessary for someone like him to take classes in New York City if he planned to stay in New York and establish a family. When asked why he believed that, he responded that if one is thinking about staying here (long term) and starting a family, one should think about ways to advance or improve his/her work conditions. One will not always be able to do physically demanding work, and education would enable them to find less physically demanding work.

Manuel: If they think like that, about staying here, forming a family, and like yes, like they have to think about their futures, they are not going to stay like that working, doing the same things, sometimes they do not think about anything, they think that they are always going to have the same strength to do the same jobs, but that is not true, one has to think.

Si los piensan así como de quedarse aquí, formar familia y como si, como ellos tienen que pensar en sus futuros, así no van a quedar trabajando, haciendo las mismas cosas, a veces no piensan nada, piensan que siempre van a tener la misma fuerza hacerlos mismos trabajos, pero eso no es cierto, uno tiene que pensar.

In the case of Pedro, at first he resisted taking English courses because he only planned to stay in New York City for a year and a half. Four years later and still in New York City, Pedro, at the encouragement of customers who frequented his taqueria, enrolled in English classes.

Pedro: Aha. Well I thought that not me, I thought that [English classes] were not worth much, like since we want to return quickly, and then you return, and then I only came for one and a half years, but then, I stayed like four years. So then I thought, why enter into an English school if I am leaving in a few months or a year?

Aha. Pero yo creo que yo no, yo pensé que no se sirve para mucho, como nos queremos regresar pronto, y luego te regreses, y luego yo no más vino por un año y medio, pero ya, me quede como cuatro años. Entonces yo pensé, para que entra a una escuela de inglés si me voy en unos meses o un año?

After two years of living in New York City, Manuel was beginning to think that he was going to stay in New York for a bit longer. If this was the case, then, Manuel began to think that he would like to enroll in English classes.

Manuel: [If you could, would you like to take classes here in New York?] Sometimes yes, I think about it, because sometimes I think about staying for awhile, I would like to attend. [And what is awhile?] Like some eight years.

[Si podrias, te gustaria tomar clases aqui en Nueva York?] A veces si, yo lo pienso, porque a veces pienso en quedarme un buen rato, me gustaria si asistir. [Y que es un buen rato?] Como unos ocho anos.

Non-traditional school-going youth discussed thinking about and actually entering into English language classes as a result of the time they had been in New York or planned to be in New York. When youth began to think about a longer future in the city and the other life changes that could accompany that, including family formation, they began to see the utility of reentering into the educational system. In some cases, it was the realization that one had been in New York for a longer period of time than intended, and the reality of staying longer that drove youth into English classes.

How Mexican Youth Experience the Life Course in the Educational Field

Of the youth who actually attended English classes in New York, several discussed being underage in the classrooms, as the other students were, on average, slightly older than they were, in their twenties. Being underage, or simply younger, however, did not appear to be an issue in spite of the age requirements associated with taking adult English classes. Not only were they allowed to take the classes, but taking them alongside adults made them feel like adults as well.

Narciso and Gabriel both were taking classes with older individuals. In Gabriel's case, he knew that there were (implicit and explicit) rules about the ages for enrollment in English classes and traditional high school. He was also aware that he was violating the age rules of English classes, as well as the more general educational field by participating in traditional high school. Whereas his classmates were in their twenties, at age sixteen, he knew was too young to be taking the course. Instead, he knew that this course was for adults, whereas he was supposed to be attending a traditional school with other youth his own age.

Narciso: [And your classmates, were they your age or were they older?] They were older, like 25.

[Y tus companeros de clase, eran de tu edad o tenian mas de edad?] Tenian mas de edad como de 25.

Likewise, Gabriel knew that if schools were age-segregated, and he was technically not in the right school for his age.

Gabriel: [The school] it is more for people who are twenty-one years old, because I have to still be in [traditional] school.

[La escuela] asegun es mas para gente de veinte y un anos, porque yo tengo que estar todavia en la escuela. .

All of the youth who attended English as a second Language classes discussed being treated and feeling like an adult in their classrooms. Not only were they surrounded by adults, as was discussed by Narciso and Gabriel, the youth also believed that the their teachers' treatment of the students, as well as the general idea of a for-pay school – that one is financially responsible for their own engagement with the classwork – also made them feel like adults.

In the case of Narciso, he believed that he was treated and felt like an adult in his English classes because of the lack of attention his teachers gave to their students. Unlike children who are given special attention, adults were left more on their own.

Narciso: [And how do you think you were treated there (at English school). Like an adult. [And why?] The teachers just give their classes and that's it, they don't get near you, nothing.

[Y como piensas que estabas tratado ahi?] como un adulto. [Y porque?] Los maestros no mas se dan sus clases y ya, no te acercan, ni nada.

Jose Luis felt similarly, that in these types of classes, it is moreso up to oneself to advance academically. Here, teachers would leave students alone.

Jose Luis: Because they don't, to enter into that school you are already, you can already say, by your own merit, it is not anymore that they are telling you that you have to do schoolwork, that if you do not do it you have to repeat, because if you want to work in the class, if not, no, you can enter, because you are paying, they cannot tell you anything, that is why I say that they treated me like an adult, no, an adult.

Porque ya no te, para entrar a esa escuela ya estas, ya te puedes decir, por tu propia merito, ya no es que te esta diciendo que tienes que hacer tarea, que si no lo haces la tarea tienes que reprobar, porque si quieres trabajar en la clase, si no no, puedes entrar, porque tu estas pagando, no te pueden decir nada, es por eso que digo que me trataron como un adulto, no, un adulto.

Enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes, which, formally, have age requirements [See Chapter 4], and surrounded by adult classmates, Mexican immigrant youth who enroll and complete English as a Second Language classes are treated and feel like adults during class. Different from the teacher-student relationships they experienced in Mexico, that were based on an age model of teacher-adult, student-youth, the model of teacher-student relationships is now adult-adult. Treated accordingly, the Mexican immigrant youth believed that the teachers were colder towards them, and now, the youth are no longer told what to do. As consumers who are paying for their classes, especially in the case of the youth who attended for-profit English schools, the youth can opt to complete assignments or not without major penalty or even persuasion to do so. The only penalty now is a loss of money, a type of capital that they youth, now that they are managing it themselves, are more conscious of and concerned with. Thus, in this particular segment of the educational field, being left to complete their schoolwork without higher levels of attention, surrounded by adult classmates and having to pay, the youth feel like adults in their classes.

Future Fields: There and Here

Another explanation for whether or not, and to what degree Mexican youth engaged in educational fields was based on where the youth viewed their future home, in Mexico or in the United States, as well as what they believed they would be doing. Most of the Mexican youth who were working full-time and not attending traditional school discussed wanting to return to Mexico to live and stay. Once in Mexico, some of the youth discussed returning to the Mexican educational fields, or labor market fields, in some cases, holding higher positions in this field.

Ironically though, those who wanted to return and work, the characteristics of the Mexican labor market, in their minds, were discussed as more desirable than those found in New York, even though it was an evaluation of these characteristics that were largely to blame for their departure. They would now, however, with more money in their pockets and employment experience in the United States under their belts, be able to obtain higher positions in this Mexican labor market.

Samuel was one youth who discussed wanting to complete his formal studies, but only upon his return to Mexico. He reported immigrating to New York so that he could save money to pay for his studies in a Mexican educational institution: a police academy.

Samuel: Yes, what is yes, I would like to continue with my studies. With that, already arriving in Mexico that is what I am thinking about doing, continue studying. No, I think [about] entering into an academy, a police academy there in Mexico. And I was going to do that until I was about eighteen or nineteen years, but when I came over here I was just about to turn eighteen, and then I said, no, better that I go over there, to New York, work, gather my money and already, when I am about twenty or twenty-one years, I return to Mexico, and I enroll in the academy when I already have my money to pay for my studies, that is what I thought, no? [And is that the level of education that you would like to complete?] Aha.

Si, lo que si, si me gustaria continuar mis estudios. Con eso, ya llegando en Mexico, eso es lo que pienso hacer yo, seguir estudiando. No, yo pienso en meterme en una academia, una academia de policias oficiales alli en Mexico. Y eso iba ser hasta que yo tuviera los 18 o 19 anos, pero cuando yo me vino para aca apenas iba cumplir 18, y luego yo dijo, no mejor que voy para alla, para Nueva York, trabajo, juntar mi dinero y ya cuando tengo unos 20 o 21 anos regreso para Mexico, y me meto en la academia cuando ya tengo mi dinero para pagar por mis estudios, eso es lo que pense yo, no? [Y eso es el nivel de educación que te gustaria terminar?] A-ha...

Other youth discussed returning back to Mexico so that they could reenter the labor market, but this time, obtaining either an easier job than they would have had they stayed in Mexico or in New York, or at a higher position, such as a business owner. Earning and saving money in New York City, then reentering into the Mexican economy, enabled youth to return to the Mexican labor market.

Manuel: I have always had in my mind like returning to my country because it is more peaceful, you don't have as much money but you pass it more peacefully, you work less

hours, with less depression, like if you already have your house there, and you have money to eat or you know how to work, you go passing but you know that you have to have something...here it is pure pressure, you have to work, work to pay your monthly rent, and you feel like that it is very hard, and apart from that, my family, well the majority are there in Mexico, no, so like I don't feel secure, like I think of staying here little time, no, and already return back.

Yo siempre lo ha tenido en mi mente como regresar a mi pais, porque esta mas tranquilo, no tienes tanto dinero pero lo pases tranquilo, tu trabajas menos horas, con menos depresion, como si tu ya tienes tu casa ahí, y tienes dinero para comer o sabes trabajar, tu te vas pasando pero tu sabes que tienes que tener algo..aqui es puro presion, tienes que trabajar, trabajar para pagar tu renta mensual, ,y sientas asi que es muy duro, y aparte, mi familia, bueno la mayoria esta alla en Mexico, no, entonces como yo no siento seguro, como yo pienso quedarme aquí poco, no, y ya regresarme para atras

Lastly, Narciso and Jose Luis discussed returning home and opening businesses, but not for several more years.

In the case of Narciso, his plan was to return home once he was twenty four years old, and open a business in Mexico where he would no longer be the *employee*, he would be the *employer*. Narciso speaks out loud of his desire to return to Mexico where he can assume a higher position in the labor market field than if he had stayed in Mexico, as well as if he stayed in New York.

Narciso: I think that I will live in Mexico, already in a house, already a family. [And are you going to be working or what are you going to be doing?] I think, I think, no, about putting a business. [Like what type of business?] I don't know what type of business but already to not be working over here. I want to be the owner of my own business, don't boss me around anymore, I want to boss [around].

Pienso vivir en Mexico, ya en una casa ya, una familia. [Y vas estar trabajando o que vas estar haciendo?] Pienso, pienso, no, de poner un negocio. [Como que tipo de negocio?] No se que tipo de negocio pero ya para no estar trabajando aca. Yo quiero ser el dueno de mi propio negocio, ya no me manda, yo quiero mandar.

Likewise, Jose Luis had similar plans to own his own business in Mexico.

Jose Luis: My plan is to live here between two and a half and three years and then, if everything goes well, return. [Okay, if we talk about your life, though, what is your plan?] To put a business there in Mexico.

Mi meta es de vivir aqui entre dos anos y medio o tres anos y medio y luego, ,si todo va bien, regresarme. [Okay, si hablamos de tu vida, que es tu plan?] Poner un negocio alla en Mexico.

Conclusion

Reinforcing the idea that scholars must consider Mexican immigrant youth's lives *in toto*, rather than as only a snapshot that reflects the time living in the United States, these youth's discussions revealed much about how these Mexican immigrant youth are behaving, or at least trying to, transnationally, with one eye to the fields in which they are participating in New York City, and one eye to the fields they intend to return to in Mexico. Their split vision drives their decisions to and how to participate in certain fields and not in others in New York City. The majority of the youth discussed living independent lives in which work was their primary activity, and school, sometimes, although temporarily, was their secondary activity. They intended to stay in New York City only a short time, no longer than six years, after which they would either return to Mexico to stay permanently, or go back and forth between the United States and Mexico. Then, if they did return to the United States later it would be only briefly and for the short-term, to earn money to support their lives back in Mexico. In a sense, then, the youth anticipate mostly participating in the labor market fields in New York City temporarily so that they can gain mostly economic capital, and return home to participate in fields back home, both labor market and educational. While in most cases the youth participated in the labor market in New York City so as to assert independence from their parents, i.e. sending money to pay for the construction of their own homes or businesses, others were saving their monies to invest and use upon their return to Mexico. In all of these cases, the youth currently possessed low positions in labor market and/or educational fields in New York City so that they could obtain higher positions in the labor market and/or educational fields in Mexico.

In New York City, Mexican immigrant youth reported participating in both the labor market and educational fields as adults. Put in another way, the youth were either enrolled in

adult classes or working over full-time in jobs normally reserved for adults so that they could support themselves and send money back home, to either support their families in Mexico, or to save and/or invest it in additional schooling, businesses, and/or properties. In the cases of youth who were planning to use their earnings from the United States to build homes in Mexico, their earnings were not only being converted into structures, but also into symbolic capital. Large, well-constructed homes in their towns were markers of success and status, raising their position in the Mexican housing field.

Other youth saw their participation in the United States fields and the economic capital garnered from it as a way to reenter into the educational field in Mexico. Now able to afford and pay for advanced schooling, some youth saw their participation in United States fields at low positions as a way to obtain educational credentials, or cultural capital in Mexico. Mexican youth who were sending money home so that they could open businesses were also thinking of obtaining higher positions, but in the Mexican labor market. No longer willing to work for others either in the United States or in Mexico, these youth wanted to use their U.S.-earned economic capital in the Mexican labor market to jump straight to business ownership. Ultimately, however, it is the youth's participation in either one or both the labor market and educational fields, and the conditions of these participations, that lead the youth to feel like and act like adults, something that most discuss planning to continue upon their return to Mexico.

Section II: The Lives of Traditional School-Going Youth

The lives of traditional high school-going youth were organized much differently from the lives of their non school-going counterparts. Enjoying much more guidance and protection than their non-traditional school-going counterparts, as well as able to experience a longer period of dependence – both financial and emotional – these youth were able to forego full-time

participation in the labor market for full-time entry in the educational field. Although some of the youth who enrolled in traditional high schools were unaccompanied, the majority of traditional school-going youth could attribute these behaviors to the presence of at least one parent in New York City. The presence of this one parent not only liberated them from having to support themselves full-time, and thus engage in the labor market full-time in order to do so, but the youth were also allowed a degree of emotional dependence where they could rely on their parents to perform and/or facilitate particular tasks for them, including navigating their entrance into the educational field [and in fewer instances, the labor market]. Relying on the social capital not only of themselves, but of their parents' friends, the youth were able to enter into the educational field and into traditional schooling with little confusion.

It would be the youth's entrance into the educational field, at this particular moment of their lives, as teenagers and recently-arrived youth immigrants that would be the catalyst for the youth's changes in habitus. Once here, the youth were able to obtain cultural and social capital that they could exchange for even higher positions in the educational field, or to consolidate themselves in the field. With longer exposure to an "age-appropriate" educational field at this time, the youth's ideas about their futures and development, including the length of their school-going and their participation in the labor market, diverged more and more from their non-traditional school-going counterparts. Adopting ideas about age and activities that are more closely aligned with U.S. industrial/post-industrial ideas, as well as learning English and about social institutions in the United States, the youth began to plan their futures in the United States, rather than in Mexico like their non-traditional school-going counterparts.

To examine how the traditional school-going youth change from being like their non-traditional school going counterparts, i.e recently arrived and monolingual Spanish-Speaking,

towards more Westernized, English-speaking youth, I first turn to examine the organization of the youth's lives in New York City. Discussion then turns towards to examining how the restructuring of their families, and, in many cases, parental reunification may help explain their ideas and acts surrounding school enrollment, as well as their ideas about the life course.

Next, I examine the youth's participation in the labor market field part-time and the educational field full-time. This is a contrast from the field commitments and positions of their non-traditional school-going counterparts, and the reasons for this juxtaposition are explored. Lastly, this section examines how this juxtaposition affects their ideas for their futures, including in what nation-state they envision living their lives, and in which fields and positions they believe they will inhabit.

To begin the discussion, I turn to perhaps one of the last shared experiences these youth held with their non- traditional school-going counterparts upon arrival to New York City.

Receiving Communities

Lost in translation: Geographic and Linguistic Unfamiliarity

Like their non-traditional school-going peers, traditional high school going youth reported arriving in New York and also being unsettled by the spatial and linguistic organization of the city. Since most of the youth arrived to join their parents, however, they were forbidden to leave their apartments without their parents' permission. When they were able to leave the apartment, they would be accompanied by their parents who showed them where important landmarks were, including the subway stations, as well as how to get around their neighborhood. Because they had not been unaccompanied in New York until then, it was not until they enrolled in school that they experienced the disorientation that their non-traditional school-going

counterparts expressed upon their arrival in New York City. Geographically and linguistically lost in their schools, it would take the youth awhile to get used to their new surroundings

In the cases of youth who arrived in New York and could not enter into school immediately, the youth reported being forced to remain inside of their new homes while their parents worked. Some youth arrived during summer months while other youth had to await the arrival of their school records from Mexico, as well as obtain all of the necessary vaccinations. In these cases, if their parents worked full-time, the youth were left alone in their new homes while they waited until they could enter in school. Parents and youth were afraid that the youth would get lost in the city, so they were strictly forbidden to venture outside. As a result of being left alone for hours, in their new, strange home, the youth felt imprisoned and miserable, unused to being restricted in this way.

Lisandro was one youth who ended up sitting around in New York, waiting to enroll in school. Although he arrived in November, he had to wait to complete all of his medical requirements before he entered school. During this time, his parents forced him to stay indoors, which, he recalled, was unpleasant for him.

Lisandro: Well, my first month in New York was a little boring, because I could not enter into school like that, rapidly, I, um, we had problems to enter into school, like vaccinations, so then, it was a little boring, because I spent a lot of time in the house, and it was not a pretty time.

Pues mi primer mes en Nueva York fue un poco aburrido, porque yo no podria entrar a la escuela asi rapido, yo este tuvimos problemas para entrar a la escuela, como vacunas entonces, fue un poco aburrido, porque pase mucho tiempo en la casa, y no fue un tiempo bonito.

Likewise, Baltazar had difficulties adjusting to living with his parents after several years of being apart. Not only had he not seen either of his parents since he was eleven, he finally reunited with them at age fifteen to find that they were restricting his movements and refusing his request to remain outside of school. In addition, he was also joining a mixed legal status

family, as he was introduced to new siblings who had been born in the United States. All of these changes placed significant strains on Baltazar's relationship with his parents.

Baltazar: Here I constantly had fights with my parents, and I didn't have a good time, being in my house either, because I felt enclosed, and I could not leave because I was afraid to get lost, I didn't know what to do.

Aquí, yo tenía peleas constantes con mis papas, y no me la pasaba bien, estando en mi casa tampoco, porque yo me sentía encerrado, y no podría salir porque yo tenía miedo de perder, no sabía que hacer.

In some instances the youth's parents began to gradually familiarize them with their new environs. Acting as their guides, their parents were able to slowly introduce them to their new surroundings.

Patricio: My first month I was with my mother and my father, I did not spend any money, since my father worked, my mother started to show me how to do basic things, like arrive at my house if I was somewhere, where the trains stop was...

Mi primero mes yo estaba con mi madre y mi padre, yo no gastaba ningún economía, como trabajaba con mi padre, mi madre me empezó enseñar hacer las cosas básicas, como llegar a mi casa si yo iba a alguna parte, donde era la parada del tren.

Eventually, however, the youth were allowed to experience some independence, but within a controlled, monitored space. Once enrolled in school, the buffer between the youth and their new environs was removed, without the protection of their parents. It is here that the youth reported first feeling lost, spatially and linguistically. The degree of their confusion depended much on the language programs their school offered.

In Mexico the youth were used to staying in one classroom and either having only one teacher all day or having different teachers rotate into and out of their one classroom. Julieta recalled not only being anxious about attending a larger school in New York, but also having to find her way through the school to attend classes in different classrooms. Although looking forward to learning English, and mastering it by the end of junior high school, it was at first difficult to understand her classes in English.

Julieta: It was hard. I remember my English classes and my math classes, I was always good at math, and my English classes, I wanted to learn English, so I would pay attention to it, I remember that it took me two to three months to get good with the language, get acquainted with the language, I liked it, it was different, I had to go to different floors, it was stressful to move around, where before you would stay just in one classroom and the teachers would come to the class. Now going to the classes and it was a little difficult because of the language, and the classes were different. Like in Mexico [for example], I would say geography, and here you would say social studies. That was different. I was in ESL, just in junior high school, then I had to take a test. I passed it the first time that I took it and then I was put in regular English classes.

Likewise, Baltazar was lost during his first days at a new large school with so many people different from him. The high school was much larger than the schools he was used to in Mexico, and without knowing much English, he would often get lost and remain in the hallways after his classes had started.

Baltazar: Well, when I entered into the school, I felt strange because it was a large school, there were many students, from different countries, so then I felt strange because there were many classrooms, and I did not know which classroom it was, and it is three floors, I did not know which floor I was supposed to be on, so then, I went with fear, eh, but, and I could not speak English, so then during class I always stayed in the hallways because I did not know where to go, and then a school assistant arrived, who always goes reviewing, that all of the students are attending their classes, s/he always had to take me to the classrooms I belonged to, eh, so then I entered into the classroom, I sat down, and already, the teacher started, that we all presented ourselves, and well it was my turn, I had to do it, there was no other way, just to do it.

Bueno, cuando yo entre a la escuela, yo sentía raro, porque es una escuela grande, hay muchas estudiantes, de diferentes países, entonces yo me sentía raro porque había muchas salones, y yo no sabía de que salón era, y es de tres pisos, yo no sabía en cual piso me tocaba, entonces, andaba yo con miedo, eh, pero, y no podía hablar inglés, entonces en las clases siempre me quedaba en los pasillos, porque no sabía dónde ir, y luego llegue una asistente de la escuela, que siempre anda revisando, que todos los estudiantes están asistiendo sus clases, siempre me tenía que andar llevando al salón que me pertenecía yo, eh, entonces yo entraba al salón, me sentaba, y ya, el maestro empezó, que todos nos presentaron, y pues a mí me tocaba, yo lo tenía que hacerlo, no había de otra, no más de hacerlo.

Likewise, Roberto, like all of the other youth, reported that classes were difficult and confusing at first because of the language, but eventually became easier. Roberto demonstrated how the difficulties with English affected all of his courses, including the sciences. Here, he was not only unfamiliar with the new terms and symbols, but also the language it was being taught in.

Roberto: The classes are difficult at first, but already after learning, there were not so difficult. All of them [classes] were in English, sometimes I did not understand the symbols, I did not understand to what they referred to, they were a little difficult to me, or then in science I did not understand some words that they were telling me or to what they referred. Las clases son primero difíciles, pero ya después de aprender, no eran tan difíciles. Todos eran en inglés, a veces no entendía los símbolos, no entendía a que referían, me hizo poquito difíciles, o luego en ciencias no entendía algunas palabras de que me estaban diciendo o que referían.

Obviously, this unfamiliarity with language would impact their abilities to complete their school assignments. Over time, however, the youth's grades would improve, going from Cs and Ds at first in middle school to As in high school.

Lisandro: No, that was one of the problems that I had arriving in this country, of not knowing the language, that made it difficult to do my assignments, and that was a very large problem that I had.

No, esa fue uno de los problemas que tuvo de llegar a este país, de no saber el idioma, me hizo difícil para hacer mis tareas, y eso fue un problema muy grande que tuve.

Unlike their non-traditional school-going counterparts who experienced geographic and linguistic confusion on the streets of New York City, traditional school-going youth were mostly buffered from being lost and confused in the city by their parents. It would not be until they entered into New York City public schools that they would experience a limited version of their counterparts' geographic and linguistic confusion with fewer consequences. Occurring instead in a safe space, a schoolhouse, with, in most cases, readily identifiable school officials who did speak their language and were commissioned with helping students acclimate to their environs, this version of spatial and linguistic confusion could occur with less fear and anxiety.

Additionally, assigned to learn English in these spaces for at least a year, the youth would be taught to eventually overcome their geographic and linguistic confusion and master not only this smaller space, but also the city at-large.

Peers in New York City

Most of the traditional school-going youth reported that their closest friends were also immigrant youth who were equal or younger in age. All current or former classmates of theirs and all school-goers themselves, their friends were mostly Mexican but also from all over the world, including Haiti, Colombia and the Middle East. Even though in school, the youth's friends had different orientations towards school-going. While most of the youth reported having friends who were positively oriented towards school, one youth discussed the disillusionment one of his friends was having with school, due to, according to Miguel, a lack of parental and school support. Miguel reported that while two of his closest friends were positively oriented towards school, one of his friends wanted to drop out of school. Whereas Miguel believed that he had parents who supported his school-going, as well as teachers who cared about him, Francisco had not been so lucky.

Miguel: Among those three, it is different, like my classmate, Francisco Sanchez, he hardly likes school because of the same, because they give him a lot of support, they do not help him in school, and like he wants to drop out, and like no...My friends, Joyce Garcia, she likes school, and she has good grades, and Elias Sosa, he is intelligent.

Entre ellos tres, es diferente, como mi compañero, Francisco Sánchez, el casi no le gusta la escuela porque lo mismo, por le dan a él mucho apoyo, no le ayudan en la escuela, y como él quiere salirse, y como no...Mi amiga, Joyce García, ella le gusta la escuela, y ella tiene buenas notas, y Elías Sosa, el es inteligente.

When further asked about Francisco and how he and Miguel possessed different ideas about school-going, Miguel attributed the differences to a support network he possessed/Francisco did not possess.

Miguel: Well, the truth is that his parents do not give the support that they need, and I think that they don't give him much attention, like I have received, and well too, I have teachers who worry, but I think that they do not have teachers who worry about them.

Pues la verdad es que sus papas no les dan el apoyo que ellos necesitan y creo que no les dan mucho atención como yo ha recibido, y pues también, tengo maestros que preocupen, pero creo que ellos no tienen maestros quien preocupen.

In cases where youth reported possessing older friends, these friends were college-goers who encouraged the youth to join them in college as well. Julieta possessed older friends who were positively oriented towards school-going. Encouraging her college-going, all three of her closest friends were attending area colleges and not only shared information with her about college, but they also spoke positively of their college experiences.

Julieta: I talk more to the one who is at City Tech than the one who is at Brooklyn College. They tell me that it's a little, its good, because of what you get from going to college, but he says that the class is big, its more listening than writing, he says that in a way it's harder, and on the other hand, it's easier, it all depends on you, and he says that not all of the teaches write on the board, they just talk and talk.

She continued to add:

Julieta: [My friend] says that I should go there, it's awesome [Brooklyn College].

Most of the traditional school-going youth's closest friends were all close in age and school-going. Reinforcing the idea that individuals of a certain age should be school-going, or that a numerical age should correspond with a particular behavior, attending school, the youth's peers were also positively oriented towards school-going. Also immigrant, the youth believed that not only did these friends understand their experiences better, but they also supported them. Additionally, their positive orientations towards schooling encouraged the youth to continue on this pathway. Their friends not only helped the youth complete their assignments, but they also encouraged them to continue their studies and to go to college.

Leisure Time in the Lives of Traditional School-Going Mexican Immigrant Youth

Although not experiencing the vast amounts of structured or unstructured leisure activities that are documented in studies of adolescence and leisure, the traditional school-going youth did discuss possessing leisure time in which they were free to engage in their own

individual interests. In reality, however, their free time was also limited, as most of the youth not only attended school full-time, but also worked part-time, leaving little time for leisure.

In the case of Miguel, his free time was spent practicing an activity related to his part-time work of teaching soccer. He discussed only resting and playing soccer [something he may have been able to do at work or immediately after] during his free time.

Miguel: Well, the only thing that I do in my free time is to rest, and then after, play soccer. Pues, el único que yo hago en mi tiempo libre es de descansar, y después, juego fútbol.

Also a soccer player, Baltazar discussed spending his free time playing club soccer at school.

Although an organized and structured activity, Baltazar counted this as his free time. Aside from playing soccer, Baltazar reported doing his homework during his “free” time.

Baltazar: The other year, I could not belong to any club, this year, yes, I am already training in sports. [Which ones?] soccer.

El otro año, yo no podría pertenecer a ningún club este año sí, ya me entrenar en deportes. [Cuales?] Fútbol.

Alicia discussed engaging in leisure activities that centered around family responsibilities. During her free time, she would accompany her younger brother to visit their aunt, or sometimes, she would watch him play soccer.

The only youth who discussed an uninterrupted activity that occurred away from school and could not be linked to obligations was Julieta. An avid bookworm, she loved to read any type of book she could get her hands on. Most recently, however, she was reading books about adolescent psychology, a topic she was interested in. She also discussed spending unorganized time with her friends.

Julieta: [Let’s talk a little bit about free time. What do you do in your free time?] I read, I read a lot. [Okay, what kinds of books do you read?] Any books, like right now I’m reading a lot, I read, What Happened to Nancy, have you read that book? [No.] It is about a girl who was raped and then she was infected with HIV, and what she was trying to do was help adolescents to be more informed about that. I read a book in Spanish called “Los adolescentes precosos/The precocious adolescents,” it’s about psychology, that is what I am

interested in, psychology, in school, I read the books that they gave us.[So what other stuff do you do?] I hang out with my friends, we go to the movies, we go shopping, we go to the park.

Like their non-traditional school-going counterparts, these youth did not discuss possessing an abundance of leisure time. Between full-time school, part-time work and family responsibilities, the youth simply did not have much time left over to do whatever they wanted to do. In several cases, the youth instead piggy-backed their leisure activities with both other school and work activities, mixing fun with responsibilities.

General Ideas of the Life Course

At the time of interviews, most of the youth expressed that they were either between life course categories, were experiencing a combination of life course categories, or close to the life course category of adult, but not there just yet. Unwilling to commit to just one category, the youth believed that due to their behaviors and individual traits that they could turn on and off, exhibit and hide, they were not yet adults.

In the case of Miguel, he believed himself to be part-boy, part-adult. He could bring forth different parts of his personality depending on the setting, or exhibit both parts at once.

Miguel: Well, I am a very funny boy, and sometimes I behave like, very infantile, but when I have to act like an adult, or with people like that who I know I have to behave, I divide those parts of my life, like an infant and like an adult, well, I do the two at the same time. Pues yo soy un chico muy chistoso, y a veces me porto como muy infantil, pero cuando tengo que comportarme como adultamente, o con personas así que yo sé con quién tengo que comportar, divide esas partes de mi vida, como de infanta y como adulto, pues hago los dos al mismo tiempo.

Patricio believed himself to be halfway between the life course categories of adolescence and adulthood. Adulthood, in his eyes, would be marked by his completion of high school, or the exit of this particular educational institution.

Patricio: I think that I am in the middle of adolescent and adult already, because the time is passing, and I am growing, and while I am growing, I am getting more responsibility and

that is an adult. [And how will you know when your adolescence will end?] I think that it will be marked when I finish high school, because then I am going to have to choose a big responsibility, decide if I go to college or choose a job.

Creo que estoy en medio de adolescente y adulto ya, porque el tiempo está pasando, y voy creciendo, y mientras voy creciendo voy agarrando más responsabilidad y ese es un adulto. [Y como sabes cuándo va acabar tu adolescencia?] Creo que va a marcar cuando yo termina la high school, porque después yo voy a tener que escoger una gran responsabilidad, decidir si voy a ir a college o escoger un trabajo.

Several of the youth named a category between adolescence and adulthood, being a young adult. This in-between category also was used to describe a time during which youth may feel that they are adults in some ways, but not in others (Arnett, 1994). In the case of Jesus, he already felt like adult in some ways, including because he worried about and sent money home to his parents in Mexico. However, because he was attending school full-time, his older brother was helping him get by. It was this financial and most likely emotional dependence on his brother that made Jesus hesitate from calling himself an adult.

Jesus: Already, I think that I am already a young adult, and more since I already have the responsibilities of an adult, even if I am not an adult, but I already have the mentality and responsibility, like I am already more over there than a young adult, like I already think of my parents there in Mexico, like what I think I should do, the expenses that I have. Well, me, the responsibilities already should be complete, like my brother is helping me a bit, so if I passed to the category of adult, eh, I would be responsible for everything, everything, because now, my brother is helping me with half of the rent, I think that already when I pass to adult, I am going to be responsible for my own rent.

Ya, yo pienso que ya soy un joven, y mas como yo ya tengo responsabilidad de adulto, aunque sé que no soy adulto, pero ya tengo la mentalidad y responsabilidad como ya estoy mas allá que un joven, como yo ya pienso en mis padres allá en México, como que lo que debo que hacer, los gastos que yo tengo. Bueno, yo las responsabilidades ya deben estar completas, como mi hermano me está ayudando un poco, so como si yo me pasaba a la categoría de adulto, eh, yo sería ya responsable de todo, todo, porque ahorita mi hermano me está ayudando con la mitad de la renta, yo creo que ya de pasa de adulto, ya voy estar responsable por mi propia renta.

In the case of Miguel, a self-proclaimed adolescent, he defined adulthood as being comprised of an abundance of responsibilities, so many responsibilities that he actually feared becoming an adult.

Miguel: Well, I hardly think about that [being an adult], I am afraid of becoming an adult, I am afraid to arrive in a world, I need my parents, like I do not want to leave them, and the fear to be looking for work, and worrying for all of the responsibility that I have to have, I worry.

Pues casi no pienso en eso [ser un adulto], tengo miedo en llegar de ser adulto, tengo miedo de llegar en un mundo, necesito mis padres, como no los quiero dejar, y el miedo de estar buscando trabajo, y estar preocupando por todo la responsabilidad que tengo que tener, me preocupe.

In their mid to late teenage years, these youth, appear to share ideas about the characteristics of the life course categories they belong to with their non school-going counterparts. Like-minded, it was their growing cache of responsibilities that defined their movement from adolescence to adulthood, but the types of responsibilities experienced by the two groups of youth varied greatly. Whereas the non traditional school-going youth had to be responsible not only for themselves in New York City, they were also responsible at work and in most cases, for the economic livelihood and quality of life for their families back in Mexico. Traditional school-going youth were only held responsible for their school assignments, and in most cases, part-time work responsibilities. In a sense, although naming the same life course categories, they were discussing completely different practices with different consequences for incompleteness. Not surprising, however, less youth discussed already considering themselves adults; unless the youth were financially independent, the youth did not report engaging in any other activities that they associated with adulthood.

The lives of traditional school-going youth differ from the lives of their non-traditional school going counterparts in various ways. Not only are the majority of the youth residing with their parents, they are also largely buffered from the city as a result of not only their parents' protection, but also their almost immediate enrollment into schools. Unable to explore any spaces by themselves, it is not until they reach the safe space of school that the youth can begin to exhibit any sort of Independence in New York City. In this safe space, the youth are also

surrounded by similarly-oriented and similarly-aged youth who actually support and motivate the traditional school-going youth towards staying in school and continuing their studies. In their lives, then, their primary sites in which the youth can be independent, explore and obtain and accrue responsibilities and be social is in the age-segregated school house.

In spite of this, however, school-going youth echo the non-traditional school going youth's ideas about the life course categories they are currently living in. All of the youth report limited leisure time and feeling significant responsibilities. However, although discussing similar ideas such as limited leisure time and responsibilities, it is evident that the two categories of youth possess different concepts of leisure time and responsibilities, with traditional school-going youth exhibiting ideas more closely linked to mainstream ideas of leisure time and responsibilities as they are associated with U.S. adolescence.

Changes in Family Structure

In the cases of most of the traditional school-going youth, rather than leaving their parents behind to immigrate, the youth were immigrating to rejoin their parents, some of whom they had not seen for three or four years. While most of the youth rejoined both of their biological parents, two youth joined single mothers, and two youth joined their siblings, leaving their parents behind.

In the cases of youth who were rejoining their parents, most of the youth expressed joy in seeing their families again, but other youth reported experiencing periods of conflict and transition as they rejoined in their parents. Well documented in immigrant youth literature, some youth were joining families that had become mixed status in their absence, and were meeting U.S. born siblings for the first time. In one case, this led to conflict between the immigrant youth and the rest of his family, including their native siblings.

In the case of Miguel, his reunion with his family seemed full of joy. His parents were able to devote full attention to him when he arrived, taking their vacation and showing him all over the city during his first month in New York.

Miguel: Well, my first month was fantastic, I arrived during vacation, so there was not school, there was not anything, I lived without worries, my parents also had vacation from their jobs, so I was with them all of the time, we went to the park, they took me to get to know the city.

Pues mi primer mes fue fantástico, llegue en vacaciones, so no había escuela, no había nada, viví sin preocupaciones, mis padres tenían también vacaciones de sus trabajos, so yo estaba con ellos todo el tiempo, íbamos al parque, este, me llevaba a conocer la ciudad.

Other youth experienced less positive reunions. In some cases, the youth's parents had not seen them since they were "children" in Mexico, and were still treating them as such. In other cases, with the youth used to less vigilance and more freedom in Mexico, the recently arrived youth resented the restrictions that were being placed on them in New York City. In addition, their families had grown since they had last seen their parents, and now they had much younger native-born siblings. Having to go through a period of readjustment, where both the parents and the youth were reacquainting themselves with each other and the new family organization was, in some cases, difficult.

In the case of Lisandro, not only did he not like being in New York, which he perceived to be a decision that was made not by himself, but by his parents, he was also upset with the way they were treating him.

Lisandro: When I arrived here, I was an adolescent, more or less, maybe, I did not like the environment here, and maybe I did not like how my parents treated me, but I also thought that it was for the same thing of environment. Now I think that I have changed a little, I think that I have adapted a little more, and I think that it is better, that I act better with them.

Cuando llegue aquí yo era una adolescente, más o menos, a mí no me gustaba el ambiente de aquí a la mejor, y a la mejor no me gustaba como mis papas me trataron, pero también yo pienso que era por el mismo cosa del ambiente. Ahora pienso que ha cambiado un poco, pienso que me adapte un poco más, y pienso que es mejor, actuó mejor con ellos.

Baltazar, on the other hand, immigrated with his uncle and cousin to reunite with his parents. Upon arrival in New York City, he was not only reunited with his parents, but he also met, for the first time, his younger siblings who were born in the United States. He admittedly held resentment against his family and was soon fighting with both his parents and younger siblings.

Baltazar: Well, at first, I had anger against them, no, so then I did many things to make them mad at me, so then to tell them that I don't like school, that I was not going to go to school, that I want to work, that was something that bothered them. It was difficult, because I had many fights with my parents, with my siblings...

Bueno, al principio yo tenía rancor contra ellos, no, entonces era muchas cosas que yo hacía para hacerlos enojar conmigo, entonces de decirlos que no me gusta la escuela, que yo no iba a la escuela, que yo quiero trabajar, era una cosa que ellos se molestaba. Se fue difícil, porque tenía muchas peleas con mis papas, con mis hermanos...

In spite of conflict, however, the presence of younger siblings, especially if school-going, introduces the youth's parents to the educational field prior to the immigrant youth's arrival. This knowledge and interaction with the traditional school system thus makes a transition into traditional schooling not only easier, but more natural as the parents were already familiar with school rules, including ages of enrollment, and are able to enroll the recently arrived youth with less trouble.

The Power of Parents: Deterring by Example

It was the ability to see up-close just how hard their parents worked that led some youth to begin to think about their own futures, and their own desires not to follow their parents into the secondary labor market. Well documented, children of immigrants see their parents working under undesirable conditions and strive to avoid the same fate (Gans, 1992; Louie, 2004). Several youth mentioned that after seeing their parents work hard, long hours, they wanted something different for themselves, something that would only come the way of formal education.

For Baltazar, it was seeing it in person that helped him to realize this. In Mexico, he had wanted to drop out of school, and upon arrival in New York, he initially resisted enrolling in high school. Whereas he had taken their remittances, as well as school-going for granted while still in Mexico, it was not until he saw how his parents worked so that he could get ahead that he began to think about completing his studies and aspiring to better employment.

Baltazar: Because in Mexico, I did many things, no, I would go out into the street, everyday, I would go out with my friends, I would get home late, and I did not care where the money came from, or how it was earned, so then my parents apportioned everything, no, I hardly cared much to do things. [And here?] Here it is different because here I see my parents that, for example, my mama who works since seven in the morning until eight at night, and then I see that she arrives tired, and I don't like that, for example, if I am going to school, and my mom is working so that I can go, and instead of going to school I leave school or I go with my friends while they are trying to give me something better, I am going to take advantage of it. That's why it's different. I know that I had to go to school because I saw how they [both parents] worked twelve hours, eh, without rest, they would leave in the morning and not return until night, and I do not want that life, I want to get ahead.

Porque en México, yo hacía muchas cosas, no, me salía a la calle, todos los días, iba con mis amigos, llegaba tarde, y no me importaba de donde venia dinero, o como se ganaba, entonces mis papas me aporcionaba todo, no me importaba casi mucho hacer las cosas..[Y aquí?]Aquí es diferente porque aquí veo a mis padres que, por ejemplo, mi mama se trabaja desde las siete de la mañana hasta las ocho de la noche, y luego yo la veo llegar cansada, y eso no me gusta, por ejemplo, si yo estoy yendo a la escuela, y mi mama está trabajando para que yo me vaya, en vez que yo voy a la escuela yo salgo de la escuela o yo vaya con mis amigos, mientras ellos están tratando de darme el mejor para mí, yo lo voy aprovechar. Pues por eso es diferente. Yo se que tenia ir a la escuela porque yo veía como ellos trabajan doce horas, eh, sin descansar, salir ellos a la mañana y no regresar hasta la noche, y yo no quiero esa vida, yo quiero salir adelante.

Being able to rejoin one's parents in the United States, even if conflict occurs, has the possibility of placing the youth on a different pathway than if they arrived unaccompanied, or if they remained in Mexico without them. Just as the absence of parents in New York or Mexico causes particular adjustments and behaviors for some Mexican youth which may lead to their inability to continue their studies and remain stuck in the secondary labor market, the presence of parents provides an opportunity not only for the youth to remain financially dependent for a longer period of time, but also may provide them a dual frame of reference in the United States. Not

only are they comparing their lives here and there, in Mexico and the United States, but the youth are now given the opportunities to compare their lives (future) with the lives of their parents.

Fields in New York City: Housing

Unlike their non school-going counterparts, most of the traditional school-going youth continued their status as dependents, not paying rent or for other household expenses. Instead, these youth, most of who worked part-time, discussed helping with utility bills, such as light or cable bills, or whenever they could.

Catarino shared that although his parents fully supported him, he would try to help them financially from his own wages, when he could.

Catarino: When I can, I help [financially] at home.

Cuando puedo, ayuda [financiero] a la casa.

Patricio, working part-time, also reported not paying rent, but also discussed helping out with whatever expenses he could.

Patricio: Sometimes I have helped my papa with cable, light or telephone bills.

Algunas veces yo ha ayudado a mi papa con los billes de cable, luz, o teléfono.

Likewise, Florinda reported not paying rent and not being able to contribute to the household financially, but instead contributing to the household maintenance to help her mother.

Florinda: Here, I help her with the house, I cook and I also study.

Aquí le ayuda con la casa, cocina y también estudie.

Traditional school-going, often not working or working very little, are unable to contribute to the household in ways that their full-time non traditional school-going counterparts are able to.

Instead, both parents and siblings do not pressure them for household contributions, allowing them to focus primarily on school work and helping out financially when they are able to.

Transnational Housing Field

Traditional school-going youth who were now living with their parents reported still staying in contact with their relatives back home, or in most cases, the relatives who had been their guardians while their parents were in the United States. These relatives were usually one or more grandparents who remained in Mexico. In spite of staying in contact with them on nearly a weekly basis, the youth did not send money back home to them. They discussed wanting to send money back home, but not being able to. Instead, their parents sent remittances back home.

Baltazar: With all of my family, my grandmother, principally, I communicate every eight days, and my family, my maternal grandfather, the same.

Con todo mi familia, mi abuela, principalmente, tengo comunicación cada ocho días, y mi familia, mi abuelo materno, mismos...

Patricio reported wanting to send money home but had to settle for watching his father send money home on his behalf.

Patricio: I would like to send, but I do not send money apart from what my father sends. Me gustaría mandar, pero no mando dinero aparte de lo que mande mi padre.

None of the traditional school-going youth who lived with one or both parents reported sending money back home to family members left behind, including their former guardians/grandparents. While their parents may have sent money home, from their earnings, the traditional school-going youth were not expected to, nor did they provide any economic capital which could then hold them in higher esteem in their homes back home.

Intersection of Life Course with Housing Field

In spite of rejoining their families as financial and emotional dependents, most of the youth reported being treated either like adults only, or as a combination of adolescent and adult. Only one youth, Julieta, believed that she was treated like a child. Her parents were hyper vigilant in monitoring her behaviors. They were constantly checking up on her if she was out with friends.

Julieta: Well, my parents are overprotective, so I think they treat me like a child. [What do you mean by overprotective?] If I go out with my friends or sister, then they call me every hour, to know where I am or if I am coming home soon, what I am doing, who I am with.

Alternatively, Baltazar discussed being treated simultaneously like an adolescent and adult.

Reflecting his parents' gradual loosening of their protectiveness, they were granting him more freedoms and trusting him to make good decisions [adult], although they still required him to answer to them [adolescent].

Baltazar: They treat me like between an adolescent and like I was an adult. [Why do you say that?] Well an adolescent because they still treat me like, like I still have to obey them, and like an adult, because when I go to the streets, they tell me that I am responsible for my own actions.

A mí me tratan como entre adolescente y como yo fue un adulto. [Y porque dices eso?] Pues un adolescente porque todavía me trata como, como todavía tengo que obedecer a ellos, y como un adulto, como porque cuando yo salgo a la calle, ellos me dicen que yo soy responsable por mis propios.

In the case of Roberto, he believed that his parents' recent acts towards him reflected their consideration of him as an adult. Exhibiting more respect towards him, meant, in their eyes, he was already was an adult.

Roberto: Now they treat me like an adult, more like that, with more respect, or more like an adult.

Ahora me tratan mas como un adulto, mas así, con más respeto, o más como un adulto.

Unlike their non-school-going counterparts, traditional school-going youth were able to rejoin their families and forego the economic expenses owed to relatives and strangers such as paying rent in New York City. Living without their parents, in some cases for four or five years, the majority of the school-going youth were in fact rejoining their parents and were not expected or obligated to pay several hundreds of dollars a month. Being able to forego these expenses, or avoid using economic capital to obtain housing, precludes them from engaging primarily in another field, the labor market, for their economic survival. Without such expenses for having to maintain oneself, and being able to avoid the labor market field, the youth can then engage in the

educational field full-time. These youth are free to remain financial dependents, and engage in the educational field full-time in which, if they do not earn any monies, they will not experience any serious consequences, such as homelessness.

Some youth, mostly those who were working, reported contributing some of their earnings to their households, but they were neither obligated nor expected to. Instead, the youth's contributions, unlike their counterparts in Mexico and in New York City, were voluntary, inconsistent, and most likely, modest. Instead, the youth believed that they were helping ease the household burden by purchasing their own clothes and other amenities, such as cellular phones, freeing their parents from these expenses. With at least one parent working and earning in New York, the earnings of the youth were not deemed necessary.

Additionally, as most of the youth's parents were located in New York City, these youth did not participate in transnational households via economic remittances. Rather, they maintained social contact with relatives who took care of them in their parents' absence via telephone, but did little more to maintain transnational ties to their households. Instead, if at all, they transmitted social remittances, such as ideas and social capital, not economic, with their households. (Levitt, 1999).

Living as financial dependents and not significantly contributing economically to any household, in Mexico or in the United States, the youth reported being treated like children, like adolescents and like adults. Ranging from overprotected to experiencing a gradual loosening of control, this treatment in their own households differed from that experienced by their non traditional school-going counterparts. Traditional school-going youth, on the other hand, were experiencing a slower, more gradual climb to adulthood that allowed for a lengthier period during which the youth were free to attend school and forego economic responsibilities.

Fields in New York City: Labor Market

Although school-going was this group's primary school activity, some youth did work, although usually part-time. To find jobs, though, traditional high school-goers, like their non school-going counterparts showed similar characteristics in terms of ways of entering into the labor market – wages by the hour, and simple participation in the labor market – yet, these youth spent far less time working. Perhaps, more importantly, these youth also interpreted the labor market field differently, understanding their current participation in it in different ways than the non-traditional school-going youth as it related to future fields. According to the youth, these differences in interpretations had different impacts on their current, as well as perhaps their future participation in the labor market field, but also in the educational field.

Most of the traditional school-going youth reported working in similar types of jobs and earning similar wages as their nontraditional school-going counterparts, although there appeared to be a slightly greater degree of diversity in the jobs. Two of the immigrant males were stockboys, three other youth worked in various positions at restaurants, including as a hostess, a grill cook, and a dishwasher, and the other youth were employed in various positions such as a child care provider, a soccer teacher and youth leader. Only one youth had never been employed, Alicia, because her parents would not allow her to get a job.

Finding Work in New York City

Like their nontraditional school-going counterparts, the youth discussed finding work with relative ease, although they would have to first convince their parents that they should work. Among the youth with parents, both males and females discussed how their parents were not willing to “let them” work, and only relented after some persuasion. Their parents in fact, wanted them to remain out of the labor market field. At the time of interview, Alicia had never worked.

When asked why, she responded that her parents merely wanted her to devote her full attention to her schoolwork.

Alicia: I don't work because my papa does not permit me to work. They just want for me to focus on my studies.

No trabajo porque mis papas no me permiten trabajar. Solo quieren que me enfoque en mis estudios.

Julietta's parents also needed to be persuaded to let her work. Afraid that not only would she be seduced by money to abandon her studies, they also feared for her safety as she may have had to return home after leaving work at night. Her boss allayed her fears by promising not to keep her late and/or to bring her home himself.

Julietta: They said no [I could not get a job at age sixteen], they said that once you get the money in your hand, you'll want to continue getting the money and you won't want to continue going to school.

After convincing their parents, though, work was also relatively easy to find. As seen in the following section, she, and her peers, merely had to rely on social capital. Already overcoming the hardest part, convincing their parents, finding work was as easy to find as it had been for their nontraditional school-going counterparts.

Relying on Social Capital for Work

All of the youth who were employed reported obtaining their jobs in similar ways that their nontraditional school-going counterparts had – through relatives and friends. Baltazar obtained his job through his father, at his father's workplace, after previously wanting to work full-time and being told that he could not by his parents. Eventually, Baltazar was able to convince his father to take him to work with him one day a week, on Sundays.

Baltazar: Yes, since I wanted to work, my father took me with him to his work, and there, they showed me how to work.

Si, como yo quería trabajar, mi papa me llevo con él a su trabajo, y ahí, me ensenaban a trabajar.

Likewise, now that Jesus was attending school full-time, he was working at the same restaurant as his brother. Before, he sought employment through employment agencies, but since he had entered into school, his brother was able to get him a job at his worksite, negotiating a less stringent work schedule. At this worksite, Jesus had been able to work his way up from washing dishes to grill cook, all the while continuing his studies.

Jesus: To me, no, because my brother works at the same job, so he has showed me many things and I do them, since he has shown me, and like that, I work very well.

A mí, no, porque en el mismo trabajo, mi hermano trabaja, so el me ha enseñado muchas cosas y yo los hago, como él me ha enseñado, y así, trabajo muy bien.

Just like their nontraditional school going counterparts, relatives are able to help the youth obtain employment. Additionally, however, their relatives may be able to negotiate flexible work hours for the youth that enable the youth to continue their full-time school-going. The presence of a relative to vouch for them may explain the employers' flexibility in accommodating their school-going more than if they had obtained the job alone.

Types of work available to Traditional School-Going Youth

For the most part, traditional school-going youth were working the same types of jobs as their nontraditional school-going counterparts, but experienced less mobility through the labor queue. Most of the youth worked in the particular segment of the labor market that many Mexican immigrants found themselves working in, the restaurant industry, but a few were able to obtain employment in other sorts of jobs, including as youth workers, and none really experienced upward mobility in their jobs. While a third of the youth were employed in the restaurant industry, another three of the youth were working as stockboys in supermarkets. Another three youth were not working, while the remaining individuals worked in a variety of jobs, including in childcare, at a clothing store, as well as teaching soccer to youth. Only one youth, Jesus, who had participated in the labor market field full-time prior to full-time participation in the

educational field, had experienced any sort of upward mobility in his job. His other traditional school-going counterparts remained in the same positions they had started out with, or were currently unemployed or had never been employed.

Conditions of work in New York City

Most of the youth worked only on weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, during the school year, but full-time during the summer months. In their cases, however, full-time still meant fewer hours than their non-traditional school-going counterparts; full-time employment occurred five days a week, not six. In addition, the youth reported having genial employers who supported their school-going and honored the limited work hours that the youth were able to provide them due to their school-going.

Julietta's boss, along with co-workers and customers, encouraged her to finish high school. Her boss further incentivized her high school completion by promising her a party at the restaurant.

Julietta: Because there I have found people who they ask me about what do I do besides working there, and they're always telling me about continuing school, that I could do better than just being a hostess, they always tell me that it's always better to have another degree. [Who told you that?] The customers and the workers. [Anyone else?] The boss always says to continue school, and he says that if you graduate on time, I'll throw you a party here, and it's all free.

Likewise, Roberto, a soccer teacher, was able to have a work schedule that reflected a school day and year schedule. Charged with teaching school-age youth to play soccer, he taught when the youth were not in school, or when he was not in school either.

While some youth reported working in strenuous jobs, and eventually having to quit because it interfered with their school work, other youth discussed loving their jobs [soccer teacher] because he was getting paid doing something he loved. Working in less strenuous jobs

on a whole, it seems, and for less time, these youth's school schedules were not as compromised by their paid work as they were in the cases of nontraditional school-going youth.

Reasons for entering into the Labor Market Field

All of the youth who arrived to join their parents did not enter into the labor market field out of necessity, or to contribute significantly to the household. Most of the youth provided responses that focused on their own consumption wants and their desire to possess control and autonomy over their spending habits. Unlike the majority of poor youth in Mexico or those who were not attending traditional high school, the mention of working to contribute to the household was remarkably absent from these youth's discussions. In few cases, the youth spoke of "helping" their parents, with a bill here or there, but for the most part, the youth were working to maintain their own spending/luxury items. Wanting to fit into "U.S." culture, the youth entered the labor market to buy items that other similarly aged youth possessed: clothes and cellular phones.

Patricio: Well, when I arrived to this country, I liked to dress like the people dressed, like pants, and shoes, and I worked to buy my things. The majority of my money I was using for clothes, to help my dad.

Bueno, cuando yo llego a este país, a mi me gusto usar la manera en que la gente se viste, se seas pantalones, y zapatos, y yo trabajaba para comprar mis cosas. La mayoría de mi dinero estaba usando en ropa, en ayudar mi papa.

Although arguably a ploy to make working seem selfless and in the best interests of the entire family and not solely herself, Julieta tried to contribute part of her earnings to her parents. Her parents did not want to accept the money, telling her that her earnings were hers and hers only. She used her earnings to purchase her own cell phone, as well as one for her mother.

Julieta: Because I wanted to have my own money, I wanted to stop asking my parents for money, I know that they have their own expenses, my father has a house in Mexico, he wants another one, he wants to go back, he wants to live in one and rent the other. I told them that I could get a job, and pay for my own expenses, and pay for what I need, and I could help them pay the utilities. They said no, that if I worked, it is only going to be for

you. So after that, I got my phone, I paid my bills for my phone, I got my mom a phone, I paid her bill for her phone, and sometimes I help them pay the electricity, but they don't accept my money, they say it's for you, and if they accept it, they put it into a bank, my mom just told me a couple of months ago that they didn't touch the money that I gave them.

Additionally, youth worked so that they could feel more autonomous and independent from their parents. With money in their pockets, they would no longer have to ask their parents for money or permission to buy goods that they wanted. This was the case of Miguel.

Miguel: Eh, well, I don't want to be feeling very dependent on my parents, I want to make myself a little more independent on myself, and I want to earn my own money.

Eh, pues no quiero estarme sintiendo muy necesitado de mis padres, quiero hacerme un poco independiente de mi mismo, y quiero ganar mi propio dinero.

However, the youth who were attending high school but had left their parents in Mexico did discuss still sending money home when they could.

Jesus: Well, I do a little of everything, I save a little, spend on me, I pay my expenses, save to send to Mexico, and a little to enjoy it.

Pues yo hago de todo, ahorro un poco, gasto en mí, yo pago mis gastos, ahorro para enviar a México, y un poco para disfrutarlo.

Most of the youth discuss working so that they can exert some independence from their parents.

Not obligated to contribute money to the household from their earnings, instead, these youth are working to have money in their pockets and to avoid asking their parents for money to buy clothes, celular phones, and other items associated with adolescence. Those youth whose parents remain in Mexico do send some monies home, but not the amounts attributed to the nontraditional school-going youth. Instead, these earnings appear to be used for personal goods.

Intersection of Labor Market and the Life Course

In the case of traditional school-going youth, they too are able to find employment and, in spite of their school-going, are also treated like adults. Expected to perform tasks on their own, and obliged to be responsible, these youth also discussed how they were treated and felt like

adults at work. In the case of Miguel, he thought he was treated like an adult because he had earned the trust of the employers. Trusted to do his work well, Miguel felt like an adult at his job.

Miguel: Well, they already treat me like an adult, they aren't telling me anymore what I have to do, they already leave me to do my job, and things are not like that anymore.

Pues ya me traten como un adulto, ya no me están diciendo lo que yo tengo que hacer, ya me dejan hacer mi trabajo, y ya no están con cosas así.

Likewise, Roberto also reported that trust, and the responsibility of having to do things well made him feel like an adult at work.

Roberto: Like an adult, because they let you do your things, they put more rules, and they treat you to be more responsible and do your things. Because like it is a job, you have to do the things so that everything is in its place, and you have to do your things well.

Como un adulto, porque te dejan hacer tus cosas, se ponen más reglas, y que traten para ser más responsable y hacer sus cosas. Porque como es un trabajo, tienes que hacer las cosas, para todo estar en su lugar, y tienes que hacer sus cosas bien.

Associating job tasks and certain amounts of pay with adulthood, Lisandro felt as if he had been treated like an adult at work, but he had not been paid like an adult. Although he was required and was asked to perform difficult tasks that were better suited for an older people at his job, he was not commensurately compensated.

Lisandro: Yes they treated me like an adult, but they, they treated me like an adult, but the money that they gave me was not for an adult.

Si me trataron como un adulto, pero ellos, ellos me trataron como un adulto, pero el dinero que me daban no era para un adulto.

Treated like their non-traditional school-going counterparts, these youth also felt as if they were treated like adults at work. Expected to perform tasks without constant vigilance, the youth believed that this was a sign that they were viewed like adults at work. Unlike the nontraditional youth, however, these youth believed that their wages were not commensurate with those of adults; rather, they were earning wages that may be associated with youth.

Fields in New York City: Education

Traditional school-going youth experienced radically different conditions in New York City from their nontraditional school going counterparts that enabled their school-going in New York City. Perhaps the most important feature of these youth is that the majority had arrived here to reunite with their parents. Here, they were not obliged to financially support themselves and were expected to enter into the educational field as their field of primary participation. Aside from offering the youth the financial freedom to attend school full-time, parents also navigated their entry into the educational field, and after that, prevented their departure by remaining involved in their school progress. Many of the youth attributed both their educational entry and retention to the vigilance and care of their parents.

Additionally, the types of schools that were available for the school youth to attend not only guaranteed their initial interest at entry, but also helped shape the positive school orientations that the youth exhibited during the interviews. Although experiencing difficult entries if they arrived during middle school, at the high school level, most of the interview youth attended schools that were specially designed to meet the needs of recently arrived immigrant youth and school returnees. It is in these specially designed schools for immigrants that the youth feel comfortable, and part of a web of care, where both teachers and their fellow classmates are helpful and motivating.

However, the reality remains that, once in the educational field, the youth could opt to leave it. In this particular sector of the educational field, however, the youth received and believed messages about the value of continued schooling and its exchange rate in the labor market. Not only did they learn about its value, but also that a labor sector, different than those accessed by other Mexican immigrants, including their parents, exists where formal education is necessary. Able to use not only their parents' and relatives' jobs, but also their own part-time

jobs as frames of reference, the youth are convinced that staying in school will allow them to obtain better paying jobs under better conditions, in the United States.

Community Messages about the Educational Field

Upon arrival into New York City, traditional school-going youth, unlike the nontraditional school-going youth, were encouraged to continue their studies, through both high school and college. These youth were surrounded by individuals such as relatives, friends, employers, co-workers and even customers who all were telling them about the importance of education, including its completion and the benefits one could garner by completing school.

Patricio reported hearing, in general, that going to school would lead to increased earnings and an overall better future.

Patricio: Well, when they talk about school they talk about a better future or a better salary, so because of that I continued with my studies, to have a better future, better salary. [And who has told you that?] People. [Here?] Yes.

Bueno, siempre cuando ellos hablan de escuela platican de un mejor futuro o un mejor salario, so por eso quise continuar con mis estudios, para tener un mejor futuro, salario mejor. [Y quién te ha dicho eso?] Gente. [Aquí?] Si.

At her job, Julieta is encouraged by her employer, coworkers and customers to finish her high school studies. Her employer has even offered her an incentive to complete, a party to celebrate her graduation at the restaurant. These messages, she said, help urge her to finish her high school studies.

Julieta: Because there I have found people who they ask me about what do I do besides working there, and they're always telling me about continuing school, that I could do better than just being a hostess, they always tell me that it's always better to have another degree. [Who told you that?] The customers and the workers. [Anyone else?] The boss always says to continue school, and he says that if you graduate on time, I'll throw you a party here, and it's all free.

Herminda also recalled how before she had entered school in New York, one of her bosses continued to encourage her to go back to school to obtain a GED or high school diploma.

Herminda: On this occasion, it was my boss, that was a Jewish woman, who followed, that education was super important.

En esta ocasión, era mi jefa, que era señora Judea, que siguiera, que la educación es súper importante.

She had also been surrounded by people who convinced her that she had endless educational opportunities in New York City; she merely had to take advantage of them.

Herminda: I was interested in continuing with my education. I had the dream to be able to have a, some paper that registered me here, and then I started to hear about the DREAM Act, and that motivated me too, it stimulated me, it influenced me to continue with my education, and well, the people around me begin to say that I had many opportunities here, that here you could have, that you can have the American Dream, but today, without an education, that is almost impossible.

Yo estaba interesada en continuar con mi educación. Tenía el sueño de poder tener un, algún papel que me registraba aquí, y luego yo empezaba oír del DREAM Act, y eso me impulso también, me estimulo, me influizo a continuar con mi educación, y bueno la gente a mi alrededor empieza a decir que yo tenía muchas oportunidades aquí, que aquí podrías hacer, el idea del sueño Americano si se puede hacer, pero hoy en día, sin una educación, es casi imposible.

Apart from going to school and being with their families, the youth spend very little time in spaces where others or outsiders could provide their opinions about the youth's school-going. The only other space that the youth were spending time in was in the workplace, where they did receive encouraging messages from their employers to continue and complete their studies. Ironically, employers provided the most encouragement, as well as incentives, even ones that may insignificant, like parties, for the youth to continue their studies. Looking ahead, this encouragement from their employers was also an implicit acknowledgement that the positions that the youth held were temporary; their employers' encouragement to obtain more formal schooling essentially was tacit advice to not stay stuck in these jobs and in the secondary labor market.

Entering the Educational Field

Prior Knowledge

Armed only with the idea that more years of schooling translates into better jobs and a better future, traditional school-going youth gravitate, voluntarily and involuntarily, towards the educational field even when they are not clear about its particularities. They merely had the vague idea, based mostly on hearsay from family and others that continued formal studies would earn them more economic capital. In the case of Herminda, she did not know the difference between a GED and a high school degree. After the GED program into which she was enrolled inexplicably closed after three weeks, Herminda visited the Queens school district office where a counselor recommended that she attend New York High School. Designed for older students who were returning to their high school studies, the schedules and accommodations they made for working students sounded perfect for her needs. Unaware of any differences between a GED and a degree from NYHS, Herminda was excited to be on the road to continuing her studies in an environment that accommodated her.

Herminda: I had no idea what the difference was between the GED and high school, so when they offered me that school, it was a marvel, I thought that it was almost like a GED, so then there I find people who are my age, who for different factors leave their previous schools and decide to return [to school], and take two or three classes.

Yo no tenía el idea de que era la diferencia entre GED y la preparatoria, entonces cuando me ofrecen este escuela, era una maravilla, yo pensaba que era casi como un GED, entonces ahí encuentro gente de mi edad, que por diferentes factores salen de sus escuelas anteriores y deciden regresar, a tomar dos o tres clases.

The majority of traditional school-going youth wanted to enter directly into the educational field and expressed no desire to begin full-time work in New York City. Youth who had expressed a desire to work full-time upon arrival and not enter into school were quickly disabused of this by their parents, whom they obeyed.

Baltazar recalled that he insisted that he would not enter into the educational field and fought his parents all the way up to, literally, the school house before he was shamed into going into the school.

Baltazar: My father told me that, because he wanted me to enter into school, he did not take me to work anymore and I stayed at home. And my mom told me, classes are about to start, “you are going to enter into the school,” and I always negated, “no, I don’t like school, I am going to get a job,” and she told me, “no, you are going to go to school,” and from there, I took out, I explained “why am I going to go to school here if in Mexico, I did not want to study, why am I going to want to study [here]?” And he told me, “I don’t know, but you are going to go to school,” and from there I could not change her mind, she just with “you are going to school, you are going to school, you are going to school,” until the day arrived that “you are going to go to school, let’s go,” and from there, she grabbed my hand, and she took me to school. I did not want to leave my house, but...and when we were on the street, I told her, that “I can do this” that she was grabbing me by the hand, my mama, so then I told her that “I am going to walk to school alone, let me go,” and she let me go, and she took me to school, but at the entrance, they did not let her pass.

Mi papa me dijo eso a mí, porque el quería que yo entraba a la escuela, ya no me llevo a mi trabajo y yo me quede en la casa. Y mi mama me dijo, ya vienen las clases, tu vas a entrar a la escuela, y yo siempre la negaba, “no, no me gusta la escuela, yo voy a conseguir otro trabajo, y me dije, no, tu vas a ir a la escuela, y de ahí, la sacaba, yo le explicaba porque voy a ir a la escuela aquí si en México no quise estudiar, porque voy a querer a estudiar?” Y me dijo, “yo no sé, pero tú vas a ir a la escuela,” y de ahí yo no pude cambiar su mente, ella no mas con “tu vas a ir a la escuela, tu vas a ir a la escuela, tu vas a ir a la escuela,” hasta llego el día de que “tu vas a ir a la escuela, vámonos,” y luego yo le decía, “no, yo no voy a ir,” entonces me dijo, “yo no sé, tu vas a ir a la escuela,” y de ahí, pues me dijo, y me agarre la mano, y me llevo a la escuela. Yo no quise salir de mi casa, pero...y cuando estábamos en la calle, yo dije que “yo puedo hacer eso,” que me iba agarrando de la mano, mi mama, entonces le dije que yo voy a caminar solo a la escuela, suéltame,” y me solté, y me llevo a la escuela, pero en la entrada, a ella, no le dejaron pasar.

As discussed in Chapter Six, some Mexican youth already possess information about schools in New York City from their relatives who already reside in New York City. Perhaps the most important nugget of information, however, is that the schools are free and that the youth can attend these schools.

Baltazar: In the school where I go now, everything is free, paid for, we suppose by the government, the books, free, they give me everything. Only in the case if I lose a book, I have to pay, but meanwhile, I do not have to pay for a single book, for a single registration, everything is free. I think that is the grand difference, let’s say, it is a big part of money, that here everything is free, you don’t have to pay anything, and in Mexico, you have to pay everything, your books, your travel to school, and here everything is free, that is the difference. In all of the schools. Eh, well now, I think that it is easier to attend school here, to high school, because everything is free, that’s it and I think that it is not so easy to go to college, the costs of classes are very elevated/high, and sometimes, we do not have all of the resources.

En la escuela donde yo voy ahorita todo esta gratis, pagado, supongamos del gobierno, los libros, gratis, todo me lo dan..solo en el caso si yo pierdo un libro, yo tengo que pagar, pero mientras, no tengo que pagar..por ningún libro, por ningún inscripción, todo es gratis.. Creo que la gran diferencia, supongamos, es en gran parte de dinero, que aquí todo es gratis, no tienes que pagar nada, y en México tenias que pagar todo, tus libros, pasaje para asistir a la escuela, y aquí todo es gratis, es una diferencia.. En todas las escuelas? Eh, bueno ahorita, creo que es mas fácil de asistir a la escuela aquí, al high school, porque todo es gratis, eso es, y yo creo que ya no sería tan fácil de ir al college, los costos de las clases, son muy elevados, y a veces, no tenemos todos los recursos.

In addition to the absences of expensive fees, it was a confluence of factors, it seems, that determined whether or not and when the youth entered into the educational field in New York City. As discussed earlier in this section, the presence of at least one parent definitely made entrance into the educational field much easier, although two of the traditional school-going youth were unaccompanied. Not only could parents support their children during their school-going, but especially mothers, who were also part of social networks with other similarly aged adults, mostly females, and who themselves had children in schools. From this social network, Mexican youth and their parents learn about the *public* schools in close proximity to them, but also, upon visiting the schools, find out what other requirements were needed, namely transfer documents from Mexico and proof of vaccinations. For most of the traditional school-going youth, it was not only the cost, but also the presence and actions of their parents who negotiated their entry into the field.

Baltazar: Yes, my mama did everything, I did not. [Before taking you or when?] Yes, she did everything, she was investigating, she sent to request my papers from the school in Mexico, she did everything so that I entered into school.

Sí, mi mama hizo todo, yo no. [Antes de llevarte o cuando?] Si, ella hizo todo, ella estaba investigando mando para pedir papeles míos de la escuela en México, ella hizo todo para que yo entraba a la escuela.

Likewise, it was Julieta's mother, with the help of a friend, who negotiated her middle school entry. Arguably the binational agreement that the United States Department of Education

negotiated with the Mexican Secretary of Education facilitated the relatively quick transfer of school documents.

Julieta: My mom was looking for a school, for what they would need, and a friend of my mom's went with her to the school and they told her that they needed my paperwork from Mexico, so we had to wait. [How long did it take?] It took like a week.

In the majority of cases of traditional school-going youth, the youth's parents compelled, and in some cases, forced, their school enrollment. Parents, predominantly mothers, took the lead and asked friends with school-going children about schools where they could enroll the youth. This was especially true of youth who arrived during the ages associated with middle school. Relying wholly on the advice of their mothers' comadres, or friends, most of the youth ended up attending the middle schools closest to their homes.

Without much knowledge about schools in New York City, parents usually elect to send them to the middle school closest to their homes. Parents, however, do spend some time prior to enrollment to learn about the school where their child will attend, speaking with neighbors and even visiting the school. The youth, recently arrived and perceived as too young to make this decision themselves, defer to the parents who are in control of educational decisions.

Miguel: One of my mama's neighbor was the one who, she was a very good friend of hers, is the one who talked about this school, and so then it was like that, since we went to the school to see more or less how it was, and well since it was close, and yes, my mama liked it. Una vecina de mi mama era la que era muy amiga de ella, es la que platico de esta escuela, y entonces fue así como fuimos a la escuela par a ver más o menos como era, y pues como estaba acerca, y si, se gustaba a mi mama.

Lisandro also attended the closest middle school to his home.

Lisandro: It was the one closest to my house, and because of that I went there, we did not have other options because we did not know about others in this country, because we were new in this country.

Solo fue la mas a cercana a mi casa, y por eso fui ahí, no teníamos otras opciones porque no sabíamos de otros de este país, porque éramos nuevos en este país.

When selecting a high school, however, the youth demand more, if not all, of the factors on which school they will attend. More familiar with their surroundings, the youth appeared more deliberate in selecting a school to attend. Having lived in New York for a lengthier period of time, as well as having established trusting relationships with school officials, the youth and their parents based their decisions of high school selection on the information and knowledge of “official” knowledge agents.

The youth reported that they and their parents made choices based less on the recommendations they received from their friends and more on information they received from official sources of information, including school officials, the “Book,” otherwise known as the New York City Department of Education Directory of the New York City Public High Schools, and firsthand information, or through campus visits. These youth were given advice from teachers, as well as advice provided the New York City High School guide supplied by their middle schools. Approximately half of the youth ended up enrolling in special high schools designed to meet their needs as immigrant youth, including several Immigrant High schools, in Brooklyn and in Manhattan, as well as the New York City High School. The other youth reported attending different comprehensive high schools scattered around the city.

Miguel ended up enrolling and attending Immigrant High School One. A teacher from his middle school, Edgar Allan Poe Middle School, recommended the school because of its focus on immigrant students. According to his teachers, the schoolteachers and administrators at his future high school were committed to helping students like him succeed.

Miguel: Well, they gave us recommendations [at Edgar Allan Poe], we talked with another teacher and they gave us recommendations that, at that school, immigrant students who came from other countries, and it was a school that helped you to get ahead.

Pues nos dieron recomendaciones, hablamos con otro maestro, y nos dieron recomendaciones de que esa escuela era que tambien iba estudiantes inmigrantes, que vinieron de otros paises, y era una escuela que te ayudaba para salir adelante.

Traditional school going youth who attended other high schools besides the Immigrant High Schools discussed referring to “the book” to select their schools. These students attending New York City public middle schools were provided with this resource and ended up selecting traditional comprehensive high schools based on information provided in the book as well as from campus visits.¹⁴⁶

Florinda based her selection on her academic interests of math and finance. After initially applying to Lincoln Finance, she ended up attending the High School for Social Justice because of the other non-mathematic related curricula it offered.

Florinda: Because of the book, I was looking for one that interested me, and I liked it, because I also had other classes besides mathematics.

Por el libro, estaba buscando una que me interesada, y me gusto, porque tambien tenian otras clases para matematicas.

Julieta engaged in a multi-step process to select her high school that included more information from institutional agents and sources, as well as her own personal interaction with the school. Although she had attended a general New York City high school information session at her middle school, and had researched high schools in “the book,” it would not be until she visited the school with her sister-in-law that she decided that Sidney Lanier was the high school she wanted to attend.

Julieta: Well, in junior high school, they would give us, there was always this person who would go to us and tell us about high schools, and they gave us a book, so I would kind of read, not all of the information, but I would try to find, not the closest, but not the farthest, and I thought it was pretty, I liked the school, I liked the courses, the classes that they give, the sports and all of that. [So you picked the school based on the book?] It was, because that was the high school that my sister-in-law went to, so she told me more about it, and I went with her, because she needed a paper from her guidance counselor, so we went and she told me more about it, and she showed me the school, the cafeteria, the classrooms, the

¹⁴⁶ Mexican youth who opted to attend high schools that were not designed for recently arrived immigrant youth and school returnees ended up attending schools with graduation rates ranging between 75% and 50%. Immigrant High School graduation rates are actually more dismal, with the schools that the youth attended possessing graduation rates that were less than 65%.

science department, the English departments, it was pretty inside the school, there was a pool, and two gyms, and I liked it.

At the high school level, parents relied more on their children's interests than their own and allowed the youth to research, and ultimately, select the schools themselves. A number of the youth reported relying on their own set of resources, not their parents, including their peers, their similarly-aged relatives, teachers, as well as their own evaluation of the schools based on the high school directory and visit.

Lisandro based his decision about which high school to attend on the selections of his peers. Not knowing much about high schools, when it came time to select a high school to apply to and attend, he followed the lead of his classmates. He applied and enrolled in Lamar High school, the same high school where many of his classmates from Bay Ridge were enrolled.

Lisandro: I decided to go to this school because many students who went to my school, the junior high school, of Clinton, they registered in that school, and like I did not know much, I just had two years there, well, I just followed the people I knew.

Yo decidí a ir a esta escuela porque muchas estudiantes que iban a mi escuela, el junior high school, de Clinton, ellos inscribieron a esta escuela, y como yo no sabía mucho, yo no mas tenía dos años aquí, pues solo seguía a los personas que conocían.

When it came time to decide which high school Patricio would attend, he relied on the experiences his cousin shared with him about Immigrant High School Two. His cousin had attended the school years earlier and recommended attending it to Patricio.

Patricio: I went because of my cousin, I had a cousin who attended the school, and he recommended it that it is a good school, and up until now, it is proven, because I have learned English too, and they support each one of the students.

Yo la tome porque un primo, tuve un primo que asistió a la escuela, y él me lo recomendaba que es una escuela buena, y hasta ahora, está comprobado, porque ha aprendido ingles también, y soporta cada una de los estudiantes.

The two youth in this population who were unaccompanied could be characterized more as "school returnees," enrolled in their respective high schools after a period of time in the labor market. In Herminda's case, she wanted to enroll in a nearby high school but found out that, at

age nineteen, she was too old. A district official informed her of New York and its program, as well as their accommodations for youth who worked full-time, and she enrolled there. In the case of Jesus, his brother found a flyer announcing the opening of and an information session for New American High School and he accompanied Jesus to the meeting. In both cases, it was the receipt of “official” information from institutional agents that brought about their enrollment in these respective schools. Unfamiliar with other traditional school-going peers, and not in contact with teachers and other advisors, nor the official documents given to students as they prepare to select their high schools, the youth instead had less information to go on as they selected their schools. Arguably, they did not possess many options to choose among many schools.

For traditional school-going youth, methods of information-gathering and decision making about which school to attend depended on the social capital they and/or their parents possessed, which varied by the length of time they and/or their parents had been in New York City, as well as whether or not they had prior experience in the educational field. For newcomers who enrolled not long after their arrival, they and their parents could only rely on their parents’ social capital, embedded in the friendship networks they maintained with other Mexican parents of school-age children.

The majority of these youth arrived during their middle school years. After entering into middle school, the youth were able to access information, some official, some not, through social agents located in their schools, including teachers, as well as other friends who would continue onto high school. Although these recommendations were primarily subjective, youth also discussed basing their high school selections on the “objective” high school directory. With this resource, they were able to match their interests with the school offerings, and apply to attend these schools. Youth who arrived during their high school years showed less diversity in their

high school selection, attending schools that were specifically designed for recently arrived immigrant youth and older school returnees. Varied in means of decision-making, they relied on a mixture of parental personal contacts [one youth] and encounters with institutional agents. Bound by age, the youth reported attending schools that corresponded to their ages. In only one case did the subject's age determine which school a youth would attend; too old to attend traditional high schools, she was forced to attend an alternative high school for older youth.

Schools Mexican Immigrant Youth Attend

Although the traditional school-going youth expressed positive school-going experiences at their schools, differences existed between levels of schooling. Whereas the youth expressed negative experiences during middle school, once they arrived in high school, their descriptions of their experiences were much rosier. Partly attributed to the adjustments they were experiencing as new arrivals, all of the middle school arrivals were enrolled in ESL or bilingual tracks, within larger, non-immigrant schools. Here, they were not all "iguales," as so many of the high school students mentioned over and over again in their reasons for enjoying their high school experiences.

As suggested in the previous section, traditional school-going immigrant youth attend a variety of high schools, some which are designed specifically with their needs in mind, and other, more traditional high schools in which their recent arrival status is not explicit. Regardless of which high school the youth attended, they seemed to have more positive orientations to high school, itself.

Middle School

Only a third of the traditional school-going youth arrived at an age that was appropriate for middle school enrollment. Comparing their middle school experiences with their high school

experiences, the youth evaluated their time in middle school less positively than their time in high school. These youth discussed attending schools that were neither designed especially for immigrant youth nor were they the racial/ethnic/linguistic majority. At these schools the youth were tracked into ESL classes, which coincided with the spatial organization of the schools. Marked by the location of their classes, the youth discussed being victims of harassment from other non LEP students while at these middle schools.

In middle school, the Mexican youth reported attending classes which were located apart from English proficient youth. Miguel describing attending a five-floor middle school in which the first two floors were attended by English proficient speakers, and the top three floors were inhabited by Limited English Proficient students.¹⁴⁷ The majority of the LEP students were Latinos.

Miguel: The building was five floors, with the first two floors, there the students were located who already, their English was very good, and in the other floors, the students were bilingual.

El edificio era de cinco pisos, con los dos primeros pisos, estaba localizada los estudiantes que ya, su ingles estaba muy bueno, y en los otros pisos, los estudiantes eran bilingües.

Youth attended bilingual classes all day long except in the afternoon when they received English instruction. These youth discussed how at first, during middle school, school-going was difficult, because of the language, but by high school, it had become easier. Leonardo and Patricio both recalled similar school days, filled with bilingual classes in the morning and English classes in the afternoon.

Leonardo: Well at the start of the regular day, I took my regular classes, but all of them were bilingual, all Hispanics, all spoke Spanish, so there were classes in Spanish in the morning, but they gave us English classes in the afternoons.

¹⁴⁷ Two of the five youth who attended middle school in New York reported attending Edgar Allan Poe Middle school. Based on the NYS Report Card, approximately 85% of the student population was identified as Black or African American, while 12% were Latino. Only 11% of the school population was identified as LEP.

Pues al principio del día regular, tome mis clases regulares, pero todos eran bilingües, puros hispanos, todos hablaron español, so eran clases en español en la mañana, pero nos dieron clases de ingles en las tardes.

Likewise, Patricio followed a similar schedule, experiencing academic difficulties at first and then improving as he progressed through middle school to high school. He expressed regret at having followed this schedule that provided limited English instruction. He believed it impeded his linguistic progress.

Patricio: In middle school, the truth is that I only chose two English classes, our classes are bilingual, but I think that was, maybe, a little bad, because I barely understood any English, so then the second school, the high school, I think it's been a little better because I have taken English.

Al middle school, la verdad [es que] escogía solamente dos clases de ingles, nuestras clases eran bilingües, creo que era, a la mejor poquita mala, porque casi no aprendí nada de ingles, entonces la segunda escuela, el high school, creo que ha sido mejor porque ha tomado mas ingles.

The youth attributed much of their displeasure with their middle schools to the instruction they received. Several of the youth who had attended middle school in New York City reported having difficulties with the subject matter, and had experienced teachers who did not provide them adequate support/the support they would have liked/needed. Florinda had difficulties understanding her classes when she was attending middle school. Her teachers were unable to/unavailable to help with her confusion.

Florinda: Well, like they did not explain it well, and I had doubts about the subjects.

Pues como no nos explican bien, y quedo con dudas sobre las materias.

Miguel described having teachers who did not care whether or not the students learned. Placing the burden of learning on the students, the teachers even shared their lackadaisical attitude with the students, telling them that, regardless if they mastered the material, they would still receive a paycheck.

Miguel: The teachers continue the same, if you learn, good, if no, no, that they say that they'll pay us and you, they did teach, but if you learn, good, and if not, no, there you stay.

Los maestros siguen igual, si aprendes, bien, si no, no, que ellos dicen que nosotros nos paguen y ustedes, ellos si enseñaron, pero se aprendes, bien, y si no, no, ahí te quedabas.

Traditional school-going youth also reported experiencing discrimination from other students while attending middle school. Unlike their high schools where immigrant youth were in the majority, if not the sole population in the school, the youth attended schools in which they were not only a racial/ethnic/linguistic minority, but they were distinguished by tracking and the location of their classes. Easily identifiable and few in number, these youth were easy targets for harassment.

Patricio attended a middle school that was 85% Black or African American, 11% Latino and 12% LEP. While he discussed feeling discriminated against for being a non-English speaking immigrant, the harassment may have also been rooted in the fact that he was a Mexican non-English speaking immigrant.

Patricio: During middle school, I felt that I did not connect with that school because the majority were of the African race, so, sometimes I felt that I was discriminated against during lunch, or I thought that I did not have to go there. I have had discrimination, when I was in middle school, the African race discriminated against us for not speaking English or for being an immigrant.

Durante el middle school, yo sentí que yo no conectaba con esa escuela porque la mayoría era de raza negra, so, algunas veces sentí que yo estaba discriminada. Si ha tenido discriminación, cuando estaba en Middle School, a la raza negra, nos discriminaba por no hablar ingles o por ser inmigrante.

The connection between harassment and being Mexican was more explicit in the discrimination Miguel experienced. He had been called an immigrant and a “beaner,” a term that has long been disparagingly used in reference to unauthorized Mexican immigrants (Acuna, 1996).

Miguel: [Have you had any sort of experience of discrimination in New York, with other people, or in school?] With classmates, they call me immigrant, beaner, um, ugly things. [Has tenido cualquier experiencia de discriminación en NY, con otra gente, o en la escuela?] Con compañeros de la escuela, me dicen como inmigrante, frijolero, este, cosas feas.

Other youth attended middle schools where Latinos were a greater percentage, and in some cases, the majority. These youth did not express such strong experiences of discrimination or harassment. Lisandro attended a middle school where Latinos were not only the majority ethnic population, but the percentage of LEP speakers was well over 30%. He had no incidents of harassment to report.

High School

By the time they reached high school, Mexican youth framed their school experiences as positive. In high school settings, more of the youth were attending classes with youth who were like them, either recently arrived immigrants, mostly Spanish-speaking, or school returnees. This homogeneity set the tone/framed not only how the youth interpreted their treatment at their schools, not only from school officials, but also from their friends who shared similar backgrounds/experiences. These youth seemed happy in their high school settings, and as such, exhibited positive school orientations. Expanding on previous literature depicting [mostly early arriving] immigrant youth as positively oriented towards school, these youth were also positively oriented towards school and exhibited behaviors to demonstrate such. The youth discussed never missing classes, being interested in their courses, experiencing improvements in their academic achievement, and for the most part, expressing desire and plans to attend college. These youth felt as if they were where they belonged: in high school.

Reflecting data that characterizes immigrant youth as “good” students, the youth described school-going behaviors that support this premise. The youth reported having high levels of school attendance and positive school orientations. All of the youth except for one reported always wanting to attend school and “always” attending school and “never” missing classes.

Roberto was one such student who stated that he liked school a lot, so much that he never missed school. He reported receiving certificates of perfect attendance every cycle.

Roberto: Yes, because each month, or each semester, like I went every day, they always gave me a diploma that I had not missed [school].

Sí, porque cada mes, o cada semestre, como yo iba todos los días, siempre me daba un diploma de que yo no faltaba.

Likewise, Jesus commented on finding his classes interesting. Jesus had entered into high school only months before and was still experiencing difficulties with English. In spite of his linguistic difficulties, he was enjoying his school-going at New American High School.

Jesus: The classes are more fun, more interesting, in English, even if I do not understand much, what I understand interests me, the school.

Las clases son más divertidas, más interesantes, en ingles, aunque yo no entiendo mucho, lo que entiendo me interesa la escuela.

The youth attributed much of their positive orientation towards high school to the social networks and the characteristics of the individuals located in these networks, both teachers and friends. Especially at the Immigrant High Schools, the youth found their teachers to be supportive and helpful, constantly asking the youth if they needed assistance and offering assistance to them. These teachers, the youth believed, cared about them and their well-being.

Miguel: Well [in High School], I am treated, well I feel like I am treated much better, I receive more attention in the school with the teachers, and if I need help after school, I can stay and ask them, and I can ask them with great frankness, and they help me. They never tell you no, if you need help, they give it to you, and if they cannot in that moment, after school they give it to you, and there is another person who focuses on, if you have a problem, you go and tell him, and he helps you to solve your problems.

Pues [en el High School], estoy tratado, pues siento tratado mucho mejor, recibo mas atención en esta escuela con los maestros, y si necesito ayuda después de la escuela, puedo quedarme y pedirlo de ellos, y puedo pedirlo con gran franqueza, y ellos me ayudan. Que nunca te dicen que no, si necesitas ayuda, ellos te lo dan, y si no pueden en ese momento, después de la escuela te lo dan, y si no pueden en ese momento, después de la escuela te lo dan, y allí hay otra persona que se enfoca, si tu tiene algún problema, tu vas y lo dices, y el te ayuda resolver sus problemas.

Likewise, Baltazar felt that his teachers cared about him at his school. They thought about him and his well-being and tried to help him solve his problems as well.

Baltazar: I think that yes, I am valued in school because the teachers, to me, always take me into account and already now, I have a problem and they are helping me.

Yo pienso que si estoy valorado en la escuela porque los maestros a mí, siempre me toman en cuenta, y ya ahorita, tengo un problema, y me están ayudando.

Julieta also discussed receiving support from several school officials at her high school. She discussed how her Spanish teacher gave her practical advice, while her guidance counselor provided more institutional assistance, intervening on her behalf when necessary. Remarkably, Julieta held her teacher in such high esteem that she named her as her favorite thing about high school.

Julieta: [What are your favorite things about high school?] I don't know, I spend a lot of time with my Spanish teacher. And she would always give me good advice to do well in school, not to go with bad influences, and if you have friends, just keep a distance between them, inside and outside of school.

While Julieta enjoyed receiving one-on-one attention from her teachers, other youth expressed appreciating the uniform treatment they received from their teachers. Reminiscent of Levinson's findings in his ethnography of a Mexican secundaria, the idea that all of the students were the same and were treated as such was repeated over and over again by the youth. When asked about their teachers, it was this similar treatment, not preferential, that they most respected and liked about their teachers and their schools.

Roberto: What I liked was that the teachers treated you the same as everyone.

Lo que me gustaba es que los maestros te trataba igual que a todos.

Likewise, Patricio believed similarly, that his teachers treated all of the students the same way.

Patricio: Well, in that school where I am, the International High School, I like how I am treated because they treat us the same, and the truth is that there is not a single thing that I do not like.

Bueno, en la escuela donde estoy, la Immigrant High School, me gusta como estoy tratado, porque nos tratan igual, y la verdad es que no hay ninguna cosa que no me disgusta.

This uniform treatment, however, meant under no circumstances that the teachers did not care about them individually. Rather, the youth felt as if they were all cared about.

Florinda: [Do you feel valued or not valued in your school?] Valued. [Why?] Because they worry about you, they are always asking you if you feel sick or if something is happening to you.

[Sientes valorada o no valorada en tu escuela?] Valorada. [Porque?] Porque preocupen por ti, siempre te están preguntando si sientes mal, si te está pasando algo.

In addition to being instructed by supportive teachers who appeared to care and want for the students to succeed, the youth also discussed being surrounded by supportive classmates who, similarly, were immigrants and who had experienced similar conditions as the youth including arriving in New York City. Like them, their classmates were recently arrived immigrants who, in some cases, also carried significant household and labor obligations. Sensitive to their fellow classmates' strengths and weaknesses, the students described going to school in an environment where everyone was the same, and everyone helped each other.

Jesus remarked about how attending a school where every student was an immigrant made him feel good, and that they were all on an equal level.

Jesus: Well there, I feel good, I do not feel like that, put to one side, because there, we are all the same, immigrants, we just arrived to this country, no one was born here, we are all the same.

Pues ahí me siento bien, no me siento así, hecho a un lado, porque ahí, todos somos iguales, inmigrantes, acabamos de llegar a este país, nadie es de que nací aquí, ahí, todos somos iguales.

Possessing similar experiences also translated into youth being sensitive to their classmates' challenges and vice versa. This led to a sense of security in knowing that their classmates not only understood them better than other youth would, but that through these shared experiences and empathy, they would assist the youth in times of need.

Miguel: What I like [about going to school in New York] is that I have friends who are, who have the same problems that I do, and I do not feel alone, and I have help wherever I want.

La que me gusta [acerca ir a la escuela en NY] es que tengo amigos que son, que tienen los mismos problemas que yo, y no me siento solo, y tengo ayuda donde quiera.

Likewise, for Roberto, it appeared as if attending school with other immigrant youth was tantamount to the youth possessing a safety net. Roberto never felt alone at school and he believed that he could rely on his classmates and friends at school for help, especially with his English skills.

Roberto: [Have you felt one time that you do not belong to school in New York?] No, I have not felt like outside of school, I feel more attracted to school, the people from the school help you and they give you support and do not leave you alone, and if you do not understand anything, like friends who speak English, better than you, they help you and they talk to you about how to do it and they do not leave you alone, they show you how to do it better, because of that, I do not feel alone or like I want to leave school.

[Has sentido alguna vez que no perteneces a la escuela en NY?] No, no ha sentido como afuera de la escuela, siento como mas atraído a la escuela, la gente de la escuela te ayuda y te da apoyo, y no te dejaron solo, y si no entiendes algo, como amigos que hablan ingles, mas mejor que tu, te ayuda y te platica a saber cómo hacerlo y no te dejan solo, te enseñan para hacerlo mejor, por eso no siento solo o como quiero salirme de la escuela.

Herminda was not only the only traditional school-going youth who was still working full-time, but she was also the oldest youth attending school. For her, it was the school's institutional policies, as well as support services that facilitated her school-going. At New York High School, school officials had designed policies and services that accommodated older teenagers who were reentering into the school, as well as unaccompanied immigrant youth who were supporting themselves. At this school, Herminda marveled not only at the myriad services the school provided to ensure their students' success, but also the flexibility of their class schedules.

Herminda: They give us a metro card, they give us food, including if we don't bring paper, they give us paper and pencil, there is alot of support for those from the administration, um, also included in the school is a non-profit organization that is called CDI that focuses on giving us services, services for young immigrants, who do not have a place to sleep, or do not know the city, or do not have parents, this organization brings lawyers, counselors, and other people who have to do with medical services, legal, etc. So then, this school counts with many services, actually, they are trying better, they give lots of opportunities to the students, they give employment, if they have problems with credit, they help them.

Nos dan un metro card, nos dan comida, incluido si no traemos papel ahí mismo, te dan papel, y lápiz, hay muchísimo apoyo por los quien esta en la administración, este, ahí incluso hay en la

escuela una non-profit organización que se llama CDI, que enfocan a darnos servicios, servicios para los jóvenes inmigrantes, que no tienen lugar para dormir, o no conocen la ciudad, o no tienen padres, esta organización trae abogados, consejeros, otras personas que tienen que hacer con servicios médicos, legales, etc. Entonces, esta escuela cuenta con muchos servicios, actualmente esta tratando mejor, le dan muchas oportunidades a los estudiantes, los dan empleo, si tienen problemas con crédito, les ayuden.

Continuing to work so that she could support herself, Herminda was drawn to NYHS because of the school's accommodation to working youth. Although she had to find a new job, she continued to work, taking care of her new employers' son from 8am until 3pm. At that time she left and entered classes in downtown Manhattan at 5pm. Classes would end at 10:30pm, after which she would travel home to Queens and arrive around midnight. She would be up the following morning at 6:30am to begin her routine again, doing her homework on the train to and from work and school.

Herminda: They [the administration] look for the best schedule so that we can work and study at the same time, that is why they have schedules all day, in the morning until afternoon, or in the afternoon until a little into the night, or at night until later at night.

Ellos [la administración] buscan el mejor horario para que podemos trabajar y estudiar al mismo tiempo, por eso tienen horarios por todo el día, en la mañana hasta la tarde, o en la tarde hasta poquito del noche, o de la noche ser hasta poquito mas adentro de la noche.

Traditional school-going youth discussed positive experiences at their respective schools. Mexican youth who arrived during their middle school years appeared to be attending schools that were not catered to their newcomer needs, and instead, were somewhat hostile and segregated. Aware of their separation from other students, as well as harassed, entry into middle school was challenging. It is not until the youth arrive to high school that they appear to enjoy school. Largely explained by their enrollment in specialized schools, either for immigrants or older students, their satisfaction is met by caring teachers and sensitive policies and practices that address the needs of recently arrived immigrant youth.

Staying in the Educational Field

None of the traditional school-going youth expressed any desire to leave the educational field, both prior to high school completion or after. Not only were the youth still interested in learning and school-going, they did not possess any obligations that would force them out of the full-time educational field. Only a couple of youth expressed the desire to leave school and work full-time to help their parents, but this occurred early on in their educational careers, something which their parents refused. Later on, as discussed previously, the youth were able to obtain part-time work, but never left the educational field.

After emigrating from Puebla, Miguel arrived in New York City expressing a desire to forego schooling and enter into the labor market full-time. After joining his parents, however, they ruled out that possibility and enrolled him in middle school.

Miguel: Well, like I told you, at first, well yes, I thought that maybe it was better to leave school and help my parents, but they told me no, but yes, I did want to work.

Pues como te dijo al principio, pues sí, pienso que quise mejor en salirme de la escuela y ayudar a mis padres, pero ellos me dijeron que no, pero sí, quería trabajar.

When asked why she continued her studies, Julieta also attributed her continued school enrollment to her mother.

Julieta: [Why did you continue your studies when you arrived in NY?] I don't know, maybe it was because of my mom that I have to go [to school], because I would talk to my parents about getting a job and they would always say no, you have to focus on your studies.

Miguel believed that some of his friends wanted to drop out of school because their parents and teachers had not demonstrated sufficient support for them and their school-going. Parental and teacher support were the differences in the lives of him and his friends, between enjoying school and wanting to drop out. Belonging to a web of care which included his parents and teachers, Miguel had never wanted to discontinue his studies in New York since he had begun them.

Miguel: Well, the truth is that his parents do not give the support that they need, and I think that they don't give him much attention, like I have received, and well too, I have teachers who worry, but I think that they do not have teachers who worry about them.

Pues la verdad es que sus papas no les dan el apoyo que ellos necesitan y creo que no les dan mucho atención como yo ha recibido, y pues también, tengo maestros que preocupen, pero creo que ellos no tienen maestros quien preocupen.

In addition to refusing their children's wishes to discontinue their studies, the youth's parents instill the idea that school will lead to a better life into the youth's minds. When asked why they have continued studying up to this point, aside from refusing to let them leave, most of the youth also responded that their parents had instilled in them as much.

This was true in the cases of Lisandro, as well as other youth. Their parents had been instrumental in making them believe in the value of a formal education and studies.

Lisandro: I say, because of my parents, they always inculcated [in me] that I study, even if they never obligated me, because they told me that I could work or something, but they always told me that it was better to study.

Yo digo, por mis padres, ellos siempre me inculcaron que yo estudiara, aunque nunca me obligaron, porque ellos me decía que yo podía trabajar o algo, pero ellos siempre me decía que era mejor estudiar.

Not only did parents refuse their children's requests to leave the educational field, the youth also reported that their parents were involved in and aware of their academic achievement. In spite of their parents' low levels of education, as well as low levels of English proficiency, the majority of traditional school-going youth discussed that their parents helped them with their homework assignments, as well as contacted and visited the schools. Only a couple of the youth with parents reported having parents who entrusted their children more with their own academic achievement and success.

Miguel and Roberto appeared to possess the parents who monitored their sons' academic progress the most. Not only did their parents check over their assignments, but they also called and visited their schools to find out how the youth were progressing academically.

Miguel: That they [parents] help me with my assignments, no, but that they find out how I am doing in my assignments, yes, um, yes they are my parents, and each time that they go to school to check my grades, they are the ones who ask my teachers to see how I am doing. They are the ones who are told.

Que me ayuda con mis tareas, no, pero que se enterre en cómo voy en mis tareas, si, este si son mis padres, y cada vez que van a la escuela para chequear mis notas, ellos son los que preguntan a mis maestros para ver cómo voy...ellos son los que dicen.

Roberto's mother behaved similarly, always going over his assignments and making sure that they were complete. She would also check in with the school to make sure her son was doing what he was supposed to be doing.

Roberto: Yes, my mama always says that we have to do our assignments, she checks our assignments, or she calls the school, or she is always checking.

Sí, mi mama, siempre dice que tenemos que hacer nuestras tareas, ella chequea nuestras tareas, o ella habla a la escuela, o siempre esta chequeando.

Other youth reported that their parents engaged in limited parental involvement once they were in high school. Believing that their children were now old enough to monitor their own progress and advocate for themselves, some parents refrained from becoming involved in their children's school affairs. They let the youth handle them themselves, or with the assistance of school officials. Not so much from the lack of care so often attributed to immigrant and poor parents; rather, these parents made decisions as to their children's well-being in school based on particular beliefs about age-related responsibility and autonomy.

While Lisandro's parents' had been more actively engaged in his school progress until the end of junior high school, they believed that upon his entrance into high school, he was old enough to manage his own academic progress.

Lisandro: Well, my parents were aware of how I went and everything, until a point, when I graduated from junior high school, well they left more responsibility to me, so that I was more responsible for myself in how I was doing in school.

Pues mis padres estaban enterrados de como yo iba y todo, hasta un punto, cuando yo gradué de junior high school, pues ellos me dejo más responsabilidad a mí, para que yo estaba responsable de yo mismo en como yo iba a la escuela.

In the case of Julieta, her parents also appeared to limit their involvement. Although they wanted Julieta to do well in school and asked her about her academic progress, if she was experiencing challenges in school, they encouraged her to assume responsibility by addressing the issues with her teachers and counselors, rather than visiting the schools themselves.

Julieta: So most of the time, they're like how's school, so they ask me about school, they ask me about my relationships with my teachers, they ask me what I'm learning, and they ask me if it's difficult, and when I tell them that a class is a little difficult for me, they help me if they can, and they give me advice to go to tutoring or to go to my teacher so they can help.

For most traditional school-going youth, the presence of a parent, especially a mother is essential to their school-going. Not only are parents and mothers responsible, in most cases, for their school enrollment, but several of the youth discuss their parents' involvement with their studies. Perhaps partly due to their enrollment in immigrant-friendly schools, the youth are able to enjoy the support of their parents, including social capital for their continued studies.

Exchanging Cultural Capital in the New York City Labor Market Field: Perceptions of Traditional School-Going Youth

All of the traditional school going youth reported believing that completion of a high school degree, as well as going to college, would lead to a better job and a higher salary. The youth defined these "better jobs" and "better salaries" as contrasting with the jobs that their parents worked in; instead, these jobs required higher levels of educational attainment.

Lisandro: Well, like I told you, to have better jobs, we need us Mexicans, or well, those who are immigrants, to try to have better jobs in this country and not conform with what our parents did.

Pues como te dije, para tener mejores trabajos, necesitamos nosotros mexicanos o bueno, los que son inmigrantes, tratar tener mejores trabajos en este país y no conformarnos con lo que hicieron nuestros padres.

When asked, however, most of the youth spoke in general terms about the benefits that continued studies would afford them. Aside from defining the dual labor market by who/which generation currently held those jobs, other youth defined the split in the labor market by the conditions that

defined those jobs. In the case of Jesus, he believed that continuing one's studies would help him gain status, as well as not only a better future and salary, but also help him avoid the work conditions that so many Mexicans work under.

Jesus: Well, to come out ahead, to be someone in life, to have a better future, and so not to keep on doing the same, no, not just to have a better salary, I would like to be someone who earns better money, without killing oneself a lot.

Bueno, de salir adelante, de ser alguien en la vida, para tener un futuro mejor, y para no seguir haciendo el mismo, no no mas para tener un salario, yo me gustaría ser alguien que gana mejor plata, sin matarse mucho.

In spite of knowing that continued studies corresponded to a better job than their parents, the youth were split between what was the highest level of formal education, and which educational credential one needed to obtain a "better" job. While Patricio knew that continuing on to college would better secure a position in the primary labor market, he believed that obtaining a high school diploma, and knowing English were enough to get a "good" job.

Patricio: Yes, because first, to have a good job in this country, they say that you have to know English, and well, maybe, if you can finish high school, and if you want to go to college, but at least have a high school diploma.

Sí, porque primero para tener un buen trabajo en este país, dicen que tienes que saber ingles, y bueno, quizás, si puedes terminar high school, y si quieres ir al colegio, pero a lo menos tienes un diploma de high school.

Miguel was able to describe the distinction and correspondence between levels of educational attainment and the split labor market the most distinctly of all of his peers. When asked what the highest level of schooling he believed Mexicans needed to have in able to find work in the United States, he immediately distinguished between the two labor market sectors and corresponded different levels of education to each sector.

Miguel: And what is the highest level of schooling that you have seen that Mexicans have to complete in Mexico to work in the United States? Finish college, that is the most basic that we have to complete. [And why do you think that?] Because if you do not have a diploma that says that you finished college, it is difficult to find a job, the only one that remains is to work in a restaurant, and that's it.

[Y cuál es el más alto nivel de escuela que has visto tu que los mexicanos tienen que cumplir en México para trabajar en los EU?] Terminar college, es el mas básico que tenemos a terminar. [Y porque piensas que necesitamos este nivel?] Porque si no tienes un diploma que dice que terminaste college, es difícil de encontrar trabajo, lo único que se queda es de trabajar en un restaurant, y ya.

In contrast to their nontraditional school-going youth, these youth, by going to traditional high schools, are developing a broader, more complete picture of the labor market by belonging both to families where their parents and relatives work in the secondary labor market, and schools, which promise access to the primary labor market through the attainment of educational credentials and “completion.”

By participating in traditional high schools, the idea of better jobs, better wages and better futures whose attainment was based/corresponded to educational credentials was crystallizing in their minds. Told this over and over again not just by their parents, but by school officials, the idea of a dual labor market began to take shape in their minds. Although the contours of the primary labor market were still fuzzy, i.e., details about what jobs are available, the youth were beginning to distinguish between the two more confidently than their non traditional school-going counterparts had done. With the message of “high school completion and college-going for a better life” ubiquitous in media and schools, the youth believed this as well and were beginning to make distinctions based on these ideas.

Congruency of Labor Market and Educational Fields

In the case of traditional school-going youth, because they predominantly engaged in the labor market as part-time workers, most of the youth reported not experiencing conflicts between the two fields. As discussed previously, youth either only worked after school and on weekends, leaving, in their words, sufficient time for homework. Only in the cases of Herminda, the only full-time worker, and Lisandro, did complications due to the intersections of the two fields arise.

In the case of Herminda, she quickly searched and found another job, however, that would allow her to attend classes at night. In the case of Lisandro, it was not until he failed several courses did he change his work schedule to privilege school-going.

Lisandro: This idea, I got it by myself because I remember when I went to work, I left at one in the morning, so then I did not have the same time to do assignments or projects that they left me, that made me repeat, or I did not pass, some classes.

Esta idea yo lo saque por mi mismo porque recuerdo cuando yo iba al trabajo, yo salía a la una de la mañana, entonces no tenía el mismo tiempo para hacer tareas o proyectos que me dejaban, eso me hizo reprobar, o no pasaba algunas clases.

Instead, however, the youth reported that it was the intersection of the labor market and educational fields that encouraged their continued studies. Participating in the labor market, especially the secondary labor market, actually positively influenced their school-going rather than deterred it. Like the pre-migration youth who discussed continuing their studies so that they would not have to work in the campo or fields all of their lives, these youth explained that being exposed to hard labor and low wages motivated them to stay in school and continue onto college so that they would not have to be limited to the secondary labor market.

Rey: Well, the work that I had helped me a lot because, like I said, when I entered into high school, I did not like it, and I wanted to maybe look for a job and not study anymore, and that helped me a lot in the form that I think because after I had that job, I had more desire to be in school and I thought less in looking for a job and leaving school. [In general, do you think that working influenced you to leave or not leave school?] Well yes, like I said, I'll repeat like I just told you, it influenced me a lot to stay in school, because to have a job like those, is heavy, and better for me to stay in school and hope to obtain a better job.

Pues el trabajo que tuve aquí me ayudo mucho porque como te dije cuando yo entro al high school, no me gustaba, y yo quería buscar un trabajo a la mejor y no estudiar más, y eso me ayudo mucho en la forma en que yo pienso porque después de que tuve ese trabajo, tuve más ganas de estar en la escuela y pensé menos en buscar un trabajo y dejar la escuela. [En general, piensas que trabajar te influyo de salir o no salir de la escuela?] Pues si, como te dije, te repito como te acabo de decir, me influyo mucho en que quedarme en la escuela, porque de tener un trabajo de esos es pesado, y mejor quedarme en la escuela y esperar conseguir un mejor trabajo.

Likewise, it was Patricio's previous work as a supermarket stockboy and the conditions he worked under that gave him the idea that continuing with his studies could catapult into work with better conditions.

Patricio: Ah, yes, it has influenced me a lot, at work, I have worked, ten or sometimes twelve hours, and I think that with my education, I am going to be able to work in a job where I can work six or eight hours, yes it has influenced me a lot.

Ah, sí, me ha influido mucho, en el trabajo, ha trabajado, diez y a veces doce horas, y creo yo con mi educación, voy a poder trabajar en un trabajo donde puedo trabajar seis o ocho horas, si ha influido mucho.

Miguel discussed another benefit of working and going to school at the same time. Balancing work and school, he believed, helped him to focus more on what he had to accomplish in both fields.

Miguel: Yes, because there at school, like with many problems in my head, well, I have to be doing jobs, and well, I have to have my time to go to work, go to school, well, do what I want to do, so then it helps me to be organized, have patience in my jobs, and become responsible.

Sí, porque hay en la escuela, como con muchas problemas en la cabeza pues me tiene que estar haciendo trabajos, y pues tengo que tener mi tiempo para ir a trabajar, ir a la escuela, pues hacer lo que quiero hacer, entonces me ayuda ser organizado, tener paciencia en mis trabajos, y hacerme responsable.

Rather than expressing their own difficulties or complications from participating in both the labor market and the educational fields, the traditional school-going youth, by virtue of opting to work part-time, but still in jobs found in the secondary labor market, were actually motivated to do better and continue their studies so that they would not participate in this sector full-time. In addition, by being able to participate in both fields at once, some of the youth were able to transfer skills learned in the labor market into the educational field, which, according to them, led to greater success. Skills such as being organized and being responsible were useful to them in their studies.

Intersection of Life Course and Educational Field

Traditional school-going youth reported experiencing different life course categories according to the particular level of schooling they were discussing. Although adolescence is most often associated with middle school attendance, even in Mexico (Levinson, 2001), in middle school, the youth reported being treated and feeling in-between the life course stages of childhood and adolescence. Julieta reported believing that she and her fellow middle schoolers were treated not yet like adolescents, but also no longer like children.

Julieta: In middle school, I wasn't treated like a child, but also not as an adolescent, like in the middle of that.

Patricio believed that the organization of middle school and the treatment arising from this organization caused this schizophrenic treatment. During the school week, school activities were split between those suitable for children, like playing, and those suitable for adolescents, like staying on task.

Patricio: [In middle school] Well, sometimes like a child, and sometimes like an adolescent, a child because sometimes we just passed the day playing and other times like an adolescent, we attended to what we had to do and what was important.

Bueno, algunas veces como un niño, y algunas veces como un adolescente, un niño porque algunas veces no más nos pasábamos jugando, y otras veces como una adolescente, nos atendíamos lo que teníamos que hacer y que era importante.

Once in high school however, the youth believed that they were firmly experiencing the treatment expected of adolescents. Granted more autonomy but expected to be responsible in all of their actions and behaviors, the youth believed that they were treated as adolescents in their high schools. These expectations and behaviors, autonomy and responsibility, under adult supervision, is what characterized adolescence.

Roberto: Well here at this school, they treat you like an adolescent because it is more, they see you more sure of yourself and they see you more open and like they do not put pressure on you, only they tell you what you have to do.

Pues aquí en esta escuela te tratan como un adolescente, porque son mas, se te ven más seguro de ti mismo y te ven más abierta y como no te ponen presión, solamente te dicen lo que tienes que hacer.

Likewise, Julieta believed that she was treated like an adolescent in her high school. Disassociating the youth from their younger, junior high school peers, now, high school youth were expected to act older—more responsible and serious in demeanor.

Julieta: Like an adolescent. [Why do you say that?] Because the first time that I went there, the teachers talked to the class like very strict to us, what I remember what they said that this wasn't junior high school anymore, that you have to think more seriously about your futures, and not be playing around with your friends, you have to take it seriously.

Baltazar was the only youth who associated his experiences in high school with adulthood. Echoing Julieta's description of adolescence, he instead attributed these expectations and behaviors, such as being responsible, to adulthood.

Baltazar: Like an adult, because I, the teachers, they know me, and they know that I finish my assignments, since I started school, I am dedicated to paying attention to them, do what they ask me to do and not goof off, it is something that I have, to not goof off, not a single bad grade on my exams, and in my work, I act like an adult, responsible, I ask what they ask of me.

Como un adulto, porque yo, los maestros, me conocen, y saben que cumple yo con las tareas, desde que empieza la escuela, yo me dedico a poner atención a ellos, hacer lo que me piden, y no hecho relajos, es algo que yo tengo, de no echar relajos, ninguna mala nota en mis exámenes, y en mis trabajos, porto como un adulto, responsable, yo hago todo que me piden...

Demonstrating that New York City public schools follow strict delineations between schools based on age that correspond to life course categories, Herminda was rerouted when she expressed interest, at the age of nineteen, in enrolling in Cleveland High school in Queens. Upon visiting the district office, she was told that she was too old to attend that school, and would have to attend instead, a school for young adults. This school was specifically for youth who would complete their high school requirements by the age of twenty-one rather than nineteen, and were full-time workers. Herminda was encouraged to go to school because she was almost age nineteen, the cutoff age to be in comprehensive high schools, and would not be able to finish her degree for another year or so.

Herminda: And then it is there [the school district office] that they ask me, how old am I, and I tell them, that I am nineteen, and they tell me, well nineteen, that's already to graduate from high school. Well, I was in between eighteen and nineteen, so then they tell me you have the opportunity to go to a high school, but it is very intensive because you have to finish it in a year and a half. Everything that you were going to learn in four years, you have to learn in a year and a half. And then they gave me that option, the option to go to the school, New York Night High School, that is located in Manhattan. Well, this high school is made for young adults, that are called, young adults, and who are between seventeen and twenty-one years old, they offer me the opportunity to get a high school degree.

Y luego es ahí [la oficina de distrito de escuela] que me preguntan, cuantos años tienes, y les digo, tengo 19, y me dicen, pues 19 años, ya era para graduarse de preparatoria. Bueno yo estaba entre mis diez y ocho y mis diez y nueve, entonces me dicen tienes la oportunidad de ir a una high school, pero va ser muy intensivo porque tienes que acabarlo en un año y medio. Todo de que ibas aprender en cuatro años, tienes que aprender en un año y medio. Y luego me dieron esta opción, la opción de ir a esta escuela New York Night High School que está localizada en Manhattan. Bueno, esta high school está hecho por jóvenes mayores, que se llaman, "young adults," y que tienen entre 17 y 21 años, me ofrece la oportunidad de sacar un high school diploma.

Lastly, thinking of the future, and corresponding school levels with life course categories, several of the youth associated college with adulthood. Both Lisandro and Julieta believed that going to college meant possessing even more responsibilities and being required to act more serious, both of which translated into adulthood.

Lisandro: I think that well, that it is already the time to act like an adult, and I am going to go to college, and act like an adult or something, and I have to have more responsibilities.

Yo pienso que bueno que ya es tiempo de actuar como un adulto, y voy a ir a college, y actuar como un adulto o algo, y tengo que tener más responsabilidades.

Traditional school-going youth strictly associate life course categories with particular levels of schooling. These ideas about age and schooling are often institutionalized in curriculum as well as in media, and thus emerge as part of the natural order of life. Unlike their counterparts who had attended English as a Second Language courses with older individuals and had been treated and felt like adults, these youth experienced a more partitioned progression through the life course categories that largely corresponded with the particular school levels they were attending or believed they would attend. School officials, including teachers, reinforced

these categories, associating particular levels with characteristics and behaviors, such as levels as responsibilities, and ultimately, life course categories.

Future Fields

Traditional school-going youth envisioned their futures differently from their non traditional school-going counterparts. They envisioned themselves not only participating in different fields from their similarly aged peers, but also participating in a different country. When asked about their futures, the majority of the youth discussed continuing in the educational field. They all had plans to go to college, and if they worked, they would only work part-time to help pay for college expenses. These college plans, however, would occur in the United States, not Mexico.

Most of the youth were already certain that they wanted to continue on to college after their high school graduations. They would have to in most cases, however, find a part-time job that would allow them to study and work at the same time. Their priority however, or the field in which they most wanted to participate, was the educational field.

Miguel: Well now, since I am approaching [going to] college, I am going to have to work, because I don't think that my parents are going to always be paying my studies, look for a part-time job, and earn my money and go to college to study. What I want to do [is] study. Pues ahorita, como estoy llegando al college, voy a tener que trabajar, porque no creo que mis padres van a siempre están pagando mis estudios, buscarne un trabajo parcial, y ganar mi dinero y irme a college para estudiar. Lo que quiero [es] estudiar.

What was understood, however, was that this college-going would occur in the United States so that they youth could build a better life and better employment in the United States. Already here for at most five years, the youth believed that they had grown accustomed to living life in the United States and wanted to remain.

Patricio: [Do you think that you will return to live in Mexico?] No, because like they say that you can have, a better life here, and have a future if you study here, and have a career and have a better future.

[Crees que regresaras para vivir en México?] No, porque como dicen que puedes, un mejor vida aquí, y tener un futuro si estudias acá, y tener una carrera y tener mejor futuro.

Miguel puts the sentiments of his fellow traditional school-going youth into words best when he describes the decision of staying in New York or returning to Mexico. Comparing returning to Mexico to lowering oneself down a ladder after having climbed it, Miguel had no desire to return to his home country.

Miguel: Because I have no idea of returning to Mexico, because sometimes I have the idea of “why return? Like sometimes I think that it’s like climbing a ladder to just go down it again.

Porque no tengo el idea de regresar a México, porque a veces tengo el idea de “porque regresar?” Como a veces pienso es como subir una escalera a volver a bajarlo otra vez.

Unlike their non-traditional school-going counterparts, traditional school-going youth have no desire to return to Mexico, neither permanently nor to engage in circular migration. Instead, they all expressed the desire to continue their studies beyond high school into college, so that they could obtain jobs and wages that well surpassed those of their parents. With the plans in mind, the youth are then engaging primarily in the educational field so that they can accumulate cultural capital that will allow them to continue in the educational field for a longer period of time, eventually exchanging the increasingly valued cultural capital for not only a higher position in the labor market field, but allowing them to participate in an entirely different sector than those of their parents or their non traditional school going counterparts. By depending on the idea that, in the future, the cultural capital accrued from completing high school, and hopefully college, will translate into more money in the U.S. labor market and better labor conditions and wages than in the secondary labor market, the youth orient their current behaviors and practices toward such.

Conclusion

The lives of traditional high school-going youth are radically different than the lives of their non school-going counterparts, even if they are unaccompanied. While the presence of parents, as well as living in an economically stable household definitely facilitates and makes entry into as well as remaining in the educational field at a higher, more age-appropriate position easier, it is the ability to attend high school and the messages/outcomes that have long been popularly associated with high school going and completion that allows the traditional school-going youth to gain a more complete image of the labor market in which two sectors exist, and, at least in theory, believe that they will obtain the cultural capital that will enable a higher position in the labor market field. While their non-traditional school-going counterparts continued working in the secondary labor market in the United States, obtaining mostly only human capital and small amounts of linguistic capital that would lead to only minor improvements in the global labor queue, these youth, by virtue of not only their parents sacrifices, but also through participation in a more accessible and differently valued educational field believed themselves to be acquiring cultural capital, that upon completion of one's studies and exit from the educational field, could be exchanged in the labor market field for a position in the primary labor market. No longer satisfied only with U.S. wages and conditions found in the secondary labor market, these youth were striving for U.S. wages and conditions found in the primary labor market, or a higher position in the labor market field.

Additionally, the two groups of youth also began to differ in terms of the fields they believed they would participate in the future. While the non-traditional school going youth planned on returning to Mexico to resume their lives, engaging in either permanent settlement or circular migration, the traditional school-going youth, both accompanied and unaccompanied, do not see themselves returning to Mexico for either. Their trajectory has now changed and they

perceive themselves remaining in the United States to continue their studies. As such, their current field participation and capital accumulation is oriented towards those goals: staying in the United States and playing in the U.S. fields.

Chapter 8: Conclusions and Implications

This dissertation seeks to explain the lives of recently arrived Mexican youth in New York City as they occur and unfold across borders. In Chapter 2, I propose a theoretical framework that explains their orientations and practices towards school-going in New York City, while in Chapter Three, I present the research questions created to explain these phenomena. Chapters Five, Six and Seven provide evidence supporting the notion that these youth experience transnational lives differently which impacts their school going and non school-going in distinct ways. This chapter summarizes the evidence presented in this dissertation that supports this framework and findings. In this chapter, I explain how this model explains differences between non-school-going and school-going practices of recently arrived Mexican immigrant youth in New York City. I then offer implications for reconsidering the sole use of assimilation theories to study immigrant youth. Finally, I offer recommendations for the education of those youth who stay out of traditional schools and suggestions for future research.

Conclusions

The goal of this dissertation is not to determine whether or not Mexican youth should go to school in the United States, an assumption that underlies most immigrant youth studies, but rather it was to shed light on the school-going practices of a never-before studied group of immigrant youth who are living in the United States: Mexican youth who are of school-age but who do not attend either non-traditional schools and/or traditional schools. To put it simply, this dissertation set out to explain why, within the same age cohort, some Mexican youth are enrolled in traditional schooling, and others are not, upon arrival in New York City. Additionally, this dissertation found evidence that these youth's school-going practices in New York did not magically appear upon arrival to the city, but rather had been crystallizing their entire lives, since

they were youngsters living in their Mexican home communities. To explore this, I interviewed fifty-three youth, both pre-immigration in Mexico and post-immigration in New York City. This enabled me to observe their social locations and practices prior to immigration, and then observe how the youth either continued on trajectories set forth by their pre-immigration class locations, and determine if they were able to disrupt these trajectories in their new environs and with new resources. Lastly, this dissertation set out to expand how we consider the lives of immigrant youth, expanding these considerations beyond nation-state borders to consider the youth's lives as they are naturally occurring, across nation-state borders in multiple contexts.

In this dissertation, I pursued answers to one dominant research question which was then further complicated by two additional research questions. First and foremost, I asked why some recently arrived unauthorized immigrant Mexican youth remain outside of the school system yet others do not. To answer this question, I pursued two additional questions. First, I asked what forces [individual and structural, pre and post-immigration] influence these youth's decision-making surrounding non-school-entry and school entry in the United States school system. Second, and lastly, I explored how these forces influence decision-making regarding different types of school-entry for these youth.

The findings support the hypothesized theoretical framework in the sense that in some of the youth's lives, social reproduction is disrupted by the youth's immigration and participation in the U.S. labor market, as they are able to escape farm and fieldwork and obtain higher positions in the labor market field, although in the United States. For youth who immigrate and enter into traditional schools, the disruption of social reproduction is greater, although arriving from the same environs, as they are able to enroll in traditional middle and/or high schools, obtain a higher educational credential than what is the average in their home regions, and even aspire to

higher educational and occupational levels. It is too early to tell whether or not this will translate into a higher position in the labor market field; yet, they are at least, aspiring to higher positions even than their non school-going counterparts.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, these disruptions are occurring largely as the youth understand their own life courses. Whereas youth who have already dropped out of school in Mexico and immigrate tend to enter into the labor market field to disrupt social reproduction, youth who are merely leaving their schools in Mexico to enroll in New York City schools are disrupting social reproduction through continued participation in the educational field and even hope to obtain jobs that require college degrees.

To what degree disruption occurs is largely dependent on the status of the youth in question, whether they will be immigrating as unaccompanied youth, without their parents and joining older relatives and/or friends in New York, or whether they will be joining at least one parent in New York.

Mexico

The status of the youth not only appears to explain their school-going behaviors upon immigration, but also is largely determined by the class conditions of the household, as explained, partially, by their parents' location. While all of the youth are subject to marginalized conditions in their home communities, both rural and urban, where access to the labor market occurs earlier and more easily, it seems, than access to the educational system, the key in their pathways lies partially with their parents. If parents are in the United States, the youth have more often than not, lived in households which have been supported by financial remittances and they have lived free of economic worry and are not thinking about immigrating to send money home. They will immigrate and continue their financial dependency and their studies, aspiring to

¹⁴⁸ This is the great fear of some youth who drop out of high school before completion. With their citizenship status still in question, some Mexican youth fear that in spite of their increased years of education, they will be relegated to the same occupational positions as their parents, or worse yet, returned to their home communities in Mexico where their cultural capital may have little to no value (Abrego, 2006).

reach higher average levels of education than those found in their home communities. If parents are in Mexico, the youth have more often than not experienced greater economic insecurity and are immigrating to participate in a local, New York City labor market. I say partially, because in several cases in which a parent, primarily a father, lived in the United States and sent monies home, these monies were infrequent and inconsistent, and the youth, living in economically insecure households in spite of these unreliable remittances, still planned to immigrate to earn money for their Mexican households.

Transnational Spaces between Mexico and the United States

Although largely formed in relation to their home surroundings, youth's ideas about immigrating, and their orientations towards or away from traditional schooling, take shape with input from the individuals who comprise their transnational social networks. These individuals provide them information that either further reinforce, or begin to disrupt their original orientations towards school. Distinctly aged, these transnational social networks largely provide information that has been relevant in their own lives, which they share and project onto the youth, or if they are parents, remain focused on what is age-appropriate for the youth.

Who comprises their transnational social networks impacts which individuals the youth are now listening to, or who are the primary pedagogic agents performing pedagogic work on the youth as they begin to consider immigration. In the case of youth who will immigrate alone, they receive information and messages about the fields they may enter into upon immigration, as well as economic capital to immigrate and enter into those fields from older relatives and friends in New York, whose primary field participation themselves has been in the New York City labor market. In some cases these individuals share information about the educational field, but again, it is related to their experiences in this field, sometimes as parents of younger, sometimes native-born children. The youth's ideas then, about the educational field in the U.S. is based on these

messages. Alternatively, Mexican youth's parents are focusing on family reunification and their ability to economically support their children, and the continuation of their children's lives in New York City, sometimes in the educational field.

This information, enabled through social capital, is transmitted across nation-state borders, or transnationally. These individuals in New York also share information that is in their best interests, as they have no desire nor are they obliged to inherit a financial dependent – in most cases, they are already supporting their own families and themselves. Provided with two different sets of messages and information, as well as ideas about what conditions await their arrival, both sets of youth further develop their plans about whether or not the labor market or the educational system will be their primary field of participation.

New York City

Once in New York City, the two sets of youth continue to follow two different pathways to disrupt social reproduction. Unaccompanied, non-traditional school-going youth use the social capital they have obtained through their former transnational, now local, social networks to enter into the labor market. Here, they are able to work in the United States' secondary labor market, earning higher wages and in their words, working in better conditions, than if they remained working as *campesinos* back home. Although they earn more money, they participate in two households to which they pay monies: in New York and in Mexico. These financial obligations, as well as the meager earnings, effectively require that the youth work long hours. With long work days and weeks, the youth are hampered from attending any sort of schooling, whether non-traditional or not, while they are working. Their inability to attend classes is only aggravated by the day schedules that most schools possess, both English schools and traditional schools, with classes held during the youth's work hours, or during the time the youth are recuperating from overnight work shifts.

Instead of working fewer hours that may enable their increased participation in the educational field, the youth opt to work many hours so that their earnings are turned into financial remittances that will enable their continued participation in their households back home. Observed prior to their departure as well as named as one of their primary reasons for immigration, the youth take on these practices to remain active, transnational participants of their households, even while in New York City, through their economic contributions.

Alternatively, traditional school-going youth, for the most part, arrive at younger ages and are able to rejoin their parents as financial dependents. Without any financial obligations, their entry into the labor market is not necessary. Instead, they are free to participate in other fields, namely the educational field, where other similarly-aged youth participate. In New York, they primarily rely on their parents' social and economic capital to learn about, and be enrolled in traditional schools upon their arrival to New York. With little discussion, most traditional school-going youth arrive and are enrolled into either middle or high schools by their parents. These youth exhibit little autonomy, either in immigration and subsequently, in their school enrollment, especially at the level of middle school, in New York City.

Additionally, both groups of youth foresee different futures for themselves that also influence the practices the youth undertake while in New York. It is these practices that either maintain or diminish their transnational practices. While non-traditional school-going youth envision returning back to their home communities, to live permanently, or as a home base for circular migration, the traditional school-going youth discuss returning only to visit, with their permanent settlement based in the United States. Both youth, however, envisioned futures in which they had effectively disrupted social reproduction, regardless of their "permanent" locale.

Implications for Current Theories of Immigration and Education

The findings presented in this dissertation highlight the inability of current youth assimilation theories to wholly explain the behaviors and practices that immigrant youth undertake in their host societies. By beginning only north of the border, scholars ignore the roots of youth's decisions, and how they have been in formation since birth, south and across the border, long before their own immigration was even a consideration. Additionally, scholars ignore the roles of not only other social institutions besides schools, but also other adults, such as relatives and friends, in shaping the youth's ideas about working and school-going. Long based on mainstream ideas of adolescence in which schools and family are the primary social institutions where youth participate, theories used to explain the academic achievement of immigrant youth miss how teenagers may not abide by these ideas of adolescence, as well as primarily participate in other social institutions, such as the labor market. Additionally, only one type of educational institution has been considered, that of the traditional school.

Using a framework that incorporates the youth's class-based life courses in their entirety, or as they unfold across borders – physically rooted in Mexico, then displaced into New York, with future, transnational orientations looking both to Mexico and the United States – we gain a different perspective on immigrant youth's behaviors. Rather than be condemned for choosing to stay out of traditional school, and making evaluations about the consequences of these actions in the United States, instead, by considering the youth's statements, we may need to reevaluate our assessments to examine how they may impact the youth's lives, if they do indeed return to Mexico, as well as if they stay in New York.

Additionally, this framework provides a class dimension to examinations of youth's outcomes, as well as behaviors and practices, something that is absent from prior theories explaining the academic achievement and educational attainment of immigrant youth. Although

current discussions of immigrant youth make distinctions by national origin, there is little discussion of class differences, both between national groups, as well as within. Although parental possession of capital is incorporated into segmented assimilation theory, it is assumed that parents are available to exchange or not exchange capital. Rather, in this theoretical framework, this is not assumed, but rather parent(s) become a potential source through which youth may obtain both economic and social capital.

Implications for Programs and Policymakers

Although Mexican youth's orientations towards continued schooling begins prior to their immigration, the recommendations for programs and policymakers focus primarily on treatments that could be enacted in the context of the behaviors in question in New York and the United States. Currently, several programs already exist that, if more consistently financed, enforced, and expanded may be able to draw more Mexican youth into schools. To consider these programs and policies, it may be best to categorize them into short-term, medium-term, and longer-term solutions, to accommodate for the time commitments the youth may have or be willing to expend. Because so many positive life course outcomes are associated with higher levels of education, ideally we would want for youth to enroll in long-term programs. However, the dissertation data reveals that this is not necessarily what the youth want, or are always able to do immediately. Many Mexican youth are unable to set work schedules that would enable them to go to school during traditional school hours, or even in the evenings (until 9 pm). In addition, with high turnover rates, their schedules change frequently, rendering them unable, in many cases to commit to set school schedules. Instead, to ensure maximum entry of youth into the educational system, I believe programs where these youth can enter must be created. These programs must also be sited more closely to the youth, including their work sites, as well as be offered at unpopular hours. In addition, on-line distance learning may be needed to provide

these youth opportunities to learn skills and earn bi-national credentials from home. With little time for activities other than work, youth report that most of their downtime is spent at home, hence, on-line distance learning in which skills and credentials earned may be used on either side of the US-Mexico border may be the most effective way to extend Mexican youth's formal educations.

Before I return to this, however, I provide a summary of programs that already exist and offer some means of improvement.

Existing Programs

One of the primary question remains into what sorts of schools should we be enrolling youth?

Based on the youth's wishes for education themselves, both pre-immigration and post-immigration, as well as the locales they envision for their future settlement, it makes sense that the youth should have increased access to classes that will provide them the sorts of skills that they are most interested in: English. Several obstacles currently exist that prevent their extended lengths of time in English classes, including not only their schedules, but the schedules and availability of English classes. For one, demand for in-class, English as a Second Language courses far exceeds the existing, diminishing supply. Nearly a quarter of all adults in New York City, approximately 1.23 million individuals, possess inadequate English skills, but only slightly over 62,000 are enrolled in government-funded literacy programs (Ruiz, 2010). Secondly, the latest financial crises have made Adult Literacy courses and immigration services especially vulnerable. During the past two years, states and cities across the country, including New York, state and city, have slashed Adult Literacy funds. In New York City, the Bloomberg administration has administered major cuts in the past several years. After cutting funds in 2009 by over 50% to \$5 million from \$11 million, Bloomberg proposed eliminating the initiative entirely, in addition to making drastic cuts to the city's other Adult Literacy/ESL funding

sources. After budgets were finalized, the city's three primary sources of funding for free Adult Literacy classes, the New York City Immigrant Opportunities Initiative, the Adult Literacy Services Initiative and the Department of Youth and Community Adult Literacy Program suffered major funding cuts resulting overall in the elimination of English courses for over 3,500 New Yorkers.¹⁴⁹ As a result of these cuts, not only have we seen the numbers of English courses offered drop, but also, in efforts to save money, the number of hours of instruction as well as length of semesters have also been dramatically cut (Tung, 2010).

If we are to bring Mexican youth into English as a Second Language classrooms, funding must not only be restored, but must exceed former levels to meet the needs of Limited English Proficient speakers, including youth, in New York City. This funding will keep buildings open longer, as hours of availability must be expanded, not decreased, to more wholly reflect the available times that Mexican youth can attend classes.

Additionally, the youth who were able to take English classes reported highly varied experiences in their classes. Many of the youth reported being dissatisfied with the instruction they received. Relying on untrained interns and volunteers, programs providing English as a Second Language suffer from uneven quality instruction, and in some cases, are unable to provide basic training for their teachers.¹⁵⁰ With little standardization across institutions for teacher training, nor accountability, I argue that increased funds set a target for the creation of standards that mandate teacher training.

¹⁴⁹ Although not as drastic as initially proposed, all programs experienced budget cuts. While the Adult Literacy Services Initiative experienced a cut of approximately \$500,000 from their annual budget, the Department of Youth and Community Adult Literacy Program suffered a \$1.6 million cut.

¹⁵⁰ For example, in 2003, I volunteered and taught English as a Second Language in the basement of a Bronx Catholic Church for a local Mexican human rights organization. I was never asked for credentials or proof of ESL training, nor was I provided instruction or training to teach non English speakers, ESL. I taught for one year, without ever being asked for proof of student achievement. I was only asked to provide enrollment numbers.

Another model has been introduced in response to the limited time available for immigrant school-going has also been used to teach migrant workers English. A shorter-term fix, MP3 players have been used to provide individuals with English language instruction while they are working. Following the models of “Survival English,” English as a Second Language instruction is downloaded onto MP3 players that are distributed to the farm workers.¹⁵¹ During their fieldwork, farm workers are able to listen to and practice English, after which, they attend classes in which their knowledge is reinforced and assessed. Although in an urban environment, the youth are employed in jobs where they are often engaged in rote activities where they too may be able to listen to MP3 files of English Language instruction. Courses and students could be organized and clustered around worksites with heavy Mexican employment, with specific age requirements that do not articulate illegal work practices, i.e. for youth under the age of nineteen.

Longer-Term

Due to their low levels of formal education in Mexico, however, youth also possess uneven literacy skills in their native language. Evidence suggests that second language acquisition is most successful with a strong foundation in one’s native language. This suggests that we must not only consider English courses, but also improve the youth’s literacy in their native language. One such program already in existence that focuses on native language instruction before English as a Second Language is *Plaza Comunitarias*. Sponsored by the Mexican government’s INEA (*Instituto Nacional de Educacion Adulta, Secretaria of Educacion Publica*), these classes follow other adult education course schedules, mostly provided during the day into the early evening, and provide not only ESL instruction, but also secondary and postsecondary education in Spanish to Mexican nationals *age fifteen or over*. This native instruction in other subjects, as

¹⁵¹ IPODs for education and “Survival English” are two MP3 based curricula in which downloadable language instruction is provided to migrant workers. Both Hamilton County Schools [TN] and the University of South Carolina School of Education Migrant Education Program, respectively, have integrated the use of MP3 players into

well as supplemental life skills and vocational instruction and eventually English, is useful on both sides of the US-Mexico border. In 2009, New York was the site of ten *plaza comunitarias* (CONEVYT, 2009). In collaboration with the Mexican government, NYU's Metro Center SBETAC (Spanish Bilingual Education Technical Assistance Center) is the sponsoring organization of *plazas comunitarias*, and is collaborating with her government to provide resources such as teacher training, as well as other resources and assessment.¹⁵² Again, however, only ten sites exist, and the hours and days of these classes are limited, with several sites holding classes only on Saturdays, during the day (www.mixteca.org/programs/education). In addition to expanding the sites, days and hours of course offerings, if the students are provided supplemental life course and vocational skills, age-appropriate curriculum must be provided for individuals at different life course stages. Since the youth themselves are identifying, in some cases, as belonging to the life course stage of adolescence, it may be particularly useful to age-segregate, and hold classes for those ages 15-19, as well as over.¹⁵³

Another program that could have binational effects is the short-term (one semester) certificate programs whose completion and credentials are accepted in Mexico as well as in the United States. In collaboration with the Mexican government (Secretariat of Exterior Relations) CUNY is currently administering a certificate program focusing on restaurant and hospitality services at the New York City College of Technology Division of Continuing Studies in which certificates are granted by both the college and the Mexican Ministry of Education and Research. The course, while providing essential courses focusing on the restaurant and hospitality industry, also provides English and mathematics instruction. This program, however, only targets

¹⁵² These *plaza comunitarias* are held in a variety of sites including public elementary schools, the Horizon Academy at Rikers Island, churches, community based organizations such as Mixteca, etc.

¹⁵³ Like other government funded Adult Literacy courses, the verdict on plaza effectiveness is mixed. Initial assessments show low course completion rates, high proportions of volunteer staff, inadequate funding, etc. Additionally, student schedules often do not coincide with the plaza course schedules. While in other states, data collection to evaluate plaza effectiveness has been poorly coordinated, in New York, evaluation of the effectiveness of plazas comunitarias has only recently begun, led by the NYU Metro Center (Laglagaron, 2010).

restaurant workers, requires proof of high school completion in Mexico or the United States, and both programs are offered only on particular days and until 9 pm in the evening.

Several additions could enhance this program. For one, although a good first step, similar programs in other trades could be developed that include the other occupations Mexican immigrant youth reported holding and/or being interested in, including construction, carpentry and automotive training. As evidenced by the cases of several of the youth, they have already or are in the midst of obtaining on-the-job human capital that may make them ideal candidates for these sorts of programs, in spite of their incomplete high school education. A remedial, pipeline program could be installed that would provide strong candidates with G.E.D. classes prior to their entry into the program. This would not only put these youth on a pathway to completing high school, but perhaps also on a path to enter college in New York City or Mexico.

Long-Term

For youth who wish to complete their formal educations in New York City and are able to devote more time to their studies [more than required by *plazas comunitarias*], they may wish to enroll in alternative schools that could lead to more valuable educational credentials in the United States. These schools, however, must meet at convenient times during which they can take these courses. Perhaps a hybrid of the New York High School and Newcomers schools, and accelerated courses leading to a high school diploma could be offered at various times of day so that youth have various options from which to choose. While various community-based organizations provide accelerated GED programs in Spanish, the exchange values of a GED is not as great as for a high school diploma, nor are GED classes age-segregated. In addition, these

schools may be better equipped to provide comprehensive services that are age-specific and can meet the needs of unaccompanied, recently arrived youth newcomers as Herminda recounted.¹⁵⁴

The last policy recommendation spans nation-state borders to draw Mexican students into the United States educational system. Since 1990, the United States and Mexico have shared an MOU, Memo of Understanding that established the Binational Migrant Program, or PROBEM (Programa Binacional Educativa Mexicano). This cooperative program was reintroduced in 1998 to not only facilitate binational student transfers between the Mexican educational system and the United States educational system, as well as administer Mexico-US teacher exchange programs. Not a federal program, as of 2006, only 27 U.S. states and 31 Mexican states participated in this program (www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/brdglangbarriers/989).

Unfortunately, in the communities in which I conducted fieldwork, knowledge of this program was nonexistent. When asked informally, school directors, teachers, families and youth responded that they were unaware of this program, although I was able to meet the Secretariat of Public Education [SEP] administrator of the program at its state headquarters in Puebla and obtain written materials about the program.¹⁵⁵ It appears as if the distribution of information about the program and how it is administered is uneven, with some rural communities and teachers unaware of this program, and as such, unable to provide these transfers. Additionally, these transfers only exist for students grades K-9. To transfer after grade 9, students must obtain an Apostille, an official document from authorized officials authenticating Mexican high school

¹⁵⁴ In addition to English as a Second Language, other short term, trade classes could be offered to provide Mexican youth with certificates. In May 2010, the City University of New York announced that the New York City College of Technology Division of Continuing Education would offer a first of its kind program offering restaurant and hospitality training to Mexican immigrants. With an inaugural class of 31 students, the program was funded by the Mexican government's Secretariat of Public Education to more adequately prepare individuals for careers in the hospitality and restaurant industry. After course completion, students receive certificates of completion from City Tech, as well as a certificate of occupational competence from the Mexican Ministry of Education and Recreation. Although these certificates are evidence of skill mastery that can be used in either the US or Mexico labor market, students are encouraged to enter into a program at City Tech to further pursue hospitality careers. This program however, requires high school completion, either in the United States or Mexico.

¹⁵⁵ This office was over an hour and a half away from the rural communities that could most benefit from this information.

transcripts. This process is not simple, as authorized officials are usually not located in the near vicinity, especially in rural towns and may take time which in many cases the youth do not have prior to immigration. Additionally, several programs exist that assist school districts in translating Mexican high school transcripts for proper grade placement. One such program, LUCHA, is located at the University of Texas at Austin and assists over twenty-five school districts across the state of Texas.

Addressing the differences between legally and socially obligatory, acceptable education in Mexico and the United States, the reach of these transfers should reflect both public educational systems and extend to the 12th grade. Complicating the ability to obtain transfers after the ninth grade only further transmits the message that after immigration, studies are not expected.¹⁵⁶

Mexican communities experiencing high levels of youth outmigration must be better informed about this program, and be provided with the resources and educational administrators who are able to not only encourage participation in the program, but also to inform school directors, teachers, families and youth of the differences between the educational systems in Mexico and the United States, as well as complete the transfer of school documents. Although theoretically, this is centralized in closer district offices that lie outside of the central, SEP offices located in state capitals, messages are not uniformly reaching rural communities.

In light of Mexican youth's limitations, i.e., long work days and weeks, little time for other activities, perhaps distance-learning is the best way to extend the formal educations of Mexican immigrant youth. Through a partnership with the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey system, the Bronx-located community based organization Mixteca provides on-line distance learning for credit. These on-line courses include Basic Computing Skills, Web Design and

¹⁵⁶ In 1996, only 45,000 youth used the transfers to move between Mexican and US schools (Dolson and Villasenor, 1996)

HTML, but several structural limitations exist. For one, tutors are only available at the site, three hours a day, five days a week, and during traditional business hours. Additionally, although ideally youth would be able to access these courses from home, the courses are only accessible on-site, during business hours.

Recommendations

To think outside of the box, I suggest that distance-learning and technology become better utilized to provide additional instruction to youth. Although a significant digital divide exists between foreign born Latino immigrant and native born home computer ownership, 40% vs. 54.9% among foreign born and native Latino youth, ages 5-25 this gap expands: 58.3% vs. 36.4% (Fairlie, et al., 2006). However, many of this study's youth discussed using computers and the internet *at home* during their days off. Currently, they used their computers and the internet to chat, send emails, as well as download music. Based on this data, we may assume that the youth would also be able to use their computers and the internet to access formal on-line instruction, as well as to access to free on-line courses.¹⁵⁷ These on-line courses could incorporate either live (via webcams) or virtual technologies and provide youth with ESL instructors any time of day. Instructors could either be live, holding class from the comforts of their own space, or if virtual, software could recreate interactions with virtual ESL instructors who could be live for different blocks of time, all hours of the day. Entire classes could be established, with other immigrants logging into these live or virtual classrooms to attend class.

¹⁵⁷ The issue of the digital divide, in regards to both computer ownership and internet access may also need to be addressed to implement such a recommendation. With such a significant gap in computer ownership between native-born and immigrant youth in California, the authors call for a bridging of that aspect of the digital divide. The low cost distribution of computers may be part of a workforce development program targeting these particular youth. Additionally, many major cities have discussed provided large swaths of low cost, universal wi-fi, including Philadelphia, San Francisco and New York. More of an issue of when, not if, cities across the country including Philadelphia have plans to provide universal wi-fi for \$20 a month over 135 miles of the city, while Google and Earthlink have proposed similar plans to wire San Francisco. With broadband access increasingly discussed as a right that should be ensured to city's poorest residents, immigrant advocates must ensure that these plans are adequately accessible to immigrant neighborhoods and immigrants. In addition, the FCC has discussed the idea of a digital literacy corps to assist individuals learn online skills (Reardon, 2010; Stelter and Wortham, 2010)

Although vastly different than live instruction, the youth could still enjoy the social advantages associated with interacting and practicing English, or other subject matter, with peers, only in a live or virtual world.¹⁵⁸ I believe that one of the critical elements to extending education, whether it be ESL classes or more comprehensive instruction is the “normalization” of 24 hour educational assistance for the youth. Although arguably buildings could provide instruction round-the-clock, in the city that never sleeps, most likely, on-line and/or virtual instruction will most work best.

Ultimately, further policies and programs must be implemented which fall outside the scope of the U.S. educational system. Conditions that prevent the traditional school-going of unaccompanied Mexican youth, namely the unauthorized over-employment and underpayment of youth workers by U.S. employers must also be addressed. Additionally, as this dissertation examines the roots of the youth’s early immigration and orientations towards the labor market, I would be remiss without recommending that programs and policies must address youthful immigration in general. Policies and programs based in Mexico that address household poverty, as well as early exits from schooling and entries into the labor market must be considered.

Directions for Future Research

The findings presented in this dissertation also have implications for future research. First, the number of cases representing the different orientations towards school-going is few, so more cases must be sampled, to lend more support, or challenges, to the framework. Although proportional to the population at large, the sample of females was small, but few showed significant differences in behaviors from the males. A closer interrogation of differences between the two sexes would shed much light on differences between these populations, and the roots of

¹⁵⁸ Distance-learning has also been discussed in enabling TANF parents return to school (Lewis, 2008)

the occupational differences that may occur later, with females entering into pink collar jobs, and males remaining in unskilled labor (Smith, 1998).

Additionally, as I made the argument that to wholly understand how immigrant youth lives unfold across borders, it is important to examine their lives as they continue to unfold. All of the immigrant youth envision lofty life outcomes, with many non-traditional school-going youth envisioning returns to Mexico as business owners, while traditional school-going youth envision college-going and entry into professional occupations. Although several studies have captured the lives of immigrant youth *during* young adulthood, they have predominantly followed children of immigrants (Kasinitz, et.al, 2008). No studies have followed unaccompanied or accompanied immigrant youth who arrived later, as they grow into adulthood, both in the United States or in Mexico.

Because much of the youth's socialization, as well as practices, are related to the goings-on of the household, another research direction would more purposefully include youth's families and households. Social reproduction is a concept that speaks to generational change or sameness, and understandings of it. A more complete understanding of how this occurs would benefit from further interviews with parents, as well as grandparents, on either side of the border. Now that trust has been built, additional, more intimate methods may be employed, including participant observation.

Lastly, I purposely did not examine the impact of citizenship status on the lives of youth. Because of the sensitivity of the issue, and the fear that youth had about being interviewed by a stranger in general, I decided that I would not include citizenship status as a variable. While several scholars have examined the impact of il/legality in the lives of immigrant youth, again, this has been investigated only in the lives of traditional school-going youth, and mostly in

relation to the DREAM Act (Abrego, 2006; Lopez, 2010; Solis, 2003). For these particular groups of youth, how being un/authorized impacts the youth's lives and future aspirations must someday be examined.

In sum, this dissertation provides a theoretical model to explain the school-going and non-school going behaviors of recently-arrived Mexican immigrant youth. I demonstrate that even prior to their immigration, teenage Mexican immigrant youth are developing and have developed orientations towards or away from school that have much to do with the class conditions, as demonstrated in their households and communities from which they come. Upon arrival, their cross-border obligations, as well as the conditions of the fields in which they enter – household, labor market and educational – are not structured in ways so that these youth can easily engage with schooling. The presence of parent (s), and/or education-minded relatives are critical to the school enrollment of these youth, both in English schools, but more importantly in traditional schools. Without such support, education officials must develop and expand educational opportunities that will meet the needs of all immigrant youth, including those who are financially independent and unable to attend traditional schooling.

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Appendix 1

Introduction/Screening

Para empezar, voy hacerte algunas preguntas de manera general.

A1. Cuantos anos tienes?

A2.¿En que lugar de México naciste? Menciona el estado y la ciudad, pueblo, en el campo(si es rural)

A3.Hasta que nivel llegaste en la escuela en Mexico?

A4.Cuando tiempo hace que saliste de Mexico?

A5.¿Cuánto tiempo llevas viviendo en Nueva York?

A6. Aparte de Nueva York, ¿has vivido en otras ciudades de los Estados Unidos? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿ Cuales y cuánto tiempo has vivido en cada ciudad?

A7.¿Has asistido a la escuela o tomado clases en Nueva York? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿A qué escuela? ¿Qué tipo de clases has tomado? Hasta que nivel llegaste/has llegado?

A8.Con quien vives aqui en Nueva York (familia, amigos, conocidos etc.) Pagas? Que tanto?

I. Birthplace/Mexico Residence

Vamos a platicar un poco acerca del lugar donde viviste mas tiempo en Mexico, así como el lugar donde pasaste la mayor parte de tu vida.

1¿Cómo se llama el pueblo? Es donde naciste? Platicame sobre este pueblo. (Menciona el estado, ciudad o población, por cuánto tiempo viviste ahí, si el lugar era rural o urbano, que servicios públicos había, tipos de empleos/trabajos que existían ahí, etc.)

2. Pláticame un poco acerca de tu etapa de crecimiento ahi. ¿Qué hacías en un día típico en tu ciudad/población? ¿Me podrías dar un ejemplo? (como los sabados o domingos: levantaba, hacia a comer, trabajaba en el campo, íbamos al mercado a comprar/vender, etc...)

3. Que tipos de trabajos hicieron los hombres en tu comunidad? Las mujeres?

4. ¿Cuál crees que era el nivel de educación que tenía la mayoría de la gente en tu comunidad? Los hombres? Las mujeres?¿Cómo sabes que ese era el nivel?

5. ¿A qué promedio de edad la gente de tu ciudad/colonia se juntan los hombres? Las mujeres? ¿A qué edad en promedio empiezan a tener bebes?

B. ALL: (In town most lived in)

6. Platicame de tu casa. ¿Qué tipos de servicios tenían en tu casa? (Electricidad, agua potable, drenaje, alumbrado público, etc.)

7. ¿Hacías algún tipo de trabajo o actividad en tu casa? ¿Qué tipo de actividad hacías? (cuidar a tus hermanos, limpiar, cocinar, trabajar en el campo, correr el ganado, etc.)

Como aprendiste este tipo de trabajo? ¿Con qué frecuencia y por cuánto tiempo hacías estas tareas? (todos los días durante tres horas, cada tercer día, una vez por semana, etc.) Crees que aprendiste alguna habilidad/habilidades haciendo esos trabajos? ¿Qué tipos?

8. ¿Hacían tus hermanos(as) algún tipo de trabajo o actividad en tu casa? ¿Qué tipo de trabajo realizaban? (cuidar a tus hermanos, limpiar, cocinar, trabajar en el campo, correr el ganado, etc.) ¿Con qué frecuencia y por cuánto tiempo hacías estas tareas? (todos los días durante tres horas, cada tercer día, una vez por semana, etc.)

9. ¿Creas haber aprendido habilidades (cosas que puedes usar en un trabajo) de otros lugares en México (en la calle, en la iglesia, en el mercado, etc.)? ¿Qué tipo de habilidades aprendiste?

II. Parents

10. Me podrías platicar un poco acerca los adultos quienes vivían en tu casa en MX (quienes eran, donde viven actualmente, en qué trabajan – en México o en NYC si están aquí, tipos de trabajos, sus niveles de educación). Antes de irse, como te trataron, como un X, Y o Z? Porque dices eso?

11. (IF answered yes in screening question) ¿Está alguno de tus padres viviendo en NYC? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Estás viviendo con el/ella/ellos? Platicame un poco sobre eso (ayudas con la renta, con el pago de servicios, con la comida, etc.) Como te tratan viviendo en su casa (como X, Y o Z)? Platicame sobre eso...

III. Education

12. ¿Qué tipo de cosas crees que tu familia/padres piensan que son importantes que aprendas (en la escuela, en la casa, en la iglesia, o en otro lugar)?

13. ¿Qué tan importante piensas que es o era para tu familia asistir a la escuela (padres, abuelos, etc.)? ¿Alguna vez tus padres te platicaron de sus experiencias en la escuela, que deberías ir/no ir a la escuela y hasta qué nivel deberías llegar? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Qué te dijeron? (Si no) ¿Por qué piensas que no lo hicieron?

14. ¿Qué tan importante piensas que es ir a la escuela para la gente de tu comunidad en Mexico? ¿Los miembros de tu comunidad hablaban y hacían énfasis en lo importante de ir a la escuela? (Si la respuesta es si) ¿ Quien? ¿Qué te han dijeron? (Si no) ¿Por qué piensas que no lo hicieron?

15. Pláticame un poco acerca de la escuela a la que asististe en México (Primaria, secundaria y preparatoria --- ¿Cuál era el nombre de la escuela, donde estaba localizada, cuántos estudiantes había en cada salón de clases, maestros, tipo de edificio) ¿Con qué tipo de recursos contaba cada escuela/salón de clases? (computadoras, talleres, librerías, libros para cada estudiante, equipo de seguridad, áreas para practicar deporte, etc.)

16. Pláticame un poco acerca de cuando asistías a cada escuela. Describe un día típico en cada escuela. ¿Cómo te describes como alumno, bueno o malo?

17. ¿Cómo tomaste la decisión de asistir a cada escuela? (porque solo esas escuelas había en mi comunidad, porque eran las escuelas más cercanas, porque eran las escuelas más baratas, porque mis hermanos asistieron ahí también, etc.)

18. ¿Tuvieron que pagar tus padres por tus estudios? ¿Cuáles fueron los costos de (colegiatura, mantenimiento de la escuela, uniformes, libros, etc.)? ¿Cuánto tuvieron que pagar ellos? ¿Alguna vez tus padres se quejaron por tener que hacer estos pagos, o hablaron acerca de no tener para pagarlos? Pláticame acerca de esto.

19. ¿Sentiste que ellos podían pagar para que fueras a la escuela/tenían duda de que no pudieras continuar yendo a la escuela debido al costo? Pláticame acerca de esto.

20. ¿Fue también así para tus hermanos, mujeres igual que hombres?

21. En general, ¿sentías que no pertenecías a la escuela, o que tu tiempo podría invertirse mejor haciendo algo diferente? Pláticame al respecto.

IF DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL IN MEXICO/DID NOT COMPLETE/CONTINUE SECONDARY/HIGH SCHOOL—SO IF ONLY WENT TO PRIMARIA, OR DID NOT ‘TERMINAR’ SECUNDARIA

22. ¿Por qué dejaste la escuela en México? (Obligaciones familiares, contribuir económicamente a la familia, perdiste el interés simplemente, era aburrida, sentiste demasiado viejo, quisiste emigrar, etc.)

23. ¿Hubo alguien que te aconsejó no dejar la escuela? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Podrías platicarme acerca de esa persona?

24. ¿Hubo alguien que te decía que seguías a la escuela? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Podrías platicarme acerca de esa persona?

SCHOOLING IN US/NYC: SKIP TO QUESTION 38 IF NO SCHOOLING IN US!!

25. (Si has tomado clases en USA/NYC) ¿Me podrás platicar un poco más acerca de cada escuela/tipo de clases que has tomado en USA/NYC? ¿Cuál era el nombre, donde estaba localizada, cuántos estudiantes había en cada salón de clases/escuela, maestros, tipo de edificio en que estaba la escuela? ¿Qué tipo de recursos tenía cada escuela/salón de clases?

(computadoras, talleres, biblioteca, libros para cada estudiante, equipo de seguridad, áreas para hacer deporte, etc.)

26. Plátame un poco más acerca de ir a clases en cada escuela. Descríbeme un día típico yendo a cada escuela. Plátame acerca de las clases que estas tomando o tomaste. ¿Por qué estás tomando o tomaste estas clases? ¿Son fáciles o difíciles? ¿Qué tan a menudo vas o ibas a estas clases? ¿Cuánto dura o duraba cada clase?

27. ¿Cómo tomaste la decisión de ir a X escuela? (Vi publicidad en la televisión o en otra parte, estaba cerca de mi casa, ahí fueron mis amigos, era barata, mis hermanos fueron ahí también, etc.) ¿Cómo aprendiste acerca de X escuela?

28. ¿Cómo piensas que eres o fuiste tratado en X escuela, como X, Y o Z? ¿Te gusta como eres o cómo eras tratado en X escuela? ¿Qué te gusta y que te disgusta sobre ello?

29. ¿Estás o alguien más está pagando tus estudios? ¿Cuál es el costo? ¿Cuáles son o fueron los costos de (libros, materiales, etc.)? ¿Piensas que el costo es un problema para ti o para quién está pagando por tus estudios?

30. ¿Te sientes o sentiste siempre valorado mientras asistía/s a la escuela X?

31. Había alguien que te ayude con tus tareas? Que estaba enterada de cómo ibas en la escuela? Cuéntame poquito sobre el/ella..

REPEAT FOR EACH SCHOOL

32. En general, ¿Cuál es la más grande diferencia entre ir a la escuela en US/NYC e ir a la escuela en México? Plátame un poco sobre eso.

33. En general, ¿Te gusto/gusta ir a la escuela en US/NYC? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Qué te gustó/gusta acerca de ir a la escuela en US/NYC? (Si no) ¿Por qué no te gustó/gusta ir a la escuela en US/NYC?

34. En general, ¿Te sentiste/has sentido alguna vez que no perteneces a la escuela aquí, o que tu tiempo podría ser invertido mejor haciendo alguna otra cosa? ¿Plátame un poco sobre eso.

35. ¿Por qué continuaste/as tus estudios en US/NYC? (Por mejor salario, mejor futuro para los hijos, porque mis hermanos están estudiando, por querer aprender, porque quiero un mejor futuro para mí, etc.)

36. En general, ¿Piensas que es más fácil o más difícil ir a la escuela en México o en NYC?

IF DROPPED OUT OF US SCHOOL, NOT TAKING CLASSES AFTER HAVING TAKEN:

37. (Si no estás actualmente estudiando, después de haber atendido alguna escuela en US/NY) ¿Por qué no continuaste en la escuela (en US/NYC)? (Falta de dinero, falta de tiempo, falta de interés, etc.)

IF NEVER ATTENDED SCHOOL IN US/NYC

38. ¿ Por qué no asististe a la escuela en US? NYC? (Falta de interés, falta de tiempo, porque es muy caro, soy demasiado grande/viejo, no tengo información, creo que es muy difícil ir a la escuela, creo que no reúno los requisitos, etc.)

39. ¿Te gustaría ir a la escuela/tomar clases en NYC? ¿Cuáles clases te gustaría tomar? ¿En qué te beneficiaría tomar estas clases? ¿Por qué deseas tomar estas clases?

40. Te gustaria continuar con tus estudios? Porque o porque no?

41. (If answers yes) ¿Hasta que nivel de educación te gustaría terminar? ¿Por qué? ¿Piensas que hay obstáculos para obtener este nivel? ¿Por qué o porqué no? ¿Qué piensas que tienes que hacer para completar este nivel?

42. (If answers no) ¿Por qué no deseas tomar clases en NYC? (No tengo información, por que no puedo pagar, está demasiado lejos a donde tengo que ir, soy ya muy de edad/viejo para tomar clases)

43. ¿Conoces sobre escuelas en NYC a donde pueden ir jóvenes mexicanos? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿De cuáles conoces o tienes información? ¿Sabes que necesitas para ir a clases ahí?

ALL

44. ¿Conoces alguien mas que esté asistiendo a la escuela? De que edad tienen? Que tipo de escuela ¿Quiénes son ellos y a qué grado asisten o que tipos de clases estan tomando?

45. ¿Cuál es el más alto nivel de escolaridad/educación que piensas/has visto que los mexicanos necesitan (inmigrantes) cumplir en Mexico para trabajar en los Estados Unidos? ¿Por qué necesitan este nivel de educación? (obtener un buen trabajo, mejor sueldo, etc.)

46. ¿Cuál es el más alto nivel de escolaridad/educación que piensas/has visto que los mexicanos necesitan (inmigrantes) cumplir en EU para trabajar en los Estados Unidos? ¿Por qué necesitan este nivel de educación? (obtener un buen trabajo, mejor sueldo, etc.)

47. Nombre tus mejores tres amigos en NYC. Son de tu mismo edad? Si comparas los niveles de educación de tus tres mejores amigos en NYC, ¿es igual, menor, mayor? ¿Por qué? (Preguntar si son mexicanos o de otra nacionalidad/grupo étnico)

48. ¿Has escuchado a amigos/familiares hablar acerca de ir a la escuela/tomar clases en NYC? ¿Qué han comentado? ¿Quiénes son ellos? ¿Cuáles han sido sus experiencias?

49. ¿Si la mayoría de tus amigos/familiares no han ido a la escuela) ¿Por qué piensas que ellos no han ido a la escuela/tomado clases en NYC?

50. ¿Crees tu que es necesario para ti o para alguien de tu edad asistir a la escuela en US/NYC?
¿Por qué sí o por qué no?

IV. IMMIGRATION

FAMILY/FRIENDS IMMIGRATION

51. (Si miembros de tu familia mayores han emigrado antes que tu a US/NYC, pregunta)
¿Podrías platicarme la historia de migración de los miembros inmediatos de tu familia (padre, madre, abuelo, tías, tíos, primos) ¿Cuándo emigraron, a donde emigraron primero, por qué emigraron, donde están ahora, por cuáles razones emigraron, qué te dijeron acerca de migrar a US/NYC, por ejemplo algunas experiencias, incluyendo trabajos en US/NYC, yendo a la escuela, etc.)

52. ¿Conoces otras personas de tu edad/amigos cercanos que hayan emigrado? ¿Por qué emigraron? ¿Qué sabes acerca del por qué emigraron? ¿Quiénes son ellos? ¿Cuándo emigraron? ¿Por cuánto tiempo han vivido en US? ¿A dónde fueron? ¿Qué te dijeron acerca de emigrar y vivir en US/NYC? ¿Qué hicieron (trabajar, ir a la escuela, casarse, solo se quedaron en la casa) ¿Hablaste con ellos o ellos te hablaron acerca de emigrar? ¿Qué dijeron? ¿Están ellos aún en US/NYC? ¿Qué están haciendo ahora?

B. YOUR IMMIGRATION

53. Antes de emigrar, ¿Qué tipo de ideas tenías acerca de NYC? ¿Qué pensaste acerca de cómo sería? ¿De donde obtuviste estas ideas? (De películas, fotos, videos, maestros, amigos, familiares, etc.)

54. ¿Cuándo fue la primera vez que empezaste a pensar acerca de emigrar a US/NYC? ¿Qué se produjo tu idea por emigrar? ¿Con quién hablaste o quién te habló acerca de ello? ¿Qué hiciste?

55. ¿Por qué decidiste realmente emigrar a (US, si emigraste a otra parte primero) (comenzar a hacer planes, etc.)? ¿Por qué decidiste venir a Nueva York?

56. Plátame un poco cómo te preparaste para emigrar a US (como conseguiste al coyote, como le hiciste para ahorrar/conseguir el dinero, qué le dijiste a tus familiares, cómo hiciste contactos en US/NYC, etc.)

57. Plátame un poco acerca de cuanto llegaste a US/NYC. ¿Llegaste directamente a NYC? ¿Alguien te levanto en algún lugar? ¿A dónde fuiste primeramente? ¿En donde te hospedaste la primera noche que estuviste en NYC?

SETTLING INTO NYC/ESTABLECIENDOTE EN NYC

58. Plátame un poco acerca de tu primer mes en NYC. ¿Qué hiciste, con quién vivías, cómo pagaste tu comida y los artículos que necesitabas?

59. Mantienes contacto con tus parientes/amigos en Mexico? (IF YES) Con quien, y como tienes tu contacto con Mexico y tus familiares (has regresado—cuantas veces?, mandas dinero, hablas X veces a la semana, mes, mandas videos, etc.)

60. ¿Pagas renta/por tus necesidades ahorita? en cada lugar? (Si sí pagaste o pagaste una parte) ¿Cuánto pagaste por mes? ¿Qué otros servicios pagaste y cuánto pagaste por ellos?

V. Work

61. ¿Trabajaste por dinero en México? (Si la respuesta es sí, por favor enlista en una hoja separada cada uno de los trabajos que realizaste. Incluye una descripción del puesto, separada cada uno de los trabajos que has tenido en NYC. Incluye una descripción del puesto, edad a la que empezaste a trabajar, número de horas trabajadas por día/semana, sueldo, duración del empleo.) Menciona un poco de cada trabajo (como conseguiste el empleo, que hacías, etc.)

62. Si trabajaste por dinero, ¿Para qué trabajabas? (Ayudar con los gastos de la casa, pagar la escuela, etc.) ¿Tus padres o gente adulta con la que vivías te dijeron que tenías que trabajar o tu lo empezaste a trabajar por voluntad propia?

63. ¿Faltaste o te saliste de la escuela para trabajar? (Si la respuesta es sí). Dime por favor que pasó. (Si la respuesta es no) ¿Tu trabajo interfirió con tu trabajo escolar? Platicame sobre esto.

64. ¿Piensas que aprendiste o has aprendido habilidades valiosas en tu trabajo? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Cuáles habilidades? ¿Cómo te han ayudado?

65. ¿Piensas que tuviste que ir a la escuela para hacer los trabajos que realizaste? ¿Lo que aprendiste en la escuela te ayudó en tu trabajo? (Si la respuesta es si) ¿Cómo te ayudó?

66. En general, ¿Piensas que el trabajar/ganar dinero te influyó en querer abandonar la escuela? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Por qué?

67. En general, ¿Piensas que el trabajar y/o ganar dinero te influyó para emigrar? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Por qué?

WORK IN NYC

68. ¿Estás trabajando actualmente o has trabajado en NYC? (GO TO WORK CHART)

(Si no estás trabajando o has trabajado) ¿Por qué no has trabajado mientras has estado en NYC? (estoy estudiando, no lo necesito, no tengo interés, falta de dinero, no estan contratando, miedo del inmigración, etc.) GO TO NEXT SECTION

69. (Si has o estas trabaja(n)do) ¿Por qué estás trabajando/estabas trabajando? (Para enviar dinero a casa, para mis gastos, etc.) (Si envia dinero) En que lo estan usando?

70. ¿Cómo piensas que has sido tratado en cada empleo, como X, Yo Z (o como algo más)? ¿Por qué dices que has sido tratado como tal? Menciona algún ejemplo (Pregunta para cada empleo)

71. ¿Piensas que aprendiste o has aprendido habilidades valiosas en tu trabajo? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Cuáles habilidades? ¿Cómo te han ayudado fuera del trabajo?

72. ¿Piensas que era o es necesario ir a la escuela para el trabajo que realizabas o realizas actualmente? ¿Algunas cosas que aprendiste en México y/o en NYC te han ayudado en tu trabajo? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Cómo te han ayudado?

73. En general, piensas que trabajar te ha influenciado par ir o no ir a la escuela? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Por qué el trabajar

74. En general, ¿piensas que el ganar dinero es una influencia para ir o no ir a la escuela? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Por qué piensas que ganar dinero te hace sentir con ganas de ir o no ir a la escuela?

75. ¿Piensas que la gente debe/puede trabajar e ir a la escuela al mismo tiempo? ¿Por qué/por que no? ¿De donde sacaste esta idea?

76. ALL Piensas tu que muchachas, igual como muchachos, tu edad deben estar trabajando afuera de la casa/por dinero? En cuales tipos de trabajos? Porque o porque no?

VI. RELATIONSHIPS/Tiempo Libre

77. Tienes tiempo libre? Que haces en tus dias/tiempos libres?(Si son actividades con otra gente) Con quien haces estas actividades (pregunta si son muchachas, muchachos, hombres, mujeres, parientes, amigos, sus amiga/os de trabajo, etc.) que edades tienen la gente con quien haces estas actividades (futbol, fiestas, tomando, etc.)

78. ¿Tienes novio/novia, estás casado o viviendo en unión libre con tu pareja aquí en NYC? ¿Y en México? (Si la respuesta es sí) ¿Podrías platicarme acerca de dicha persona?

79. ¿A qué edad comenzaste a tener novio/novia?

80. ¿Qué tipo de cosas haces con tu novio/novia? (Cuando se ven, qué tipo de cosas hacen juntos—ir al cine, ver la televisión, cuidar nuestro hijo/a)

VII. AGE

Vamos hablar poquito sobre que es de ser de tu edad/etapa de vida...

81. Piensas poquito sobre la vida, cuales son los etapas de la vida...Primero soy....y luego a que tal momento soy X, y luego Y...

82. ¿Cómo sabes cuando alguien es X, Y o Z? ¿Cómo describes cada categoría?

83. (Only if no answer) ¿Cómo sabes cuando alguien es niño(a), adolescente o adulto? ¿Cómo describes cada categoría?

84. ¿Cómo te consideras a ti mismo en este momento? (niño, adolescente, adulto u otro) ¿Por qué?

85. ¿Me podrías platicar un poco acerca de tu (primer categoría)? ¿Qué tipo de cosas hacías, quién estaba a tu alrededor? ¿Ha culminado tu niñez? ¿Cómo supiste que tu niñez había terminado, que la marcó?

86. (Si eres adolescente o un poco mayor) ¿Podrías platicarme un poco más acerca de la (segunda categoría)? ¿Qué tipo de cosas haces, quién está a tu alrededor? ¿Cómo sabes que la adolescencia ha iniciado? ¿Ya terminó tu adolescencia? ¿Cómo sabes cuando terminó tu adolescencia, que fue lo que la marcó?

87. ¿Podrías platicarme un poco acerca de ser (tercera categoría)? ¿Qué tipo de cosas haces normalmente, quién está a tu alrededor? ¿Cómo sabes cuando has empezado tu edad adulta/tercera categoría, qué la marca?

88. (If has not been mentioned) Podrías platicarme un poco acerca de ser hombre? Que tipos de cosas hacen/s normalmente? Como sabes/sabias cuando has empezado ser hombre? Que son los característicos de un hombre?

89. Te voy a leer unos actos—por favor dime si alguno de estos actos te ha hecho sentir o crees que te va ser sentir como un adulto o un hombre:

- a. Dejar la escuela en Mexico
- b. Trabajar en Mexico (casa o afuera)
- c. Ganar dinero en Mexico
- d. Estar en pandilla en Mexico
- e. Tomar drogas/tomar alcohol en Mexico
- f. Inmigrar a los EU
- g. Trabajar en los EU
- h. Ganar dinero en los EU
- i. Vivir solo en los EU
- j. Estar en pandilla en los EU
- k. Tomar drogas/tomar alcohol en EU
- l. Tener novia/o en MX
- m. Tener novia/o en EU
- n. Tener relaciones con novia/o
- o. Ir a la escuela en los EU
- p. Dejar la escuela en los EU
- q. Pagar cuentas/comprar cosas tuyas (como renta, electricidad, por ropa, comida, etc)
- r. Mandar dinero a familia en MX
- s. Tener bebe

t. Tener una experiencia con la policia/autoridades, en MX/EU

Otras cosas: _____

Of those answered yes, otras categorias, pide que te platican sobre cada respuesta de 'si'.

90. (Para cada categoría) ¿Crees que has experimentado (X) de manera similar y al mismo tiempo que tus amigos? ¿Cómo lo sabes? ¿Qué crees que fue similar a tus amigos? ¿Qué fue diferente?

91. (FOR EACH NAMES CATEGORY) ¿Cómo experimentaste X (la categoría actual) en NYC? ¿Qué tipos de cosas haces? ¿Es diferente que ser un X en México? ¿Cuáles son las diferencias/similitudes?

VIII. CONCLUSION

92. ¿Has oído hablar del sueño Americano? ¿En dónde lo escuchaste por primera vez? ¿Qué significa para ti?

93. ¿Crees que los mexicanos que han emigrado a los Estados Unidos/Nueva York y han regresado a México (para visitar, para quedarse) han cambiado? (Si crees que sí) ¿Cómo/por qué crees que ellos han cambiado? Conoces gente de tu edad que han regresado y cambiado/no cambiado? Platicame de eso.

94. ¿Crees que cambiarás en caso de que regreses a México? (Si crees que sí) ¿Cómo crees que cambiarás? (Si no) ¿Por qué no?

95. En caso de que regresaras a México, ¿crees que te quedarías a vivir allá? ¿Por cuánto tiempo? (Si crees que sí) ¿Por qué sí? (Si no) ¿Por qué no?

96. (Pregunta SENSIBLE)—Has tenido cualquier experiencia con inmigración, la policia, aquí en NY? Te tiene preocupado el clima ahorita sobre Mexicanos en los EU? Platicame poquito sobre eso.

97. Puedes nombrar tus tres canciones favoritas, de artistas Mexicanas—mi maestra esta haciendo un CD sobre musica que les gustan la gente Mexicana jóvenes.

98. Por favor platicame sobre como tu apariencia: crees que eres alto, chaparro, gordo, flaco, con rostro de hombre, nino, si traes oretes, si ya estas rasurando, tu manera de vestir,etc. Crees que es diferente de cuando estabas viviendo en Mexico?

99. ¿Qué te gustaría estar haciendo en 20 años? ¿Dónde sería eso? ¿Qué crees que estarás haciendo?

Bueno, muchas gracias por tu tiempo. Eso es todo. Tienes algunas preguntas para mi?