Getting Home: Latinx/Chicano Identity Formation and the Afterlife of Migration

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Abstract

Getting Home: Latinx/Chicano Identity Formation and the Afterlife of Migration

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Through auto-ethnographic and ethnographic methods, this thesis explores the dominant theories around identity formation and their applicability within an intersectional U.S./Mexican migrant context. It involves a case study of my grandmother's history of moving between various parts of California and Mexico as a migrant field worker, as well as personal reflections on my own experiences of otherization as a first-generation US Citizen working in academia dealing with the afterlife of migrations. By bridging these two different experiences of othering in the US, I will challenge the ways in which we think about the migrant experience as having a definite beginning and end, the modes of resistance and negotiation migrants use to challenge the notion of assimilation, as well as the continuing legacy of migration that US-born Latinx people continue to deal with. This thesis will include an analysis of the creation of the Latinx/Chicano identity through various critical race scholars, primarily Frantz Fanon and Gloria Anzaldua, as various different discussions on the legal creation of the undocumented Mexican migrant and the specificity of the female Mexican migrant experience. I will challenge the conventional understanding of immigration as a process with an end and argue that immigrating and finding belonging is an on-going generational practice.

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Background and Introductions

How does someone introduce a piece of work that is centered around their own experiences and those of their grandmother? I'm struggling with this currently because I worry that I may simply end up disclosing all the issues I have with academia, society in general, and the types of people I find myself around as opposed to creating something that has academic merit. I worry this will simply be understood as a sort of journal entry, that I will be stereotyped as an angry person of color who is too emotional to have any academic worth. I don't want that to be how this thesis is introduced though. While yes, a majority of this thesis will be about the issues my grandmother and I have with our surroundings and the people in it, it is so much more about the methods we use in order to survive and prosper within these spaces. I keep thinking about why I am so unsure and uncomfortable with the act of sharing our stories of struggle in an academic essay format for an audience that is likely very detached from lives such as ours. I have no issue talking about experiences of discrimination with friends or family, but to be choosing to center them as research for academic purposes makes me feel weak and egotistical—weak because I am not strong enough ignore the discrimination, and egotistical because I am unable to create something that is not centered around my own experiences. Why do I feel that the struggles of my grandmother and those I deal with would be worthy of the attention of others? I reflect on the amazing work already created by scholars of color, and it almost feels embarrassing to try and mimic or compare my experiences to theirs in a way. Womanists of color and QPOCs have created such valuable work already, what more do I have to add to these groundbreaking conversations already at play? It feels that, unless my work is as radical as Jose Munoz or Gloria Anzaldua, it doesn't serve a purpose. There is so much work already done, but

at the same time the work by scholars of color that is regularly relied on is still so limited in comparison to the histories of white-centered knowledge that continued to be used. I am in a space where I want to create work about race and discrimination, but it will be lumped in with the existing ones, where I will have to claim my discrimination is just as important but also different enough from the other scholars of color who have written about these topics. At the end of the day, it feels like I am writing to an audience of white people about why my discrimination is just as important as that of Fanon, which is such an uncomfortable position, but one that I am forced to grapple with in order to create they type of academic work that I wish to.

I realize that these issues I am struggling with are not something I have ever had any control over. These feelings of doubt and the questioning of my right to take up space is something that I have struggled with throughout my life. The ways I am displaced by the US because of my family's history are similar to the ways I am displaced by the university by its presumed object of knowledge. It is a feeling of constantly being told that my knowledge and experiences are of lesser value than my white counterparts, that I have less likelihood of receiving a job because of my name, and that I am far less likely to be wanted in an academic program, and if I am, it is to fill a quota. I have had these feelings for as long as I can remember. These feelings of worthlessness and lack of integral knowledge stem from the systems of discrimination in all facets of western society, systems and structures that actively work against the participation and progression of black and brown peoples. We are taught that important knowledge comes from books written by white people for white people, that we need to unlearn how to talk the way we do with our families, and to learn how to speak and write properly if we want to be seen as having value. We are told that there is a good way to be a person of color, and a bad way. That if we want success, we should all aspire to be model minorities. There's nothing

wrong with the system, but an endless list of ways we could improve ourselves. The reason it is so hard to start writing this thesis is because society has convinced me that my experiences of otherization are my own, that my fears are imagined and perpetuated by myself entirely, that academic value is found in texts written by white people, not in the struggles of black and brown bodies. This is not to devalue that immense work already done by black and brown scholars, but to point to the fact that I still feel this way and have to regularly seek these knowledges outside of classrooms and syllabi, which reflects how there is still so much work to do when it comes to creating more inclusive spaces in academic institutions. They are not exempt in any way from the discriminations we deal with in society at large, and in fact can actually highlight more clearly moments of hypocrisy and privilege. These are systems that I have played a role in perpetuating in some ways and spent part of my life agreeing with, but I hope to actively complicate where and how we find knowledge, at least for the length of time it takes to read this thesis.

These feelings of exclusion and unworthiness by scholars of color have been discussed regularly, with some believing there is no way to overcome these systems (Afro-pessimism) and others holding onto hope and seeking inclusion through means outside of the dominant conversations (This Bridge Called my Back). And this is where the inception of this thesis stems from essentially. The acknowledgment of myself feeling confined and unworthy to participate in spaces around me and seeking a means to find or create a sense of belonging that didn't mean losing those parts of me that are deemed wrong. The inception of this thesis begins with the issue of feeling othered and regularly frustrated in classroom settings, and witnessing the types of knowledge that were being elevated over others. There have been moments in my graduate career where classroom conversations would be dominated by the education of white students, to

help them understand why something is racist or why something they said or shared was not appropriate. There would be times where we would read something written by a scholar of color, only for a white student to question its value, and derail the conversation toward having to educate them on why it is important to have these discussions. Days of class would be dedicated to educating us on what was appropriate and not appropriate to share in class, a reaction to a student sharing a video of the most visceral black face I have ever seen. This questioning of minority knowledge and the sharing of triggering images are acts of violence to POCs, acts that remind us we don't belong and are unwanted here. There was an instance where a cis-white-male questioned why tokenism was seen as a negative thing, that perhaps people of color think that being a token is "fucking awesome," all while I sat there as the only male of color in class.

These are graduate students in a communications department at a well-known liberal school in Canada. Yet, there were no consequences; in fact, it could be seen that their acts of ignorance were rewarded with more time spent focusing specifically on *their* education. There is always so much time and dedication put into educating white people specifically, as well as with the upmost respect and consideration for their feelings even when they are clearly perpetuating racism. I have never heard a POC question the value of scholars of color and none of us would even consider sharing images of black face in class, nor would anybody ever say that being the only person of color in a room feels so glorious. The education of white students is held up above all else; POC students have to sit by and wait for them to learn why something is racist. We sit biting our tongues, clenching our fists, wondering if it would be appropriate to walk out. We are forced to actually consider what is appropriate to say and do; at times it seems as if our presence is already pushing the limits of what we are allowed to ask for from academia.

Academia's focus on white-centered knowledge and the education of white students was nothing new for me, but in conjunction with various other aspects of my surroundings, I began to feel even more ostracized. I moved from California to Montreal for this program, and with that dramatic shift in space brought a dramatic shift in populations as well. I was so used to seeing people who looked like me everywhere, and regularly speaking Spanish with my friends and family. But Montreal and the program were nothing like the life I had up to then. The city itself and populations were definitely heavily mixed with many migrant communities, just not the ones I was used to being around. I would be regularly asked what my ethnicity was or spoken to in languages I didn't understand because of an assumption of my background. The Chicanx and Mexican migrant population in California is massive, and so although I was seen as an other in society, there were also a lot of people who looked like me to combat the racism and feelings of not belonging. In Montreal, I felt like an other who didn't fit into what the notion of an other typically is there. In terms of the program I was enrolled in, I was the only male of color in my cohort, the only Latinx person, and one of two that spoke Spanish, but the only native speaker. I was hoping to work with an advisor of color, but the options were limited and there wasn't a single Latinx instructor in the department. In the spaces I frequented, whether it be conferences or coffee shops, I would count the number of POCs in the room, a tactic I learned early on to gauge how comfortable I would be in a space. It was hardly ever more than you could count on one hand, and sometimes I would be the only one.

All this to say that the move to Montreal was a strange experience, but a very valuable one that made me reflect on what it was that I find important in my feelings of belonging. It also propelled my feelings of otherness to new levels and caused a change in the work I wanted to do for my thesis. As I was dealing so much with these feelings of otherization in this new space, on

top of all the feelings I felt regularly as a person of color in academia and in the US under the current administration, I found myself reflecting more and more on my family's migrant history. I came to the realization that my experiences were not unique, and that my feelings of otherness had already been lived through in much greater intensity by the family that came before me. I am a first-generation US citizen and I still feel otherized by the state and its populations, so it made sense to me that my family before me (who had to work for their citizenship and deal with deportation) could be seen as a site of knowledge when it came to creating belonging in spaces you are actively deemed other in.

While my mother was born in Mexico and had to apply for citizenship as well, I became particularly interested in my grandmother's narrative because I believe she had a much more complex connection to the space of the US. My grandparents were the ones who initiated the moves from Mexico to the US, while my mother and her siblings were merely children tagging along. My mother was born in Mexico, but ended up spending the first half of her childhood in California before returning to Mexico to spend her later youth and go to college. She then moved to the US permanently. My grandmother, on the other hand, played a much more active role in determining where she wanted to be and why, being able to identify elements of both the US and Mexico that affected her belonging in each. Because of her more active engagement with the spaces, I believed her narrative provided much more to work with. I chose to conduct interviews with my grandmother where we would discuss her reasoning to migrate, what her experiences migrating were like, and her reflections and views on the experience.

I went into these interviews expecting to find connections in our struggles and a shared anger or resentment towards the systems of oppression we both were living under. I was seeking these strong connections in order to validate my own experiences and find answers to my

questions of belonging, but what I ended up finding primarily were moments of disconnect. There were moments of conflict where our narratives and opinions didn't align, moments where I was feeling things I believe she should have felt, for example, when discussing one of her jobs picking strawberries and how the Driscoll company was looking specifically for migrant families to do labor.

[1]A: "Empezamos a plantar la fresa y a llevarnos las niñas. Tu mama, Pati, Hilda que nos ayudadan. porque ese requisito tenían."

K: "¿Necesitas traier tus hijos?"

A: "Traer tus hijos a que te ayuden en las vacaciones, en el fin de semana. Y se puede tener un trabajador de familia lo puedes poner. Pero importante importante que ellos qurian que fueran familias, para como ayudar a las familias. Y el trabajo fuera mas limpio y mas seguro. Porque si la fresa viene y no la piscas, ellos pierden el dinero, los que renten la tierra… y cuando es tu propia familia, tienen que trabajar."

K: "Si pero porque era necesidad traer tus hijos, porque no pueden ser como amigos"

A: "No, porque es para ayudar las familias."

K: "¿Pero pagaban a los hijos también?"

A: "Porque los hijos aprenden trabajar y estudian."

K: "Pero no los pagan."

A: "No, no les pagas, no eso no es un compromiso que les tenias que pagar son tus hijos."

K: "Si pero están trabajando."

A: "Pero están viviendo contigo, tu les tienes que dar la educación. ¿Y como los vas a tener de flojos?"

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[1] Refer to translation section (1)

K: “Pues, en ese tiempo era illegal dejar a los ninos trabajar”

A: “No porque era tu casa. ¿Como es illegal que tu le cortes el pasto a tu mama?”

K: “Lo que estava haciendo Driscoll.”

A: “No, Driscoll quiera familias que se hicerian responsibles del trabajo. ¿Es como tu compras una casa, y se te dice si pones a trabajar niños en tu casa tu ya que compraste es illegal?”

K: “Pues eso es en una casa, no es por un negocio.”

A: “Ese era un trabajo para que vivan los niños de nosotros. Había fillepinos, había mexicanos, gringos no había porque no aplicaron pienso… piscavan un rato y luego iban a jugar las niñas. No pasan todo el rato trabajando.[2]

During the interview process, moments like these were particularly frustrating for me. How could she be thankful for the ways she and my mother were being taken advantage of by landowners? I wanted her to be angry at the situations she was forced to be in, at the type of labor she was boxed into where she had to rely on her kids to help. I was expecting her to have the same feelings and views on things that I had, seeking her anger to justify my own anger. If she wasn’t angry about her situation, what right did I have to be? Why is it that generations after the point of initial migration someone can point out and feel these injustices and abuse? This is an instance of an evolution of the migration experience, an “afterlife” of what my grandmother has been through that is now having an effect on me and the ways in which we acknowledge abuse that is situated differently but continues to exist as well. I am able to feel anger and name these abuses of power she has faced, abuses that to me continue to exist in similar ways in the classroom and spaces I interact with as a first-gen Chicanx person. Our instances of

[2] The “A” stands for “abuelita” and will be used to denote when my grandmother is speaking. The “K” stands for “Keven” and will be used to denote when I am speaking.

discrimination are widely different, and my anger can stem from her inability to acknowledge the discrimination, but also equally in the ways that we are still facing these forms of abuse even if in very different environments.

It was in these surprisingly unexpected conflicts in our feelings that I reflected on just how different we actually are, and that perhaps it is in these sites of difference where we can map some sort of gulfs in our belonging. The interviews made me realize that my grandmother and I have very different backgrounds and have lived dramatically different lives in the US but that instances of abuse continue to persist through different modes. I shouldn't be seeking the identicality of our experiences, but I should instead be analyzing the ways in which our family's narrative has evolved and changed, in this way creating a narrative of how issues of immigration continue to persist and evolve generations later. Although I have citizenship and have not had the undocumented history that my grandmother has, I am still very much feeling and living many of the things she went though, sometimes feeling the anger and resentment that she was unable to at the time. We are now in a place where we can acknowledge the anger of generations past, examine how it persists, and how we have and still continue to find belonging throughout this process of migration. This continual expansion of my family's migration narrative, even after receiving citizenship, I will come to call the "afterlife of immigration". An afterlife of migration is the continuing of the migrant narrative generations later, the ways in which the struggle of my grandmother reverberate and continue to exist within my experiences. The lasting effects of migration that occur within radically different settings and how we are still learning to situate ourselves within these new spaces. This is not a progression necessarily, but more of an expansion in how we come to deal with the issues of otherness as migrant bodies--an evolution of our feelings and abilities to acknowledge the ways we have been abused in the past as well as

what we seek from the spaces we reside in. Does the migrant identity require a desired space to reside in as an end goal? Can it instead be centered around our persistence to thrive and work within systems of exclusion?

In the essay "Reporting on Immigration: A Content Analysis of Major U.S. Newspapers' Coverage of Mexican Immigration," the authors conclude that dominant news sources continue to reinforce a connection of Mexican immigration to crime above all else.[3] This narrative ignores almost everything about the migrant experience and instead perpetuates harmful stereotypes that strengthen anti-Mexican sentiments in society. I will challenge this representation by discussing a more personal migrant experience, one that focuses on the actual experience of migration as opposed to the stereotypes that surround it and only work to exclude and to paint a picture of fear. How has my grandmother's experience after attaining citizenship changed her feelings of belonging? Since I still feel othered in a state where I've legally belonged my entire life, what similarities are there between my own experiences as a citizen and my grandmother's as an undocumented migrant? How does having the history of undocumented immigration shape the way my grandmother views the U.S. in comparison to me who was born and raised here? What are the differences between our experiences and how do these differences come to shape our connections to this space where we are both deemed other? In what ways am I still dealing with or navigating similar experiences of exclusion generations later after our immigration?

Through conversations with my grandmother about her immigration experiences and with reflections on and comparisons with my own lived experiences as a first generation Chicanx US citizen, this thesis will challenge the dominant conversations around immigration and how we can complicate it by discussing the continuing experiences of otherness that happen past the

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[3] Manuel Chavez, Scott Whiteford, and Jennifer Hoewe, "Reporting on Immigration: A Content Analysis of Major U.S. Newspapers' Coverage of Mexican Immigration," in *Norteamérica* 5, no. 2. 111–25.

point of citizenship. I will also be discussing modes of belonging for Mexican immigrants and first-gen Chicanx people in the US. By "modes of belonging", I mean the tactics used by us to create or find belonging within spaces that are actively working against our inclusion. I don't want to focus primarily on the exclusion we feel, as I feel it is equally important to discuss how we have been able to overcome exclusion and experience moments of belonging within these spaces of otherization. Was my grandmother seeking belonging when migrating to this country? How did the feelings of belonging or not belonging compare to the feelings she had in Mexico? What parts of the experience of migration come to play the biggest roles in her belonging? How do my feelings of belonging and not belonging in the US compare to hers? Do we experience belonging here in similar ways or do we come to find it through different means? By comparing the experience of my grandmother and myself, this thesis will address the way in which brown bodies have been viewed and treated across generations as well, identifying patterns in the discriminations we have faced. Highlighting the continued stereotyping and abuse of brown bodies by the state as well as populations within the US.

To do this, as touched upon previously, this thesis will be relying on both ethnographic and auto-ethnographic modes of writing, reflecting on my lived experience as a first generation Chicanx citizen as well as interviews and conversations with my grandmother about her lived experience of immigration. The ethnographic mode is characterized by its flexibility and applicability to various different ways of discussing social and cultural phenomena. In *An Ethnography of Global Landscapes and Corridors*[4], Loshini Naidoo addresses how the ethnographic mode is about situating the subject rather than turning them into an exoticized object, as well as how the research comes to situate themselves in relation to their subject in

[4] Loshini Naidoo, *An Ethnography of Global Landscapes and Corridors*, (InTech, 2012),

order to challenge where we find knowledge. With this project, I am situating myself as someone who is learning from my research subject. Ethnography allows me to emphasize my grandmother as a site of knowledge and the importance of her narrative to the current fields of migration studies. In her book *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social,* Deborah Reed declares "One of the main characteristics of an auto ethnographic perspective is that the auto-ethnographer is a boundary-crosser, and the role can be characterized as that of a dual identity."[5] As someone doing work on the literal crossing of borders, as well as an exploration of the differences between identities and experiences of intersectional bodies, I believe the auto-ethnographic form to be a key tool to be able to explore these boundary-crossing conversations. By engaging with my own experiences and those of my grandmother, I will be able to explore the spaces that require crossing boundaries in literal and metaphorical ways. My decision to use the auto-ethnographic and ethnographic forms is also inspired by the work of previous scholars of color who have written about issues of identity and otherization, specifically the works of Frantz Fanon and Gloria Anzaldua, from their individual experience and structural position. Both scholars address the lived experiences of being a person of color existing in a racist system that works towards their continued oppression and exclusion from society, pulling from their own experiences of discrimination and racism to ground their claims.

The auto-ethnographic form in particular has come to be recognized by scholars of color as a means of creating space for ourselves within academic conversations that often to work exclude our identity. Calanit Tsalach's "Between Silence and Speech: Autoethnography as an

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[5] Deborah Reed-Danahay, ed., *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*. (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 1997).

Otherness-Resisting Practice"[6] and Santhosh Chandrashekar's "Not a Metaphor: Immigrant of Color Autoethnography as Decolonial Move"[7] both address the ways in which sharing one's story of struggle as a person of color can be used as a tool to challenge the conventional, problematic forms of research creation as well as rejecting the impossible notion of being able to disconnect one's identity from the work we do. Both Tsalach and Chandrashekar also reflect on their struggles in academic institutions as people of color and how unlike, their white peers, they are constantly reminded about their identities and the forms of exclusion they bring. As someone who has experienced similar moments of discrimination throughout my life, I found these moments of reflection on our discrimination so important for not just how we can undo our continued exclusion within society and academia, but also as moments of solidarity between the author and POC readers. To read scholars who write about moments of discrimination and the toll it has on their psyche comes to mean so much to students of color who continue to deal with similar experiences. By reflecting on the specificity of my own experiences, I am grounding the knowledge that comes from this thesis in my identity and acknowledging the ways in which my identity and belonging is policed by the institutions I am working in. In this way, I am also able to highlight the continued work to be done within these institutions to be more inclusive of the variations in lived experiences, as well as create another piece of academic work that hopes to provide some sort of affirmation to or solidarity with marginalized people within the academic institution.

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[6] Calanit Tsalach, "Between Silence and Speech: Autoethnography as an Otherness-Resisting Practice," *Qualitative Inquiry* 19, no. 2 (February 2013): 71–80, https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800412462986.
[7] Santhosh Chandrashekar, "Not a Metaphor: Immigrant of Color Autoethnography as a Decolonial Move," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 18, no. 1 (February 2018): 72–79, https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708617728953.

The decision to interview my grandmother comes from a similar desire to create work that relies on a particular lived experience that is often ignored and overlooked. Because I was feeling so excluded in much of the dominant work on identity theory, I wanted to seek knowledge and highlight the lived experiences of someone who I believe has valuable information on the experience of otherization but isn't connected to academia in anyway. While there has already been so much valuable work by Latinx/Chicanx scholars, I believe that there is still a lot of work to do in the fields of identity formation and immigration studies. In particular, I believe that one of the best ways to further these conversations would be to include narratives and experiences of people outside of these academic circles, centering them as important contributors to knowledge and populations that are just as scholarly. In interviewing and centering my thesis around the lived experiences of my grandmother, I wanted to bridge the gap between academia and often-excluded populations and experiences. Although my grandmother has no formal educational experience in the US, I believe her lived experiences have just as much academic importance as those working within academia. The connection between our lives and experiences will also work to explore the relevancy of much of the work by Latinx scholars across generations and political shifts. I believe Mary Louis Pratt's notion of the "contact zone" connects well in the context of this thesis. Pratt uses the term to refer to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other," as well as a means to "reconsider the models of community that many of us rely on in teaching and theorizing and that are under challenge today."[8] This act of interviewing my grandmother and reflecting on my experiences creates an unexplored zone of contact, a space that relies on the personal and the political that challenges us to expand our understanding of modes of theorizing. In interviewing her, I am also bridging the

[8] Mary Louise Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," *Profession*, 1991, 33-40.

gap between myself and the history of un-documentation of my family, creating a space of reflection and conflict, to expand what it means to be a brown body in the US, and to explore how our experiences shape our feelings of belonging.

Within this discussion of exclusionary knowledge and one's ability to connect to particular works, I will be leaving the interviews as they were conducted in Spanish. I believe that this is the only way that I will be able to recognize by grandmother's unique knowledge and best respect what she has chosen to share with us. This means that those who are able to understand her language will be able to connect more fully to her experiences, and those who do not will have a different connection to this knowledge that assumes a particular identity that they do not have a connection with. By leaving the interviews in Spanish within the body of the work, I am creating knowledge that is for those of us with a similar background, something that is *by* us and *for* us. Those who wish to truly have a better understanding of our knowledge and do not understand our particular mode of speaking Spanish will have to refer to the translation documents provided in the appendices. There is much lost in these translations though, reinforcing the notion of exclusive knowledges and how our background affects our ability to access particular texts. I wanted to create something that is not for the majority of those in higher education, something that is in more ways accessible by my family and those who look like me more than for the white English-speaking majority in western institutions.

After completing the interviews and reflecting on the various topics covered, I found myself able to categorize four key elements in my grandmother's experience of migration that played major roles in her feelings of belonging. These four elements are: space, labor, populations, and citizenship. Each chapter of this thesis will correspond with a focus on one of these elements, addressing the way it played a role in my grandmother's belonging first, and then

reflecting on how that element affects my belonging and experiences as well. In this way, there will be dual conversations through the chapters, connecting and reflecting on both of these varied lived experiences to challenge what it means to immigrate and what effects our sense of belonging.

The first chapter will cover the broad notion of space and how we come to connect to distinctly different spaces. The specific spaces discussed will be the US and various parts of California my grandmother lived in, as well as Mexico and my grandmother's connection to home and belonging there. Before delving into particularities about the spaces, I found it important to think about these two very distinct spaces in broad senses. In this chapter, I explore the way my grandmother envisioned the US before traveling as an undocumented immigrant, as well as how that perception changed or shifted throughout her experiences here. We will also address her connection to Mexico and the way she viewed it growing up there, as well as how her experiences immigrating to the US changed that original connection to Mexico; how the US and Mexico both come to play a role in the way she connects with either. In contrast, my connection to space will reflect on how I view the US as someone born and raised here, addressing the different views we come to have on it based on our different introductions to it. I will also be addressing my connection to Mexico, how my body is intrinsically seen as coming from or belonging there although I do not have Mexican citizenship, nor have I spent much time there throughout my life. Much in the same way that my grandmother had come to experience moments of envisioning what her life could be in the US, I also have moments where I imagine what my life would be in Mexico, in a country where I imagine I wouldn't be deemed other by the color of my skin. There is a pattern in the way we view the possibility of spaces and seeking greater belonging in spaces in which we don't belong.

The second chapter will analyze the concept of labor, and the ways that labor has played a role in moving my grandmother between spaces as well as providing her with feelings of belonging and progression. My grandmother essentially worked as a *bracero*, although without documentation, meaning that she did seasonal work in fields picking fruit for landowners. In this chapter, we discuss what labor in the US provided for her, as opposed to labor in Mexico, and why she felt it was so necessary for her to seek it out within a space where she was being deported from, as she was only allowed to work through undocumented means. There is also an intersectional discussion of labor, and how the undocumented migrant woman's connection to labor comes to involve so much more than just the self. In my reflections, I discuss my family's history of manual labor and how it has come to affect the type of work I choose to do. I analyze the ways in which I am still very much connected to labor done by my family, and how first-gen children are expected to continue this attempt at upward mobility. I also reflect on my own intersectionality, and how my identity within the work I do hopes to embody so much more than my own success.

The third chapter expands the conversation into the people around us, the effect that populations have on our experiences of belonging. My grandmother discusses her experience (or lack thereof) with "gringos" in the US, how she maneuvered and connected to this new population as an undocumented immigrant who did not speak English. I also discuss of how her experiences in the US came to affect the ways she interacted with and connected to people back in Mexico. Her immigration between these two spaces came to play a profound role in her ability and desires to connect with particular people, since she had a complex experience of living between these two spaces. I reflect similarly on my relationship with white people in the US and the role they play in my feelings of un/belonging, how our connections to white people vary

widely but also have similar sentiments towards them generations later. We also discuss the moments of belonging and unbelonging that particular populations come to provide for us, and how we come to create particular spaces of belonging through our connections to those around us.

The fourth chapter is a discussion of citizenship, addressing our different experiences and perspectives on what having US citizenship provides. My grandmother addresses how not having citizenship came to police a lot of her experiences in the US, as well as how it played a role in her migration due to the required living time of residency. She also discusses how she came to acquire citizenship, including a conversation of giving birth to children in the US as a means of granting easier access to documentation for herself. I discuss how I am one of those children who could be seen as a tool to receive documentation for my mother and how this comes to affect the way I connect with my citizenship. Together we provide two very distinct views on citizenship and its importance in finding belonging within a space. My grandmother documents the process of what it can look like to acquire citizenship and the feeling of living in the US after doing so. As someone without a history of un-documentation in the US, I challenge the importance of citizenship and question its worth, considering the continued killing and deportation of black and brown US citizens by the state.

As previously stated throughout, the value from this thesis will be found in the way I will challenge the conventional understanding of immigration as a process with an end as well as how I explore the applicability of much of the work on identity studies to experiences that span vastly different contexts, struggles and reflections. How does a conversation between two intersectional bodies work to expand the works of Fanon? How are Anzaldua's reflection on the borderlands still relevant? In this exploration of our lives, I will also address our shifting understandings of

immigration and work to include even more intersectional narratives. I will also argue that immigration and finding belonging is an on-going generational practice, one that is affected by various different aspects of our lives. I will be exploring elements that I have found are important factors in one's immigration experience and how those factors continue to play critical roles in the ways we interact and come to shape our belonging within spaces where we continue to be othered long after the point of citizenship. In this way, I am blending theory and work on identity formation with the studies of migration, expanding the conversations around immigration to include more personal experience and theoretical qualities that are not so emphasized on state intervention or recognition. In analyzing those factors influencing grandmother's immigration, I am also exploring identity and the roles those factors play in how our identity is affected by moving between spaces. By comparing my grandmother's narrative of migration to mine of stagnation, I hope to expand the applicability of the work in the field of identity studies as well as the field of migrant studies.

Literature Review

I am locating my work and research at the intersections of two bigger umbrella topics: Identity Formation and Migration Studies and will be relying on an auto/ethnographic methodology to explore them. Within these two areas of research, I will explore the specificity of the Mexican-American identity. I will expand the conversations on identity formation and Critical Race Studies to include discussions of Mexican migration in a US-context and how that comes to affect the ways Mexican migrants and the generations that come after them expand or challenge current discussions. The conversations between my grandmother and myself will also give insight into how similar identities are altered or shift across changes in the political and social landscape. I will explore migration studies that revolve around the Mexican-migrant specifically as well, examining how the migrant narrative can be challenged to be about more than just the act of relocating. I claim that migrant identity is a lived experience, one that is not tied to the act of migration necessarily but more to how we situate ourselves and find belonging through the inability to identify with any space perfectly.

Identity Formation and Critical Race Studies

I am choosing to discuss identity formation in conjunction with Critical Race Studies because those of us who have racialized identities are unable to discuss how we come to identify without a discussion of racialization and its effects on our psyche. While there is an extensive amount of literature on Critical Race Studies and identity formation, my thesis will be focusing primarily on key figures I find foundational to understanding the ways in which the lived experienced of being othered affect the way we navigate the spaces we reside in.

One cannot discuss the subject of the "other" and this meeting ground of identity formation and race without Frantz Fanon and his critiques of identity formations lack of inclusivity of the person of color. *Black Skin, White Masks* continues to be a radical and defining text on the struggle of the other and the inability for us to ignore the color of our skin in the way white populations can:

> "There is in fact a 'being for other,' as described by Hegel, but any ontology is made impossible in a colonized and accultured society. Apparently, those who have written on the subject have not taken this sufficiently into consideration… Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man…From one day to the next, the Blacks have had to deal with two systems of reference. Their metaphysics, or less pretentiously their customs and the agencies to which they refer, were abolished because they were in contradiction with a new civilization that imposed its own."[9]

The black identity is built off of the inability to identify, those who are not seen as white are inaccessible to the popular ontology of identity formation. Stuart Hall is another key figure when discussing issues of otherness in society. Hall's exploration of Fanon's work in "The After-life of Frantz Fanon"[10] and his observations on black youths in "Minimal Selves"[11] will be relied on to carry on the conversation that Fanon initiated. Hall places Fanon's work into perspective, and allows us to engage with Fanon in ways that are more critical than just a "white vs black" interpretation, as well as how it is that through all the suffering and exploitation that Fanon addresses, there are equally important qualities of life to otherness that exemplify just how difficult it is to discuss it in such absolute terms. The theory of Afro-pessimism[12] is also valuable within these discussions of otherness. I will resist the irreducibility of the black experience as I

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9 Frantz Fanon and Richard Philcox, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York : Berkeley, Calif.: Grove Press, 2008). 91.
10 Stuart Hall, "'The After-Life of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why Black Skin, White Masks?,'" in *The Fact of Blackness: Frantz Fanon and Visual Representation*, ed. Alan Read, Homi K. Bhabha, and England (London (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Institute of International Arts), 12–37.
11 Stuart Hall, "Minimal Selves," in *Identity : The Real Me : Postmodernism and the Question of Identity*, ed. Homi Bhabha and Lisa Appignanesi (London, England: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987). 44-46.
12 Frank Wilderson, *Afropessimism.* First Edition. (S.I.: Liveright, 2020).

think through intersectionality and multiple situated identities, but I want to highlight how black people come to navigate and live with the afterlives of slavery in societies that continue to treat them as second-class citizens.

Moving this conversation into a Mexican-American/Chicanx situation, Gloria Anzaldúa writes about brown Latinx bodies and how this unique identity has come to be such a loaded political site in the US:

> "The *mestizos* who were genetically equipped to survive small pox, measles, and typhus…founded a new hybrid race and inherited Central and South America. *En 1521 nació una raza, el mestizo, el mexicano* (people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood), a race that had never existed before. Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, are the offspring of those first matings."[13]

The creation of the Mexican-American identity as we know it today comes from a long history of ambiguity, not being easily categorized with any other sort of identity. Some of us are racialized as white in the United States, but histories of lynching and systemic racism demonstrate that we have never been treated with any sort of equality in any facet of its society. We are brown, but not black, and not identified as black. It is an identity that cannot as clearly point to a history of slavery as the Black identity in America can, but the *Bracero* Program and the indentured labor force of Mexicans---created by the US government throughout history---demonstrate a view of these brown bodies as less than human. Charles Ramirez Berg's text *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion and Resistance*[14] will also be discussed to demonstrate the stereotyping and ridicule of Latinos in media. This thesis will not attempt to grapple with these larger conversations of where the Mexican-American/Chicanx identity stands in comparison to other

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[13] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Fourth Edition edition (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012). 27.
[14] Charles Ramírez Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, and Resistance* (University of Texas Press, 2002).

marginalized communities though; instead I will look into its own unique culture and particular history that continues to make it an identity that is difficult to pin down.

Because this thesis is built off of the conversations between two intersectional bodies, a female Mexican migrant and a queer first-gen Chicanx, Kimberlee Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality will be a crucial tool when discussing the ways in which we can expand migrant narratives and queer experiences. In "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color"[15] Crenshaw details the ways in which women of color are doubly marginalized and how that often puts them at odds with both men of color and white women. The collection of writings by women of color in *This Bridge Called My Back*[16] will be relied on as well to exemplify the lived experience of intersectionality and how women of color grapple with their identity and find solidarity with each other through a shared marginality. The words of Audre Lorde[17] and other prolific intersectional writers are empowering and equally important observations that contribute crucial knowledge about the lived experience of discrimination and how we continue to survive. I will connect the themes of intersectionality with the female migrant identity, and the ways in which the female migrant is unable to locate herself within any space either.

Within this same conversation of intersectionality, Jose Muñoz addresses queer identity and the ways in which queer people of color are also regularly unable to locate themselves within popular conversation or works. The text *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* is a radical site for exploring the ways in which intersectional bodies

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15 Kimberlee Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," in *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.
16 Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back, Fourth Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th Revised edition (Albany: State Univ of New York Pr, 2015).
17 Audre Lorde and Cheryl Clarke, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Reprint edition (Berkeley, Calif: Crossing Press, 2007).

navigate spaces that are actively working to keep them out: "Disidentification is meant to be a descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship."[18] As a brown queer body in the US working within academia, disidentification becomes a crucial tool in the ways I come to navigate almost every facet of my life. I would extend this act of disidentification to the migrant body as well, particularly my grandmothers experiences and the way she challenges the concept of "normative citizenship" both literally and figuratively.

These authors have set the foundation for person of color identity-formation, expanded it to discusses those of us in the intersections, and have highlighted ways in which we navigate spaces of exclusion and find belonging. This thesis will explore and expand on these themes by examining the particular context of an intersectional migrant narratives. I am interested in the applicability of these themes and identities for migrant people who move back and forth between spaces, as well as the lasting impacts that has on the generations that come after.

Migration Studies and the Particularity of Mexican-American Migrants

I will begin with an initial introduction of how migration studies has been framed by Russell King[19], how we can theorize and challenge the way migrants are affected by and can affect space through Doreen Massey's understanding of space[20] and a discussion of labor and "precarity" by Judith Butler[21] to examine migrant labor practices, but the bulk of the literature

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18 José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers Of Color And The Performance Of Politics*, First edition edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1999). 4

19 Russell King, "Geography and Migration Studies: Retrospect and Prospect: Geography and Migration Studies: Retrospect and Prospect," *Population, Space and Place* 18, no. 2 (March 2012): 134–53.

20 Doreen B. Massey, *For Space*, (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2005).

21 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London ; New York: Verso, 2009).

will be exploring the specificity of the Mexican-American migrant experience. To do this, various authors from the texts *Latinos and Citizenship: The Dilemma of Belonging*[22] and *The New Latino Studies Reader*[23] will be relied on to analyze the historization and racialization of the Mexican migrant by the US.

The migration from Mexico to the US is also wholly unique, and the specification of the works being discussed will be important. David G. Gutierrez' essay "A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States,"[24] and Nicholas De Genova's essay "The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant 'illegality',"[25] both provide insight into how Mexican immigration has been shaped by the US as well as how Mexican migrants combatted the various policies in place to keep them out. "Latino Lives"[26] by Luis Ricardo Fraga et al. address the reasoning for Mexican migration and how the US has been shaped as the land of opportunity, as well the reality of living here as person of color. Alejandra Castaneda's "Roads to Citizenship: Mexican Migrants in the United States"[27] tackles space and how migrants come to find connection and familiarity within unknown spaces through the construction of transnational social spaces, and how migrants come to find a "culture of citizenship" even without documentation.

The literature will move from a discussion of the history of Mexican migration and the undocumented experience to a discussion of the afterlife of migration, the lives of those black

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22 Suzanne Oboler, *Latinos and Citizenship: The Dilemma of Belonging* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
23 Ramon A. Gutierrez and Tomas Almaguer, *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective* (Univ of California Press, 2016).
24 David G. Gutiérrez, "A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States," in *The New Latino Studies Reader.* (Univ of California Press, 2016). 108-125.
25 Nicholas De Genova, "The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant 'illegality'," in *Latinos and Citizenship.* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). 61-90.
26 Luis Ricardo Fraga et al. "Latino Lives: Trying for the *Americano* Dream" in *The New Latino Studies Reader*. (Univ of California Press, 2016). 321-339.
27 Alejandra Castaneda, "Roads to Citizenship: Mexican Migration in the United States," in *Latinos and Citizenship: The Dilemma of Belonging* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). 143-165.

and brown children born in the US who continue to struggle to find belonging and question the value in their citizenship. This culture of citizenship comes to be more important than legal citizenship. Suzanne Oboler reminds us that citizenship does not grant social equality for many black and brown citizens in the essay "Redefining Citizenship as a Lived Experience."[28] Manuel Pastor Jr.'s "Not So Golden?"[29] and Ramon Gutierrez's "What's in a Name?"[30] both build off of these discussions, addressing the aftermath of migration and analyzing how even those who are not migrants continue to be treated as lower class citizens in the US with little to no opportunities for upward mobility. Gutierrez's text also introduces the concept of *Latinidad* and the importance of solidarity-building between Latinx migrant communities. Bonnie Urciuoli's essay titled "Boundaries, Language, and the Self: Issues Faced by Puerto Ricans and other Latino/a College Students"[31] in particular discusses how first-gen Latinx students continue to deal with exploitative practices by universities as well. Anzaldúa's reflections will also be valuable within this conversations as a way of exemplifying the struggles of having a migrant background.

There will also be a brief discussion of the specific female migrant narrative, and the ways in which female Mexican migrants come to view the labor opportunities and the unique struggles they face. Patricia Zavella identifies how Mexican migration is particularly for Mexican women because of the greater opportunities in labor for them in "Mexican Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty."[32] "How Women Work: The Symbolic and Material

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28 Suzanne Oboler, "Redefining Citizenship as a Lived Experience," in *Latinos and Citizenship*. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). 3-30.
29 Manuel Pastor Jr., "Not So Golden?" in *The New Latino Studies Reader.* (Univ of California Press, 2016). 288-320.
30 Ramon A. Gutierrez, "What's in a Name?" in *The New Latino Studies Reader.* (Univ of California Press, 2016). 19-53.
31 Bonnie Urciuoli, "Boundaries, Language, and the Self: Issues Faced by Puerto Ricans and other Latino/a College Students" in *Latinos and Citizenship: The Dilemma of Belonging* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). 169-190.
32 Patricia Zavella, "Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty" in *The New Latino Studies Reader: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective* (Univ of California Press, 2016). 235-265.

Reproduction of Migrant Labor Camps in the United States"[33] by Robert Carley and Hilario Molina II address how migrant women are expected to conduct multiple types of labors even outside of the camps due to cultural practices. While there is extensive literature on gender and migration, the thesis is choosing to focus specifically on works that address the US/Mexican context and the farm-work environment that my grandmother found herself in. A much more nuanced and complex discussion of the field of gender and migration studies is outside of the scope of this thesis.

These texts that chronicle the history of migration and the lived experience of Latinx bodies in the US will be used in tandem with the lived experiences of my grandmother and me, grounding our actions and feelings within bigger conversations in order to challenge how we can discuss what it means to continue living with these feelings of otherness past the point of citizenship. We will expand the topics through our specific experiences, and challenge how we have and continue to find modes of belonging in a country where we are deemed other.

[33] Robert Carley and Hilarion Molina II, "How Women Work: The Symbolic and Material Reproduction of Migrant Labor Camps in the United States" in *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies.* 5:1. (2011) 37-62.

Chapter 1: Space and Expectations

Russell King describes the study of migration as "the description, analysis, and theorization of the movement of people from one place or country to another. These movements are for longer than visits or tourism and may involve either short-term/temporary or long-term/permanent relocations. Viewed in this light, migration is clearly a *space-time phenomenon*..."[34] This shift in spaces can bring about a multitude of issues: the change in politics and populations you interact with, the access you have to certain things which may have expanded or been constricted, a potential change in citizenship status within the spaces you are moving between. Migration is a loaded act that comes to encompass so many social and political factors, but ultimately it is understood as a shift in space. This shifting in space is what invites these other factors that we have no control over. Migration can be framed as something that we choose to do, but the effects of migration are frequently out of our hands. I am interested in that act of *choosing* to migrate, what makes someone want to commit an act that has potentially detrimental effects? How is it that first-gen Chicanx peoples (who have not committed this act of shifting space) come to continue to feel many of the same issues that those before them have? Our connections to the spaces we reside in are tied to the histories before us, as well as the shifting political and social landscapes within those spaces. Perhaps I haven't migrated in a literal sense, but it almost feels as if I have had to navigate so many different spaces regularly.

In my grandmother's case, this change in space was a very literal one: My grandmother migrated regularly throughout her life primarily for labor purposes, these spaces being various parts of California and Mexico. To start this analysis and comparison of our migrant and first-

[34] King, "Geography and Migration Studies." 18.

gen experiences, an exploration of space and the effect it has on creating a sense of home is crucial. How do we come to connect with the spaces around us, and how do they affect the ways we acknowledge spaces we have previously resided in or also have a strong connection to? I am curious about the similarities and differences my grandmother felt between these two different physical spaces she maneuvered. I want to analyze how she first felt experiencing California, as well as returning to Mexico after having experienced and resided in a new space. How did this shifting of spaces affect the way we she recognized home and belonging to spaces overall? I then want to apply these findings to my own experiences as a first-gen who at times struggles to find a feeling of belonging in a space that I have resided in my entire life. If she was able to create home in a space that she was actively being excluded from by the state as an undocumented immigrant, then what are the reasons that I would feel I am unable to create this connection as someone legally belonging to this space and no other?

This chapter will rely on the concept of space in both a geographical sense as well as theoretical. Doreen Massey, one of the most prolific writers on space, describes space as having three qualities: it is the product of interrelations, it is a space of possibility where many differences can coexist, and it is always under construction because of these possibilities.[35] With space understood as something that is constantly shifting, it begs the question, Do we move between spaces when we migrate or are spaces moved by us when we migrate? I will claim through my grandmother's migration that these are happening simultaneously; migrants move between separately designated spaces and this move causes a change in the spaces themselves. Migrants are not just traversers of different spaces, but also play an active role in shaping and

[35] Massey, *For Space*. 9.

forming the spaces around them. Spaces and migrants are not static; they interact with each other and affect one another.

This discussion of the Mexican/US space in particular has been described violently and beautifully as an "herida abierta," by Gloria Anzaldúa[36]. She describes the US/Mexico border as the space where the "Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture."[37] Within the context of her work, Anzaldua is describing the physical space of border towns, and the violent, aggressive ambivalence they have for those who live there. It is never settled, always in a "constant state of transition." She claims this is where *"Los atravesados"* live, the "squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who pass cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'."[38] The space of the borderlands, this meeting of the US and Mexico becomes a loaded site of queerness, ambiguity, intersectionality, all the identities that cannot be easily fit into any space. I believe that all of these observations about this physical space hold true for those of us who come from a similar background as Anzaldúa, those of us who do not live along the border but who have continued to have a connection to it regardless of our distance from it. The borderland isn't only found at the border; it is a space we (Mexican migrants, first-gen Chicanx citizens, Queer Chicanx peoples) reside, regardless of where we choose to settle down geographically in the US. I feel this grating of the third world against the first at supermarkets, in class rooms, in relationships. It feels as though we are always in an outsider space of our own, even if we have been born and raised here. I did not grow up near a border, but it feels like it has

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[36] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*. 25.
[37] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera*. 25.
[38] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera.* 25.

always been in my backyard, this specter of displacement, the feeling that I could find myself on the other side of it at any second. This border moves in parallel with the sentiments of Americans and political administrations, at times feeling closer and closer to my back. The US/Mexico space is physical, but also very metaphorical. Anzaldua wrote her text in 1987; it is now 2020 and feels as relevant as ever. I believe this connection to the border and our inability to escape it stems from the act of crossing or being crossed by it; there is something about the act of crossing this space that has lasting impacts for generations of brown and black bodies. What was my grandmother hoping for from this act of crossing then?

I believe it is important to address the intentions and expectations my grandmother had going to the US, as that comes to play a role in the relationship she had with the new space. My grandmother first migrated in 1947, during the time of the guest worker program, more commonly known as the Bracero Program. In his overview of Mexican immigration, David G. Gutiérrez addresses how the implementation of this program led to an increase of undocumented Mexican immigration and why:

> "By reinforcing communication networks between contract workers and their friends and families in their places of origin in Mexico, increased numbers of Mexicans were able to gain reliable knowledge about labor market conditions, employment opportunities, and migration routes north of the border… More importantly over the long run, the Bracero program helped stimulate a sharp increase in unauthorized Mexican migration. Drawn to the prospect of improving their material conditions in the U.S. (where wages were anywhere from seven to ten times higher than those paid in Mexico), tens of thousands of Mexicans…chose to circumvent the formal labor contract process and instead crossed the border surreptitiously."[39]

My grandmother was one of these tens of thousands. Her desire to migrate to the US follows this dominant narrative of migration from Mexico to the US during that time, for the notion of having greater opportunities than the space she was currently in.

[39] Gutiérrez, "A Historic Overview of Latino Immigration and the Demographic Transformation of the United States." 110-111.

This popular narrative of America being the "land of opportunity" is routinely perpetuated not just by migrants, but by the US as well. The "American Dream" is something that is pushed onto us since childhood, a phrase that is hard to solidify with a definition but continues to be so commonly used to perpetuate a purely positive image of the US In "Latino Lives: Trying for the *Americano* Dream," the authors engage with this term and its ambiguity:

> "The 'American Dream' is a term that has been in usage for a long time by persons throughout the United States. It is a subjective expression that means different things to different people but usually implies achieving a successful and satisfying life as a result of hard work (Adams 1934; Cullen 2003)… The allure of the American dream has been pointed to as the motivation of countless generations of immigrants who came to the United States to escape the lack of opportunity and poor quality of life in their home countries."[40]

There is a popular narrative that continues to be perpetuated which instills the US with the qualities of wealth and opportunity, in contrast with one's home country, which is seen as lacking. I've learned from my childhood that there's an understanding on both sides of the border that the US is where you should choose to live if you want to have greater access to opportunities in various aspects of life. Mexico is a space of instability where you only go to visit family, but the US is where you live and make money. The popular notion of the "American Dream" is what brought my grandmother and continues to bring groups of people to the US.

As a child, I just accepted that black and white view about the two spaces. As an adult now more critical of the US and how it functions, I believe the notion of opportunity here is reserved for a particular group of people, but I can also still see some truth to it in comparison to Mexico. Although most if not all of the opportunity for upward mobility in the US is reserved for white populations that are not systemically discriminated against and/or killed by the state, having spent time and heard stories of Mexico from my family members, the US still provides at

[40] Fraga et al. "Latino Lives: Trying for the *Americano* Dream." 321.

least some illusion of opportunity that has and is still not believed to be found in Mexico. Even as a child, I could feel a sense of "stagnation" when I was in Mexico, and the frustrations my birth father and his family felt with the work environment there. Although we were very poor in the US, sharing a three-bedroom home with nine family members, the poverty in Mexico felt very different; it was much poorer in a multitude of ways. The dirt roads, the old buildings, the lack of infrastructure or technology; it felt as if I was going "back in time" in a lot of ways. Even as a small child, I understood that paved roads are prefeable to dirt roads. The smell of garbage on the streets on a hot day, children begging for money being an everyday encounter, stray dogs everywhere, these were all things I had never seen in the US and there was always a relief in knowing I would be leaving. I was poor in both countries, but the poverty in Mexico was inescapable, especially when compared to my surroundings in the US. Mexico is still considered a "third world country" to this day. The levels of poverty I've witnessed in the US are nothing in comparison to Mexico; our understanding of poverty is the expected norm over there for many. I knew it was a very different place from the US, but it wasn't until I started asking *why* that my relatives explained to me the difficulties of living in Mexico.

With the US understood historically as a land of opportunity to those in Mexico, it became clearer why my grandmother viewed migration as a means of attaining a sense of security and prosperity, especially for someone like her. When my grandmother migrated, she had just recently been married as well as given birth to her first daughter. My grandfather though, did not provide any sense of stability for the home. He sold cattle but would routinely gamble away the money, and the economic opportunities for women were scarce in general. My grandmother was raised on a ranch with a 6th grade education, making it even more difficult to find work. What my grandmother lacked in formal education though, she made up for in

farmhand- and manual labor-experience. Her father-in-law, knowing about his son's gambling and her abilities to work, advised her to migrate.

> [41]A: "Tu abuelito dijo 'Mira Juanita, yo se que en estados unidos, las mujeres trabajan. Y ganan dinero. ¿Tu que estas haciendo aquí?'."

It became a question: "Why aren't you in the United States?", more than a question of *if* she should go to the United States. She did not belong in Mexico, a woman with her capacity to work. She was seen as the "type of woman who would be more successful in a different country" than in her own land. These types of acknowledgments by my family demonstrate an understanding of what women could and could not do in Mexico at the time. My grandmother was not seen as the type of woman who should stay home with kids; she could succeed in manual labor, and the best place to do that was in a different space that would actually pay her for it. The gendered language becomes a signifier of the opportunities available to women in Mexico vs the US. This space she was in was "confining her abilities", as well as not providing a sense of stability or comfort. I questioned whether or not the only reason she was going was to make money though; I couldn't believe that it would be easier to illegally cross the border and pick fruit as a *bracero* than to find some sort of income in Mexico.

> [42]K: "¿Porque iban a ir? ¿No mas para ganar mas dinero?"
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> A: "A mi to bis-abuelito me dijo 'mira jaunita, aquí Jesus (my grandfather) tiene una propriedad pero es muy pequeña y el siempre va ser jugador… Y yo se que las mujeres en los estados unidos trabjan, y tu eres muy buena para trabajar. Tu aqui no estas bien. Jesus is ganadero, es jugador, es muy bueno para el ganado el, pero es jugador. Tu aqui no estas segura… no te combiene quedarte aqui.'."

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[41] Refer to translation document section (2)
[42] Refer to translation document section (3)

So yes, it was about the money! My grandmother at least made it seem like there was no real way for her to make money in Mexico with the abilities she had. The intersectionality of the migrant woman has a much different connection to migration even before the actual act of migration. My grandfather was just seeking more money, but my grandmother was seeking the opportunity to make *any* money on her own. It was also about more than just money though; it was about the opportunity to be self-sufficient and not rely on my grandfather for stability.

The work I have found about the specificity of Mexican migrant women's motivations in moving are lacking in that they have tended to be about women's connection to their husbands or providing for their families, how their roles as mothers and homemakers came to affect their motivation to migrate. While this is valuable work, the female Mexican migrant is always tied to hetero-domesticity. Mexican migrant women's experience is unable to be disconnected from their male counterparts even in dominant works, but as my grandmother has demonstrated above, their experience comes to embody so much more than income or their connection to their family. In fact, the majority of my grandmother's migration story is disconnected from the relationships with her husband and children. I instead want to focus on this intersectional body only, on her experiences and connections to the spaces that are separate from those described in the most commonly found studies that continue to connect the female body to the male migrant and/or to her children. The connections to space are much more loaded for the intersectional body (racialized, classed and gendered); they become about being able to advance or expand on the opportunities based on our identities. The opportunities that my grandmother had in Mexico were very different from the ones available to her in the US because of her identity, and the opportunities in the US came to play an intrinsic role in the way she was able to imagine a life disconnected from hetero-domesticity.

Spaces comes to have varying effects on our predetermined abilities, and changes in space change also how we view our capabilities based on our identities. My grandmother's decision to migrate was not just about the opportunity to work, but also about what working would bring: the opportunity to be independent for the first time in her life, by and through her capacity to be paid for her labor. Work for women was lacking in Mexico, and with it the opportunity for women to pursue a more independent life. My grandmother was recognized as a woman who would be successful in the US because of her abilities, acknowledged as a woman who could have a better life in a different space than the one in which she has lived her whole life, perhaps even finding belonging more in the US than in Mexico. My grandmother's migration stems from an initial lack of belonging within the space she was born into, and that lack of belonging developed into a desire to seek a space where she would be able to feel more valuable.

The US had been established in my grandmother's head as a land of opportunity and equality for someone like her and her capabilities, and with that understanding she embarked on her first trip to California as an undocumented immigrant for labor purposes. The framing of this new land, I thought, would cause her to have a completely new experience and connection to California than she did to Mexico. With so much expectations and hype built around how different the US functioned, would she feel overwhelmed by the change in setting? She answered my inquiries on her own when discussing traveling along the California coast from farm to farm.

> [43]A:"…pasando por unas partes muy bonitas de madera, muchos acerraderos, viendo venados en el camino, y unos lugars muy bonitos, y eso me hiso sentir como si huviero estado en el rancho mio donde yo naci. Porque hací era. Si me estava recordando todo lo

[43] Refer to translation document section (4)

> de la tierra del rancho donde yo nasi porque era igual. No habia pueblos cerquitas, ibas en camino sin haber pueblos. Ninguno."

My grandmother describes her experiences traveling across California for work as familiar, as reminding her of her childhood. It wasn't the type of new experience that overwhelms, or one you find yourself lost in, but more of one that is inviting, feels right to be in, that isn't new or unexperienced necessarily, more of a re-experiencing or a return to something. She left her ranch in Mexico, traveled to California as an undocumented immigrant, and found her ranch here. Even before truly engaging with the opportunities that she migrated for, there was already a feeling of belonging being built within this space. Opportunities had not yet played a role in her belonging, but the setting of the space become important to her ability to engage with the opportunities there. Whether it was in fact similar to her ranch back in Mexico cannot be determined; whether the California she encountered was truly reminiscent of a small ranch in Mexico. But the more I think about it, the less it matters. If it was actually nothing similar to her life in Mexico, it puts an even greater emphasis on her ability to find a sense of home in this new space.

There is a radical and important discussion about the ability of Mexicans to find a semblance of home easily in California. The discussion of Aztlán, the ancestral home of the Aztec people, is crucial when discussing the US South West and the massive reverse migration of brown people from Mexico to this land. Anzaldúa discusses the history of this return to the homeland:

> "Today we are witnessing *la migracion de los pueblos mexicanos,* the return odyssey to the historical/mythological Aztlán. This time, the traffic is from south to north. *El retorno* to the promised land first began with the Indians from the interior of Mexico and the *mestizos* that came with the *conquistadores* in the 1500s. Immigration continued in the next three centuries, and, in this century, it continued with the *braceros* who helped to build our railroads and who picked out fruit. Today thousands of Mexicans are crossing

> the border legally and illegally; ten million people without documentation have returned to the Southwest."[44]

My grandmother's act of undocumented migration is also the act of returning home to a space which she has been forced off of. The familiarity she was able to find immediately with this new space could also be tied to our ancestral history, a return to a home that she has been disconnected from because of white intervention.

Her migration to the U.S. wasn't necessarily a migration to a completely new space then, if it is understood more as a return to a space our family originates from, is it still considered a migration? It is a migration home, a return to a space that we have been told we need to disconnect from. While my grandmother has never made a huge claim about the history of this space, she has often remarked in passing that California used to belong to Mexicans, to which I often respond that it still does. In many ways her lived experience in this space has solidified that for her. My grandmother and other Mexican migrants tend to and care for the land, and while the space has been taken over by people who only look to take advantage of us, the land is ours and at the end of the day we belong to it and find home in it through all the interventions and disconnection.

There is another fascinating discussion separate from this ancestral history but equally important about my grandmother's ability to connect these two distinct spaces. In moving to California, she created familiarity in this separate space (which she had never been to physically); she combined elements of her home with this new land. This creation of a new space that combines two worlds is something that Alejandra Castaneda addresses as a "transnational social space." Castaneda's discussion of this space is in connection to citizenship, citizenship understood primarily as a feeling of belonging to a space. A greater discussion of citizenship will

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[44] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera.* 33.

occur in Chapter 4, but I believe this discussion of the transnational social space also highlights the importance of a culture and memory that shapes the ways in which we come to find belonging in spaces where we are deemed other:

> "As Mexican migrants have to deal with two nation-states, through their everyday practices they bring together the legal realm implicated in the idea of citizenship with the aspect of belonging to a particular political and cultural community. Migrants inhabit a transnational social space built by memory and identity-formation practices, family ties, and commodity exchanges that provide content to their culture of citizenship."[45]

While this was not as an immediate connection with the space in the way the discussion of Aztlan might have been, it was a connection built of a recognition of a previous life. This act of recognition and bridging the old space with the new, finding the old space in this new space, or creating the old space in the new is a radical tactic that Mexican migrants use to find their belonging. Castenada describes this feeling of recognition when in a Mexican-owned business, "It looks like a *tienda de pueblo* (a kind of general store), just like those in Aguililla. Being in the store is like being in Mexico; a sort of transportation back home takes place by way of the power of the objects."[46] The discussion of how my grandmother maneuvered the spaces and what she chose to interact with directly will be discussed further in Chapter 3, but every choice was deliberate and about shaping a space that did not force her to conform to US culture. Here we see how migrants are moving to a new space, but at the same time actively shaping that space as well. It is something my grandmother did subconsciously when she first arrived, in the objects that reflected home, she manifested a transnational social space where she was able to find belonging.

My grandmother was able to immediately recognize a home in California, as well as rely on a previous way of life tied to Mexican culture, and I would imagine that this recognition

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[45] Castaneda, "Roads to Citizenship." 157.
[46] Castaneda, "Roads to Citizenship." 157.

would equate with a longing for home. This ability to recognize it and the seeking of similar experiences stemmed from a desire to see it again. She was able to recognize a home in California, and I imagined that that recognition would equally work as a longing for Mexico while she was away from it. The belonging she found was built off of the memories she had of her home, perhaps even this connection to an ancestral history, but also equally important were the new opportunities that were made available to her in the US.

[47]K:"¿Cuando estabas en los Estados Unidos, extrañabas a Mexico?"

A: "No quiera regresar a Mexico"

K: "¿Nunca?"

A: "Yo quiera quedarme aquí y no extrañaba a Mexico. Aquí veía que puedia hacer muchas cosas… Era como una pesadilla pensar que me fuera a mexico. Sonaba que estaba alla y decía 'porque me vine?' 'Yo no tenia que venir me a Mexico.' Si lo sonaba… y la despertaba y decía 'oh que bueno, que bueno que no es verdad,'."

Mexico and her life back there began to carry less importance because of her experiences in the US and the new social space that blended the two worlds. Her connection was built off a familiarity to her home or the unconscious recognition of an ancestral home, but the fact that it was at the same time not her home was also so important to her. She migrated for a reason, and her home was no longer seen as a site of familiarity, but one of containment. In the same way that the US held a notion of opportunity and independence while being viewed from the outside, Mexico became an opposite space in comparison to everything she had been able to experience in US. If the US was really the land of opportunity she had built it up to be, then Mexico was now the land of the disenfranchised in her mind, a way of life she wouldn't want to return to, not

[47] Refer to translation document section (5)

even in her dream. While the popular notion of migration from Mexico to the US was about economic expansion, for the intersectional migrant it became much more entangled with the societal opportunities and the cultures of both spaces. Space for the intersectional migrant is always much more loaded.

> [48]A: "No quieria ir a viviré otra ves en el rancho, porque el rancho era muy difícil la vida cuando has manejado caro, cuando ves los caminos tan bonitos, el dinero que te pagan y es tuyo."
>
> K: "¿Como te sentiste regresar a Mexico"
>
> A: "Me senti que tenia que volver otra vez a cruzar la frontera, eso fue lo único que pensé. Ya se como, tengo que ir otra vez a cruzar la."
>
> K: "¿Ya no podia vivir allí?"
>
> A: "No, Ya no, yo la sentía que ya no."

Mexico was no longer the same home it used to be; it was not where she felt she belonged. The opportunities that were once seen as the norm, were now seen as a restraint. It was only a literal home, a domestic environment that she no longer wished to return to in order to avoid reverting back to her role as housewife. In the US, she was able to work outside of the home, have her own income, discovered a new environment that—although it may have been similar to Mexico in its aesthetic—provided new opportunities. Moving back to Mexico would have been a step "backwards" in her mind, but only because of the different lived experiences. Her love for Mexico still seems to exist, in the environments and the moments of home she found in the US, but it is that reversion in abilities that she could not go back to. After immigrating only once, she already felt that she could no longer be happy going back to Mexico, and although she still did

[48] Refer to translation document section (6)

not have US citizenship, she was willing to put up with that insecurity in the US for the opportunities it brought to her. Ultimately though, the lack of US citizenship would force her to move back and forth between Mexico and California regularly, before ultimately settling in California once and for all. Although she did not want to return to Mexico for any reason, it was a reality that it was where she was still seen as belonging, no matter how much she herself felt that she belonged more in the US. Her senses of belonging were now connected to the opportunity available to her, as opposed to a familiarity or history with a space. Castaneda's social space and Anzaldúa's discussion of the history of the land are so important in forming that sense of familiarity and belonging, but ultimately the opportunities are what keep the intersectional migrant from returning home. No matter how familiar the space is, the differences are equally important. There is an extended discussion that must be explored about how this familiarity with the space is a prelude to the eventual opportunities and differences to the previous space. It is about blending the familiar with the unfamiliar, creating a unique space that allows for growth that is grounded in a comfortable space.

Having now resided primarily in California for most of her life now, I was curious about how she viewed Mexico now, being more disconnected from it temporally. It was no longer a place she saw as having to leave for economic opportunity but did any of the same issues reside in her mind. She claims she is now better at navigating California than her home in Mexico, that she gets exhausted being in Mexico.

[49]K: "¿Ya no piensas que puedes vivir en Mexico?"

A: "No, por mas de… 3 meses"

K: "¿Porque no?"

[49] Refer to translation document section (7)

A: “Porque rápido siento que el dinero se acaba muy pronto. Yo me enfado de lo que allá se hace, me cansa”

K: “¿Que se hace allá que te cansa?”

A: “Que yo no puedo agarrar mi carro, y irme a una tienda y comprarme lo que yo quiera, casi todo, y allá no. Nunca me alcanzo el dinero. Las tiendas tienen muy poco de lo que aquí tenemos.”

K: “Hay mas que hacer aquí y tenemos mas cosas aquí”

A: “Para mi, si”

She hesitates about making grand claims about the US being better, and clarifies that this is only true for herself. After finding a home in the US, she is no longer able to find that feeling of home in Mexico, or at least not in the same way that she had been able to growing up there. Mexico in her mind has changed because she has changed, and what provides comfort and a sense of belonging has changed. Mexico can no longer provide for her a sense of belonging in the way the US now does. Her comfort with the US though is grounded in the familiarity she is able to find here to Mexico, so as much as she claims to not feel comfortable in Mexico, she still relies on many of its qualities of life to find belonging here. It isn’t about one or the other, it is about blending the spaces, a meeting ground between the two that challenges the popular narratives of both. If the US really is the land of opportunity and advancement, then why does my grandmother seek resemblances of Mexico here? It is not about Mexico being backward or US culture being more advanced; she would be unhappy with either. Instead, she curates a new space that isn’t tied to the dominant ways we view space, a separate world that isn’t about advancement or progress. When my grandmother speaks of the US, it is about a personal space she has constructed, not the dominant US culture and society.

Reflecting on my grandmother's feelings about both Mexico and the US, I feel conflicted about the way she shapes the spaces as oppositional. Mexico is made to sound like it was torture for her after having experiences the US. Mexico became a symbolic limbo, where all she could think about was returning to California. As someone who only really knows California and the US, it is hard for me to feel such a strong feeling of longing for it, but that is likely because of our different experiences within California. California for her was seen as a place of opportunity, and a means to escape the domestic lifestyle that she was not seen as fit for. She had the comparison to Mexico and a previous type of life that she could refer to in order to solidify her desire and belonging to California. All I really know is California, and any experience I have had in another country was primarily touristic or with the intent to return to California. I never left California seeking some new economic opportunity or way of life. I think, in this way, I have a more conflicted view of California than her. I don't have a "Mexico", or a previous life associated with an entirely different space. California for me comes to serve a dual role in my belonging, one of exclusion and inclusion at various moments. California is both a land of opportunity that I feel I can progress in but equally a space that is continuously exclusionary and working against my progress. It is a space that I can acknowledge has helped progress my family, but I question if it still can any further. Ramon A Gutierrez summarizes this continued discrimination towards Mexican Americans:

> "Today, the majority of Mexican American are relegated to the lowest rungs of the economy, working as unskilled laborers in service industries, agriculture, and construction. Their work has been valued differentially at lower rates and afforded few legal protections… in cases of super exploitation, they have been left with few remedies, even through courts of law. Their segregation in barrios, or ghettos, has been marked by substandard housing…Their children historically have been systemically denied quality education by restricting their access to schools reserved for whites…Despite the fact that the majority of ethnic Mexicans were born in the United States… their phenotype is

> equated with the stigma of 'illegality,' which frequently results in racial profiling and harassment by the police, thus robbing them of equal protection the law guarantees."[50]

The only roles I see people who look like us occupying are fruit pickers and field workers, and our harassment by the state and systemic poverty is the norm in this space. It feels like this space is confining the modes of living people like us have. My family came here for these roles, and it was good enough for them but have we exhausted our opportunities here? Are the opportunities my grandmother sees as so valuable worth dealing with all these other barriers?

I am frustrated by my grandmother's admiration for a state that has and continues to take advantage of us, and this deviation in attitudes towards the US across generations is common within Latinx communities. In the essay "Latino Lives: Trying for the *Americano* Dream," the group of writers come to the conclusion that the expectations and hopes that our immigrant family members have begin to lose their relevancy across generations:

> "in most cases, immigrant participants were generally more satisfied and optimistic than the U.S.-born we talked with. Perhaps because the U.S.-born were significantly more aware of the barriers to upward mobility, they were less optimistic and more cynical about the prospects of achieving their dreams as they defined them. They also seemed to be more aware that many obstacles were out of their control, such as the quality of schools and the attitudes of elected officials or residents (including other Latinos) in new receiving communities."[51]

I, having lived here my whole life, have a particular view about our capabilities. I see the ways we are limited in this space, as opposed to my grandmother who only sees what she is able to do here that she was unable to do in Mexico. It makes me question whether there is a space that I can view as having greater opportunity, what would be my other space be? Does there have to be another space in our narratives in order to embody a migrant experience?

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[50] Gutierrez, "What's in a Name?" 39.
[51] Fraga et al. "Latino Lives: Trying for the *Americano* Dream." 338.

Another important distinction would be to evaluate what it is we seek from the spaces we reside in. For my grandmother and other active migrants, it would seem that the important qualities for a space to have are economic opportunity and, at least for my grandmother, opportunities for independence and freedom from domestic roles. It was about what Mexico was not able to give her. For myself and other first-gen/Chicanx people, what we seek is freedom from racial discrimination and equal opportunity. We are also seeking something that this space does not give us, but where would we look for that? While the US historically has been constructed as a space of opportunity and wealth for migrants, no space has been constructed to be free from racial discrimination. We are seeking something that has not been found. All we can do is imagine the potentiality of a place where are not so regularly seen as an other because of the color of our skin.

When I reflect on Mexico and my connection to it, it seems to carry a mysterious quality of potential that I think perhaps is what my grandmother felt towards the US. Although I've never spent a significant amount of time in Mexico, really only summers as a child, Mexico has always played a role in my life as an other space that I have a right to exist in. Although I do not have Mexican citizenship, I could apply for it, and I have family there that would welcome me if I ever desired to spend time in that space. This distance from Mexico but equally its availability to me comes to provide a sense of possibility. In my mind, it has yet to be positioned as either a space of belonging or not belonging. A lot of my relationships to it stem from the way me and other first-gen Chicanx children are treated in the US, constantly being associated with Mexico just because of our appearance and name. I am routinely positioned as an other in the US through the media as well as directly through comments made towards me. The way dominant media's discussion of undocumented migration is solely focused on brown populations from Latin

America means that it is a discussion about me, that it will affect the ways my body is seen in this space as not belonging. “Where are you from? No, I mean where are you REALLY from? Like where’s your family from?” “What’s your background?” “What’s your ethnicity?” All these questions essentially amount to asking me to defend my existence in a space. Then there are the equally problematic, fetishistic comments, “Your tan is so nice,” “I have a weakness for Mexican boys,” “I wish I had your hair, it’s so thick.” “What part of Mexico are you from? I love spending summers out there!” These reinforce the lack of belonging here, and the dehumanization that comes with not looking like the expected population. There are also the outright hateful comments, the murders of brown bodies, the deportations of brown US citizens, the laws that allow officers to ask for proof of citizenship on the basis of looking undocumented (read Mexican). Because of these interactions, it makes me long for a space where my existence there is not questioned, which in my mind must be Mexico because I am constantly told that’s where I belong. I basically am just a diplomat/connection to Mexico for people in the US. I am not allowed to belong in California because my role is to be an other for white people to feel like they belong. I am reminded of Kate Rushin’s words: “I’ve had enough/ I’m sick of seeing and touching/ Both sides of things/ Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody…/ I do more translating/ Than the Gawdamn UN.”[52] I frequent Rushin’s poem regularly, especially after days of interacting with people and spaces where I am reminded of my otherness. Having to be this other that justifies my existence here and these expectations placed on me of having knowledge or connection to a space I have not spent much time in. It’s so exhausting, all of it, and it seems never ending, I cannot imagine it being more difficult justifying my existence in Mexico.

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[52] Kate Rushin, “The Bridge Poem” in *This Bridge Called My Back, Fourth Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th Revised edition (Albany: State Univ of New York Pr, 2015). Xxxiii.

While I say all this about the potential of Mexico, I also know that I would not feel entirely comfortable there either. My Spanish is very improper, and I have an accent that clearly differentiates me from a native speaker. There are barriers I would need to overcome in order to find belonging in Mexico; it is only because I am overwhelmed by otherization in the US that I feel it a desirable possibility to explore the space of Mexico. My grandmother's otherization in the US in comparison to Mexico is discussed in Chapter 3, but it would seem like that was not such a factor in her finding belonging in the US as it has been for me. I should also acknowledge that I do find moments of belonging in the US but it is rare, and usually when I am in settings that involve people that look like me and do not remind me that I am not supposed to be here. Whereas my grandmother found belonging in California through its familiarity in geography with a home she once knew in Mexico, it was equally tied to a feeling of opportunity that she would find here. I do not share those same feeling of opportunity within this space.

While it feels exclusionary at times, and I am routinely uncomfortable and otherized within it, at the end of the day I really don't belong anywhere else. Stuart Hall had observed a similar sentiment in London, addressing his astonishment in the ways marginalized people can feel comfortable within spaces of continual oppression:

> "I've puzzled by the fact that young black people in London today are marginalized, fragmented, unenfranchised, disadvantaged and dispersed. And yet, they look as if they own the territory. Somehow, they too, in spite of everything, are centered in a place: without much material support, it's true, but nevertheless, they occupy a new kind of space at the centre. And I've wondered again and again: what it is about that long discovery-rediscovery of identity among blacks in this migrant situation, which allows them to lay a kind of claim to certain parts of the earth which aren't theirs, with quiet the certainty?"[53]

While I do not claim to have any understanding of the black experience in London, I believe Hall's observations can be read as observing myself and other Chicanx youths in the US. As if

[53] Hall, "Minimal Selves." 45-46.

responding to his questions about how it is we can feel at home in a place where we don't belong, it ultimately comes down to the fact that all we know is not belonging, that I/we do not have an understanding of what it feels to belong to a space, for our presence to not be questioned. We are "*recently migrated."* In this lack of strong connection to a space, in the lack of belonging, we are free from the need to feel like we belong constantly and it is that freedom that comes to be observed by Hall. We are free from needing to connect strongly and perfectly with a space, we revel in this outsider-ness; it is where we find ourselves. We come from migrants, we continue to be seen as migrants in our homelands, we have been taught by those before us how to survive in the spaces that work towards our exclusions. To quote Audre Lorde, "We are powerful because we have survived, and that is what it is all about ---- survival and growth."[54]

I believe that the connections and barriers my grandmother and I have are radically different. Our expectations of space are shaped by our time in it, and what we seek from it has shifted over generations. The barriers to overcome for my grandmother were more focused on income and independence, while mine tend to be focused on a sense of belonging and an ability to avoid being othered and discriminated for it. My grandmother's strong connection to the new space of the California was more focused on geography, and the way it resembled her ranch back in Mexico.

There is a history of belonging to the geographic space that comes from our ancestral history as well as overlapping similarities between these two spaces. Both of these provided her with an immediate sense of belonging upon arrival. Whether or not the two actually resembled each other cannot be proven, but regardless that ability to find familiarity in the new space would seem like a tactic migrants use to carry along a sense of home. I believe that these unconscious

[54] Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* 139.

tactics and connections are something that is carried on through the afterlife of migration, a tactic that I continue to use as well in much different circumstances. There is something powerful about having a history in a space, and the knowledge that those who looked like me were the original population that is at the same time empowering and heartbreaking. Ultimately it is hopeful, as Anzaldúa says, there is a return migration happening, a return home by migrant bodies. No matter how much the state works to keep us out of this space and label us as illegal, we have been here much longer than them. There is also a seeking of familiarity to my family or community whenever I enter spaces where my feelings of otherness are heightened. While my grandmother found in the landscape of the space, I seek a language or a mode of speaking, foods, resemblance in those around me; I seek to cultivate a space that is similar to a previous one that feels more comfortable to me. As well, I continue to rely on this transnational social space, a space in which I am able to blend aspects of these spaces of familiarity within the new spaces that I wish to advance in. This transnational space is free from borders, it is not determined by geography nor political intervention. It is a space that cannot be divided by a border, much like how Aztlan continues to thrive through our bodies and existence in these divided spaces.

Residing in this transnational space though came to affect the ways my grandmother connected solely with Mexico. After establishing a life in California, she no longer felt that she could return to her previous life in Mexico. Although the landscapes were familiar, and it was where she had been raised, what she had come to connect with home was no longer that same immediate familiarity in landscape. It was instead about the opportunities that had been afforded to her in this new space. She found home and belonging in the work opportunities here, the greater economic control over her life, and various other everyday moments that she would not have available to her in Mexico. She cannot return to Mexico, because it wouldn't be only about

returning to a space, it would be about returning to a lifestyle that was no longer suitable for her. It's clear that we have very different experiences and connections to Mexico and the US, but the connections feel just a strong and relevant a generation apart. Mexico is the space she was born and raised in and spent important parts of her life, while for me it is a space I am reminded I belong to daily although never having really spent a significant time there. It is a past to her, while a potential alternative life for myself. The US is a space where my grandmother has found belonging through the greater opportunities available to her in comparison to Mexico, while the US is the only home I've ever known and actively works against my inclusion.

It feels like my grandmother has found a feeling of belonging to this space that I struggle to find, and that difference comes from the different expectations we have for the space. What I seek from this space seems to be what she sought from Mexico in some ways. She felt that she couldn't fully exist in the ways she wished to in Mexico, similar to the ways I feel in the US. But I don't feel that need to leave the space to find belonging, I instead find my belonging in this inability to belong in many ways. I find my belonging in the act of searching for it within this space, in similar ways that she did when she first arrived. Perhaps this act of searching for modes of belonging within a space is something that every generation must go through, figure out what has worked in the past for us and how our what we seek from these spaces shifts over time. The progression of immigration seems to be that we ask more form the spaces we reside in, the generations that come after the initial move attempt to seek more and more than just the jobs that our family has worked. Our understandings of opportunities have changed: what was then seen as grand opportunities of upward mobility for my grandmother is seen as an exploitative mode of labor by myself. I no longer seek opportunities in this space, I seek my rights as someone who belongs to this space. This is our home, and we want to be treated as residents and seen as equal

to the white populations that have stolen it. We now want to participate in how we shape it, perhaps it's this innate desire to reclaim what was taken from us, not just for ourselves but for all our families have done as well.

Chapter 2: Labor and Exploitation

Throughout my grandmother's recollections on her first migration to the US, she related many of the feelings of belonging and not belonging to the different modes of living between the US and Mexico. These two different spaces came to provide different things for her, each highlighting aspects that would play a role in what made her feel comfortable and long for a particular space. Mexico was characterized as a baseline in a way, with the US being seen as an advancement in what she was able to do. The space of California particularly was familiar in its geography but also provided new opportunities to her. She was still able to feel a sense of belonging to this new space through the different opportunities she experienced, with the most important opportunity being different types of labor and income opportunities. She reinforced continuously how dramatically different the labor opportunities were in the US compared to Mexico at the time, and how this was a driving force in her continuous return to California. The ability to work outside of the home is what brought her to the US, and what that labor brought her kept her returning to the US without proper documentation. The space was familiar and provided a sense of belonging through its geographical resemblance to home, but the labor she found within this new space also came to play a major role in how she came to identify and create a new home here. The very working opportunities that brought her so much joy and freedom though, read to me as forms of exploitation and abuse. Labor became a loaded subject in our conversation: from her side it looked to be a grand tool for independence, whereas from my perspective, it was another form of exploitation of Mexican migrants that continues to exist in the generations that come after them.

As discussed before, the inception of my grandmother's migrant narrative can be seen as following the dominant narrative for migrations from Mexico to the US: that is, the pursuit of the American Dream. The US space provided her opportunities to advance economically in ways that her home country could not. I believe that the discussion of labor in the US is so much more complex to migrants than just an understanding of there being jobs available to them here or that the money is more plentiful, especially considering the ways that Latinos continue to live in poverty even after finding work. Manuel Pastor Jr addresses this phenomenon in his work, pointing out how Latino males have the highest rate of employment in California but are still regularly living in poverty. He states that the "key issue for Latinos is working poverty: having a job but being unable to garner sufficient earnings from that job to support family." [55]
The discussion of labor will not focus on profit, because there was not a lot of it, nor was the profit something that came to play a major role in my grandmother's sense of belonging, as we will see. Our conversation is also complicated and expanded by the focus on a specifically female migrant narrative, and the specific types of experiences women have when migrating for labor purposes.

In this chapter, I will be diving deeper into my grandmother's experiences working in the US, analyzing the effects it had on her sense of belonging in this new space and how it has shaped her connection to a space she now calls home. How have her experiences in manual labor shaped her connection to the US? What are the ways in which her female migrant identity complicates the dominant conversation about migrant workers in the US? What are the lasting effects of viewing a space as particularly connected to work opportunities? Within these conversations, I want to explore my own connections to labor also and the opportunities that

[55]Pastor, "Not So Golden?: Latinos Fortunes and Futures in California's Changing Economy," 298

have been afforded to me through her sacrifices. How do I connect to and reflect on my family's history of exploitative manual labor? How have the opportunities changed and in what ways are they similar? In what ways do particular institutions continue to profit off of the use of brown people? What comes from these conversations and connections between our experiences hopes to paint a more complex picture of immigration and what it means to be born into a space that is viewed by your family particularly for its economic opportunities while at the same time restricting the opportunities afforded to those who look like us.

Labor was what originally brought my grandmother to this country; it was what moved her to a completely new space. That move was not only from Mexico to the US, though labor continued to play a critical role of moving her between spaces even within the US:

> [56]A: "Dijeron 'aqui el trabajo se acabe en una semana. Ahora, si ustedes quieren seguir trabajando, se tienen que ir a Oregon. En Oregon hay cherry, buena para pizcar. Las mujeres trabajan, los hombres también. Y hay quien los lleva por paga. Ese senor los espera con el dinero haste que trabajan alla en Oregon y ya le pagan.'."

Almost exactly in the way she was told about the labor opportunities in the US, she was regularly told within the US about labor opportunities to work elsewhere in the country. As a migrant fruit picker, her work was seasonal and never provided a long-term opportunity to make money. Migrants participating in the *Bracero* program were expected to return to Mexico during the off-season when there was no longer any use for them anymore. For my grandmother who was undocumented, though, when the work was over at one location, she searched for the next location to work. When the work was done in Oregon, she looked for a new place to work and

[56] Refer to translation document Section (8)

discovered they had family in Watsonville, California that knew of work for undocumented migrants in the area.

> [57]A: "Nos dijeron 'quieren trabajar?' Claro que quiéremos trabajar. Dijeron 'Vallanse caminando a un lugar donde hay un empacadora de manzana y allí les van dar trabajo. Están pidiendo mujeres y hombres.' Y nos fuimos, nos fuimos caminando.

The job opportunities she had as an undocumented migrant were never long-lasting, meaning that they didn't provide a sense of stability. Labor came to carry a temporal character: it would never last forever, and it was something she was always chasing, following it wherever she could find it. The opportunities that she was afforded in one place always came to an end, and she would have to seek out new locations where she could find them again. In many ways, labor became a signifier of having a purpose or belonging in a space, of having a reason to stay in the US as opposed to returning to Mexico. Without seeking out such labor and following it wherever it went, she would have had to return to her life in Mexico, revert to a lifestyle of less independence and greater reliance on others for income. Her belonging at the time was connected to labor and, like the labor opportunities she had, it was also temporal and relied on a constant movement between spaces she hadn't previously been in. Labor opportunities moved her regularly throughout the US, not just from Mexico to the US. This movement due to labor shortages came to create a very unique connection to the US, one shaped specifically as a *temporal* space where she could not create a stable home because she was regularly moving to where she could find work. The work was the main priority for my grandmother; everything else followed where she could find labor. Her purpose and belonging had strong connections to the ability to work in this country.

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[57] Refer to translation document section (9)

While this may sound laborious and exhausting, my grandmother saw all the work available to her in the US as exciting and beautiful. She exemplified Pastor's notion of working poverty, an exuberance for labor with no real advancements in income, but that availability of labor overpowered that lack of funds for her. Yes, she was always working, spending money to find more work, and never able to set roots, but she came here to work. It was through this work she found temporary homes as well, since ranchers and landowners frequently provided sleeping arrangements for migrant workers.

[58]A:"No quiera yo que se huberia acbado. Ahi me gustaba tanto"

K:"Pero que te gustoba tanto?"

A:"Andar piscando la fruta, Que estaba tan rica. Y luego nos daban una estufita chiquita y unos sarténsitos para que cocináramos, el patron, el ranchero, el dueño de la tierra."

She saw the opportunity to pick fruit as a beautiful opportunity, provided to her by the landowners. The fact the she was able to spend all day picking such delicious fruit and be paid for it was something that she would not have imagined possible in Mexico. The ways that the landowners provided living arrangements to her and other migrant workers was something she was so proud of. My grandmother and I would get into arguments whenever I challenged the actual intent of such housing arrangements or treatment by the landowners she worked for. To her, these homes were grandiose acts of generosity that to this day she is still so grateful for. To me, they seem like ways that landowners would police undocumented migrants and be able to more easily deport them when they were no longer seen as necessary. The labor opportunities were so sought after though that this didn't matter. My grandmother already knew that she would not be working long term, even if they were planning to deport her, the labor was going to run

[58] Refer to translation document section (10)

out anyway. It exemplified just how much more important the ability to work is than the stability of the work. Working poverty is about working but never attaining what you set out for. Regardless of my or her readings of this housing of migrant workers, the fact that these homes were on the land that she worked on meant that there was never a separation of home and work. She lived where she worked, detached from the nearest town. She did not have interactions or engage with spaces or people that were not somehow connected to the form of labor she was doing in this country. All she knew in this country was work, and it controlled everything about her experiences.

It would be easy to judge my grandmother's views of her treatment as wrong or based in a reality where she was unable to comprehend exactly what was happening to her, but I think that devalues her knowledge and experiences. If she truly believes that the jobs she found were great, that must mean that the other possibilities available to her must have been much worse. I can't claim in full confidence that the living situations she found herself in her were truly as terrible as I believe them to be. I also cannot claim that I don't actively put myself in situations where I know I am being exploited, but still choose to do so because it is the most secure work. Our forms of labor are very different physically, but there are similarities in the ways that we have been forced into certain roles based on our identities. My grandmother's female migrant identity symbolized a cheap form of labor in the fields, whereas my identity also comes to carry significant opportunities for academic institutions. Bonnie Urciusoli recognized the ways in which Latinx students at universities come to play into this exploitative role:

> "Students recruited by small, mostly white, schools for their 'multicultural' qualities find themselves in a complex situation. As they are well aware, elite liberal arts schools have a strong investment in showing 'good multicultural numbers' (a perception verified by admissions officers). So their presence at the school is part of the school's presentation, even part of its exchange value, in a Marxian sense. Moreover, many of them are invited

> to join… student organizations that take up the task of 'educating the public' about their culture…"[59]

I put myself in classrooms where micro- and macro-aggressions are the norm, where I am exploited as a token. There is this continuation to our lineage of putting ourselves in spaces to be exploited. While my academic career may read as a sort of progress narrative or assimilative movement, the ways my grandmother and I have been used and recognized by white institutions are eerily similar. Is it still progression if at the end of the day my brownness is being commodified and used the by the academic institution as a signifier of value? Am I ever allowed to be anything more than the fields and labor my family has done before me?

I am used as a signifier of multiculturalism, whether I want to be or not; my presence is exploited to demonstrate a false inclusivity that only wants my face but not my voice. But I am equally finding my belonging in these types of exploitative spaces and careers. I often think about how any of my work will be useful to those who look like me and have a similar background, if the academic work I am doing is about educating the WASP populations that dominate higher learning. I reflect on the warnings of Audre Lorde:

> "And in the university, that is certainly no easy task, for each one of you by virtue of your being here will be deluged by opportunities to misname yourselves, to forget who you are, to forget where your real interests lie. Make no mistake, you will be courted; and nothing naturalized creativity quicker than tokenism, that false sense of security fed by a myth of individual solutions."[60]

I live with a fear of losing myself in academia, of becoming a tool to perpetuate the myth of inclusivity. I am helping white people profit, just like my grandmother. If I am to judge my grandmother so critically about her views on her life, I can easily see someone judging me for my work in environments that continue to undervalue my labor as well. My grandmother perhaps

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[59] Urciuoli, "Boundaires, Language, and the Self," 173.
[60] Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* 142

built an understanding of her situation to cope with the exploitation, something that I find more and more difficult to do. Assimilation is the act of accepting and perpetuating the racist and exploitive labor practices of the US, to buy into the belief that only some of us are deserving of a good life. I would never want my success to be seen as a devaluing of the labor that came before me, but that is how it will always be read. My grandmother was surrounded and working with people who look like her, people she could connect with, and that must have brought a great sense of belonging. I am regularly the only person of color in classroom settings, having to defend my existence in these spaces, searching for value in my experience and the knowledge of scholars of color that have come before me that echo these same sentiments of exclusion. If this is understood as assimilation, then assimilation reads more like the act of recognizing our belonging less and less.

It is also important to remember that my grandmother was a married woman and working alongside her husband throughout this time, and that although both of them migrated together and shared an undocumented status, my grandmothers' experiences of working here were very different. These differences become the most noticeable when it came to pregnancies and raising children in this labor-centered environment.

[61]A:"Yo ya estava embarazada, Yo ya me vomitava todos los dias."

K:"Y todavía fuiste a trabajar"

A: "Si si si, así trabajaba. Pero todo los días tenia que vomitarme una vez. No había un día que no. Eso fue por varios mesas."

My grandmother would continue working while pregnant, picking fruit, climbing ladders to hand fruit down to my grandfather. She details her pregnancy sickness, throwing up every day while

[61] Refer to translations section (11)

still working and putting herself in unsafe situations. Her connection and need to work was not halted with pregnancy and heightened the hazards that could occur to her. This was not uncommon though; she was just one of many pregnant migrant women working in the fields picking fruit. There was no disconnection from work during pregnancies for migrant women. Even after the birth of children, the women still found a way to work.

> [62]A: "Nos llevabamos los niños al campo a trabajar"
>
> K: "Pues cuantos anos tenían"
>
> A: "Hay pues tenían mesas."
>
> K: "Si, y los llevabas a trabajar"
>
> A: "Alla los llevábamos y los poníamos en una caja, en un carton mientras nosotros estábamos trabajando en el campo. Y llevábamos la leche y allí les dábamos de comer. Pobresitos, si en un carton los poníamos. Y cuando lloraban veniamos y los abrazábamos un ratito y luego los dormíamos y los dejábamos otra ves. Y nosotros seguíamos trabajando.

My grandmother and other women continued picking fruit with their newborns in crates next to them, only pausing to take care of them when they cried or needed to be fed. There was no aspect of her life that was detached from labor. Her husband was with her at work; her newborn was with her at work. While my grandfather was able to only focus on his work, my grandmother would have to make food for him as well as take care of her child while she was working. This type of non-stop labor by migrant women is known as a "double day," double in the way women are expected to work alongside their husband in the field as well as maintain the

[62] Refer to translation document section (12)

household when out of the fields.[63] Carley and Molina witness how this labor of fieldwork became a meeting ground of a home culture and the new working environment:

> "Women in migrant farm worker communities are expected to comply with beliefs that support the patrimonial structure. They assume the role of a 'good woman.' Violators… are sanctioned through symbolic (if not through the suggestion or administration of real) violence. As a result, the migrant farm worker woman is trapped in a torrent of values; a combination emerging from out of both the host culture and the native culture. A mediation of sorts is witnessed in the development of a middle ground where the woman is allowed to work but does not have the authority to question her husband's decision."[64]

My grandmother does not have the language of intersectionality, but she understands of how normal this woman's work was. She was just one of the many women in the fields working during their pregnancies and with their newborns in crates next to them. This care for children was her sole role in Mexico, but now she had to learn how to maintain that role while also pursing the labor she was had been seeking. She would have to learn how to take care of her children, while not losing the ability to work. My grandmother was finally able to work and have her own income; she was not willing to lose that opportunity to care for a child. For the female migrant, it became about learning how to incorporate typically separate spheres into their work schedules and the labor environment they were in. The migrant woman works a double day, and as well becomes a figure of double boundary crossing. My grandmother has bridged the spaces of Mexico and the US, and must also bridge the domestic and the space of field work.

I cannot imagine having this type of connection to labor, to view labor as an object that moves you and encompasses every aspect of your life. To me, it seems like a very exhausting and isolating experience, to not be able to enjoy or experience other aspects of a space other than the work it provided. To have to take your newborn with you to work and keep her in a crate, the same kind you pack apples in for the landowner. Even to my mother and aunt, who had spent

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[63] Molina, "How Women Work," 52
[64] Molina, "How Women Work." 45

time in these crates as newborns, this labor sounds so regular to them. There is this understanding that this is where we come from. We may no longer be in those fields still, but they are a part of our history that we have not yet been so separated from that it seems inconceivable. This exploitation and abuse of people and their families still feels so normal to us. To my grandmother though, it was great, and here we are again at that moment where I feel she should be angrier and more frustrated at the way she and so many other have been treated by this country. I asked her why she loved being here so much if all she did was work.

[65]K: "Porque te gusto tanto si no pedías salir?"

A: "Porque, como no tenia nada que salir, yo quiera trabajar, yo quiera tener dinero, para gastar, para tener."

K: "Para gasta donde si no te podías salir?"

A: "Pero para ir nos a Mexico cuando nos fuéramos. Venimos hacer dinero, no veníamos a quedar nos a vivir acá. Vinimos a juntar dinero para ir nos."

My grandmother claims that the reason she migrated was to make money, and ultimately had the goal of returning to Mexico with that money to fund a life over there. This was the plan but as discussed in the previous chapter, she ended up falling in love with the space and no longer wanting to return to Mexico. She also clarifies that while she was working, most of the money was spent paying those who would help her travel to new locations for work. People would take her to new farms on the condition that she pay them back once she had made enough money. She found the ability to work she was looking for, but the money and profit that was promised was still just as elusive. This lack of profit though was never something that disheartened my grandmother, as she was just happy to be able to work. There was something in just the act of

[65] Refer to translation document section (13)

working and earning an income on her own that itself was sufficient for her. I think the mindset of seeing everything that happened in this country as temporary and as having a looming end made a lot of what she went through seem less dramatic in the moment. It is easier to justify hazardous labor conditions if you believe that it is only for a while longer I suppose. Equally, the fear of not making enough money in the seasonal timeframe would create a desire to keep working regardless of pregnancy or newborn children. Judith Butler's notion of precarity becomes relevant here, the belief that certain marginalized populations are differently exposed to injuries and violence due to political conditions. Butler states how this connection to violence comes to be about a negotiation of it instead of an escape from: "To be protected from violence by the nation-state is to be exposed to the violence wielded by the nation-state, so to rely on nation-state for protection from violence is precisely to exchange one potential violence for another."[66] The labor conditions in Mexico affected my grandmothers view of the labor conditions in the US. My grandmother wasn't being introduced to abusive labor conditions for the first time, she was merely re-negotiating and recontextualizing it.

My grandmother was ultimately deported during her first trip to California. She was forced to move back to Mexico for the first time, where she immediately knew she had to return—not just because she wanted to, but because she *had* to for her own sense of comfort and stability. She wanted to return for the money, as well as for what that individual income provided.

[67]K: "Entonces tu quiera regresar para hacer dinero"

A: "Claro, y no queria estar allí esperando que alguien te dijera. Y tampoco confiaba en tu abuelito que me iba mantener siempre. Yo no sabia si el un día ya no iba estar

[66] Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Greivable?* 26.
[67] Refer to translation document section (14)

conmigo. Yo que iba hacer? Tenia fe en mi, pero no tenia la confianza que el me iba mantener siempre."

The time she had spent working in the US didn't just provide her with a way to make her own money; it also provided her with the potential reality of being able to be function and survive without her husband. She was never sure of how long his income would last, or if he would even stay with her. If he left her, she would have to return to her family's ranch. If he ran out of money or couldn't find work, there was nothing she could do to provide financial support in Mexico. Picking fruit in the US, in a country where she was undocumented and had already been deported from, was a safer option in her mind than staying in Mexico and being dependent on her husband.

When I asked her about the opportunities for women in Mexico that she knew of, she clarified the limitations. While it was possible for women to find work, their money was never their own. It was either for their families or for their husband.

[68]A: "No, no había nada para las mujeres. Y yo ya aprendí en un aves que vine que acá las mujeres se mantenían trabajando. Sacaban su dinero y lo ganaban igual que un hombre. Tu abuelito y yo ganábamos lo mismo dinero. Trabajábamos untos y el tenia el mismo dinero mío cuando la nos pagaban. Eso se me hizo a mi muy bueno. En Mexico no estaba eso."

K: "Era más, que el dinero. Era para ser tu propia persona."

A: "Si."

Not only did she experience making her own money in the US, but she also realized that women could be independent and maintain themselves on their own through the work available here.

[68] Refer to translation document section (15)

That was something she never saw or imagined experiencing in Mexico, to her that was something that could only be done in the country she was not allowed into. According to Patricia Zavella, this ability to find work much easier as a migrant woman in the states was true and aided in their abilities to adapt, specifically these laborious jobs knows as "brown collar jobs" where Latino migrants made up most of the labor force: "gendered differences in local labor markets profoundly influence how migrants adapt since female migrants often have an easier time finding paid employment."[69] While these jobs are "non-union, have few benefits, are seasonal or are subject to displacement… and pay the minimum wage," these jobs were seen as desirable by women who had little to no ability to work in their respective home countries. My grandmother's labor in the US may not have brought her the financial prosperity she imagined but, more importantly, it came to be seen as a mode of attaining independence and not having to rely on others to provide for you. As intersectional bodies, it is increasingly hard to imagine a feeling of belonging because you are constantly unable to relate to the world around you. But in migrant field labor, my grandmother found herself surrounded by other women who were also seeking similar things---women who wanted to experience financial freedom, acquire their own income, be able to imagine the possibility of independence from the domesticity the was expected in Mexico. Labor for my grandmother become about expanding her options, realizing that you did not have to adhere to the life expected of you. She didn't want to do just any type of labor, only the labor that brought her this sense of freedom, a labor that at that time was only available to her in the US as an undocumented immigrant, in the fields picking fruit with other migrant women.

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[69] Zavella, "Mexican Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty," 237

This strong connection of labor with independence cemented the work my grandmother did as a net positive experience, that working, regardless of age or gender or status is crucial if somebody wants to be happier. I don't believe she ever considered that picking fruit with babies next to her or with her very young children helping her was something that could be seen as wrong or questionable. She believes that picking fruit was great way to make money for anybody who wants to have their own income. Her kids would aid her in picking fruit while working at Driscoll. Many of my mother's childhood stories are recollections of waking up early before school began to help my grandmother pick fruit, how the strawberry fields were the playground for her and her sisters. The one who carried the crate full of strawberries fastest won. I remember being told at a young age that if I ever wanted to make money, my grandfather always knew people who were looking for help picking fruit. I never questioned this proposition; it was never something I wanted to do but it was never something I considered illegal or wrong to do. It was part of my family history to do this type of labor regardless of age or documentation status or even health. My grandmother did it, my mother started doing it at a younger age than I was when it was offered to me; it was something that I felt was just so natural and expected of us to do. It makes sense that my grandmother would also want her kids and grandchildren to have this experience. They did what they had to do, my grandmother did what she believes was the best thing for her kids. Labor for Mexican migrants in the US was and still is very exploitative, but it was this exploitation that at the same time provided my grandmother with so many experiences that she wouldn't have access to otherwise. Why then wouldn't she want to her kids and grandchildren to experience this, regardless of their young ages? My grandmother never saw this type of labor as strenuous either, even while caring for newborns and actively hiding from the immigration services.

[70]K: "¿Y no te importaba, que el trabajo que tenias era muy déficil?"

A: "Nunca encontré un trabajo difícil aquí en los Estados Unidos. Nunca."

Maybe it's because she knew what this labor brought her, or maybe it wasn't actually that difficult at all for her. Perhaps she had no problem expecting her kids to help her picking fruit or seeing it as an opportunity for her grandkids to make money because she believed it to be so easy. I think overall though, it wasn't about making money for her, but more about demonstrating to her family that they could be independent if they were willing to do the work.

I reflect a lot on my family's history of labor, and how our legacy up to this point is tied to those fields of fruit that my grandparents and my mother worked on. I think about the types of labor I'm doing and my connections to them, if I still have a strong connection with labor as something I should be thankful for, providing me with feelings of belonging while exploiting me at the same time. The opportunity to work and make her own money was not something my grandmother took for granted, and the act of working in and of itself was something that became revolutionary to her. I remember the ways I was ashamed of and hid the labor my family did. There has always been a connection between undocumented Mexican immigrants and working in fields; I came from such a stereotypical narrative that I came from and my family exemplified it. It's as if the very work history that my grandmother speaks so highly of somehow makes me more Mexican, and increases my feeling of not belonging to this space in the US.

There is a vast history of negative stereotyping of Latino peoples in dominant western media that pushed me further from wanting to identify with any qualities of brown otherness. In their text analyzing the history of Latinx serotyping in film, Charles Ramirez-Berg clarifies the six major stereotypes of Latino: *el bandido,* the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the

[70] Refer to translation document section (16)

Latin lover, and the dark lady.[71] While all problematic, I find their description of *el bandido* to be the stereotype that I fear the most:

> "*El bandido* is dirty and unkempt, usually displaying an unshaven face, missing teeth, and disheveled, oily hair… Behaviorally, he is vicious, cruel, treacherous, shifty, and dishonest; psychologically, he is irrational, overly emotional, and quick to resort to violence. His inability to speak English or his speaking English with a heavy Spanish accent is Hollywood's way of signaling his feeble intellect, a lack of brainpower that makes it impossible for him to plan or strategize successfully."[72]

People who looked like us were always the joke, the monster, the other that must be eradicated or contained. Berg also expands on this conversation of stereotyping and how it has changed with the rise in migration:

> "The rise in the number of immigrants coming to the United States over the last two decades coincides with the gradual national realization of finite-ness over the same period of time. From the native-born American's point of view, these new aliens are competition for a limited number of jobs and a dwindling reserve of social services. Stereotyped Hispanics images were common cinematic currency over a long period of our nation's history when the dominant Anglo majority *was not fundamentally threatened* by Hispanics, immigrants, or any other racial or ethnic minority group. Now the threat is palpable. The new Alien portrayal of the Hispanic immigrant is the symbolic correlative of a majority perception of the immigrant that is shifting from neglect to resentment."[73]

Being only a generation apart, but still connected very closely to the signifiers of brownness that are un-documentation and field work, made these stereotypes so much more scary and real to me. They made me actively hate my background and want to be nothing like those before me. I was never undocumented, and I didn't want to be considered possibly undocumented, and the fact that my family came from this fruit-picking background only seemed to insist that I didn't have a right to feel like I belonged here. My grandmother saw fruit-picking labor as an exciting opportunity to be independent and create a new life in the US; I saw this labor as a connection back to Mexico and a very recent undocumented history that I was ashamed of for how it

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[71] Ramirez-Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*. 38
[72] Ramirez Berg. *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*, 38
[73] Ramirez Berg. *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance*, 159

strengthened the imagined connections to these harmful stereotypes of Latinos. How is it that we have moved away from belonging? The myth of assimilation is rejected once again. I acknowledge my unbelonging seemingly more than the undocumented migrant. Belonging is not something that I necessarily experience more than her, the labor that brought her so much belonging is no longer the same site of freedom that it once was. Labor becomes a site of belonging and unbelonging in our narratives, something that we both come to center as signifiers of our value.

As much as I hate to acknowledge the shame I felt in my family growing up, it played a large role in challenging the assumptions of the type of labor I would come to do. I knew I didn't want to work in fields, whether it be because I despise manual labor, or because I was attempting to distance myself from my family's history. School was something I found myself very interested in, on top of its being reinforced by my family as crucial for my success in this society. My family was also attempting to move away from its field working background, and the other first gen-children and I became the ones who would have to move forward. I was more than happy to pursue higher education and found myself succeeding in academia. There has been a distancing from my family's history through education, so much so now that I feel it can have negative consequences on the way I relate to them and other migrant people. In the same way my grandmother viewed labor as a way of being different from and wanting more opportunities than the other women in Mexico, I feel that the labor I'm doing follows similar reasons, to be seen as more valuable and deserving of opportunities than those who are similar to me. I've acknowledged this though, and I don't want to separate myself from my family's history or from migrant communities.

While I enjoy working in academic spaces, I've also learned that labor in these spaces does not provide any more sense of belonging. There is something missing in my labor that was so crucial in my grandmothers, the feeling of community and shared experiences that she had with the other migrant women around her. When I am regularly one of the few people of color in classes, and where I feel the type of work I do must revolve around issues of race because white academics continue to ignore it, how could I possibly feel like I belong more than I do in the fields picking fruit where at least everybody looks like me? At the same time though, I know that I would not feel any more comfortable in those fields. Yes, they are still populated by people who look like me but there would be a disconnect in the value I find in it versus what my grandmother and other migrant people find in it. I do not have the personal history of seeking employment in Mexico, I would not find the same feelings of independence and self-sufficiency that my grandmother has found in it. This labor does not translate the same feelings for myself. Again, I find myself stuck in a middle ground where I am unable to fit perfectly in either form of labor. I would not find value in the work done in the field, but I at the same time I don't feel like I am wanted or valued within the academic world.

While I may not feel that I belong in academia much of the time, creating work that I feel is important within this system does provide this sense of belonging though. In academia, my labor revolves around writing and creating knowledge that works to expand many of the typically white-dominated conversations, to include people and communities that are regularly left out. When I am researching and writing on things that I can relate to directly, such as this thesis and the history of migrant people and their families, I truly feel and cultivate a feeling of belonging. I find my belonging in the labor that was done by the academics of color that came before me, others who have highlighted these experiences of exclusion that continue to happen. I

have learned from Audre Lorde that I should not expect to rely on the same tools that those around me use, that how to survive here is something I have had to learn outside of the classroom.

> "… *survival is not an academic skill.* It is a learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."*[74]

I have come to learn that it is not necessarily about finding academic success through my work, but more about connecting with communities I am a part of through a mode I feel comfortable with and believe will help in some way. Whether or not I am seen as valuable in academia is reflective of the value that is seen on people who have similar identities and experiences as mine. I want my success to be tied to all the labor done by my family and other migrant people before me. My work is never my own, and it is never something I can ever acknowledge as being completely detached from my family's history. In accepting that my work and identity will always be tied to undocumented fruit picking, I can work to create something that I am proud of and resonates with me. My labor builds on the labor before mine, my work is a continuation of the work done before in order to challenge how we experience our belonging and work against an assimilative narrative.

I do not find belonging in writing and academic work itself, I find it in doing labor that connects back to my family and highlights the struggle of marginalized communities in our society. Much like my grandmother, labor and the type of work I do and where I do it comes to play a major role in my feelings of belonging. Our choices in labor are not about income or about upward mobility necessarily as both of these have and continue to be elusive to brown migrants.

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[74] Lorde, *Sister Outsider,* 112

Our labor exists within the realms of both belonging and not belonging. We both are seeking something from our labor that is missing from our lives. Maybe it's as intersectional bodies that we don't only view labor as a means of attaining money, but more about the opportunities it affords us. For my grandmother, the labor she does brings feelings of independence and a chance to break away from domesticity. For myself, an ability to engage with and create work that hopes to challenge and expand dominant narratives that often overlook or ignore a majority of people. My grandmother's legacy of labor continues through her children and grandchildren, that we should find work that provides a sense of value no matter how much we are told we don't belong and are actively worked to be excluded from—that once you find work that is so valuable to you, you follow it wherever it takes you. While I regularly find issues with academia, I am so thankful for it and what it has provided for me. My grandmother claims to have never had a hard job in the US as an undocumented immigrant, and it reminds me that I have no right to complain about the things I go through to have my belonging. I'm not going to wait around for someone to tell me when I can do the work I want to.

Chapter 3: Populations and Racism

We have explored the themes of space and the labor we do within spaces, analyzing how these come to affect our feelings of belonging. My grandmother didn't come looking for a home, but she found it in the connection and comfort with the setting. It was not about exoticism or the shock of the different setting, but about the ways in which she felt as if she had already lived and resided in the US previously. It was a "coming home" in a strange, radical way that seems antithetical to the whole understanding of migration as a desire for change and a new setting. A coming home but to a different home, a home with different possibilities. The labor she found here as well also came to play a crucial role in her feelings of belonging; it was through the work that she was able to find reasons to stay and persevere through the exploitative practices and lack of documentation. Her strong connections to labor and space came to play a role in her reflections on the act of migration and what has come to be significant parts of how she experiences belonging. My connections to space are just as complex; I have not migrated, but I am still connected to Mexico, a space I have not spent a significant amount of time in. My labor practices are very different, moving from the fields of fruit to the classroom, but it can still feel like I am being exploited through tokenism and the lack of support by academic institutions. It becomes clear that I am still living with the effect of my grandmother's migration; I am still connected strongly to Mexico and the exploitative labor practices of brown bodies here in the US. The details of the narratives are different, but the feelings are similar. With much that has changed, it feels that a lot has stayed the same as well. The discussion and her recollection up to this point has been very much focused on her memories and feelings of first migrating. She discussed the jobs she took, the food she ate, the homes she stayed in, and while I found it all

very interesting, I kept having a feeling that something was missing; her story up until this point had been insular in a way. My grandmother's feelings were made very clear, she loved California and the labor she found, but where were all the people?

I felt very happy to hear about her immediate comfort with this new setting, but I was also puzzled about how easily she was able to create a feeling of belonging in a new setting, a setting where I routinely have feelings of being an outsider although I was born and raised here. I would think that the feelings should be reversed, that *she* should be the one who feels she belongs less than me. After reflecting on the previous interviews, it struck me what played such a large role in my feelings of otherness, and what I felt was missing in her story up to this point.

[75]K: "¿Entonces, No conociste personas blancas?"

A: "Los gringos les llamàbamos"

Her narrative up to now was devoid of white people, any sort of addressing of their existence in California whatsoever. I figured this would come up naturally, considering white people play such a huge role in my experiences living here, but I soon came to learn that she has had a completely different type of relationship with them. I wanted to learn what role they played in her migrant experiences, how they came to affect her feelings of belonging compared to mine. Have we experienced similar forms of racism at the hands of whiteness? What are the differences in how we navigate the racism we encounter? The environment might have looked just like home to her, but there was no way that all the people looked the same as well. How did this new population and new culture affect her ability to find feelings of belonging? As well as how did they compare to the people she was so used to being around? In what ways is there overlap between our experiences with those who do and do not look like us in this place? How

[75] Refer to translation document section (17)

does the afterlives of migration come to permeate the ways we seek connection with the people around us? Do we seek the same things from the people around us or have our expectation shifted in the way they have with themes space and labor?

After acknowledging that she did know about white people here in the US, I continued the discussion.

> [76]K: "¿No hablaste con ellos o no tenías ninguna rason hablar con ellos o?"
>
> A: "Si. El primer trabajo ya teníamos que saber del numero uno hasta el diez, saber lo decir. Mi primer numero para trabajar con un gringo me toco el numero uno. Te contaban por contrato cuantos cubetas hacías. Y a mi me dijeron 'Tu cuando pones una cubeta en el contenedor de fruta, el es un gringo y no mas le dices numero uno, number one. Tu no mas le vas a dicer one'."

My grandmother's first memory of interacting with a *gringo* was a work relationship, telling a supervisor a number at her job as a fruit picker. This was purely a work relationship, one that was made up of a single word. She also stated that they would occasionally speak to her and other migrant laborers in Spanish, very few things like "ve allá," and "no." All interactions were purely functional in this way. If this was her initial confrontation with whiteness, it establishes her relation with white people in a hierarchical way. White people became situated as the people you work *for*, the people that you cannot communicate comfortably or clearly with. It immediately establishes a disconnect from white people, a disconnect that she came to elaborate more later. It was almost as if they were not seen as part of the populations my grandmother interacted with as human beings or on a social level. They were a detached group that she only connected with through labor practices.

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[76] Refer to translation document section (18)

While this was an important observation, I was equally interest in any potential social interactions outside of work that involved more than what is essentially just a statement about her work progress that day.

[77]K: "¿En tu vida afuera del trabajo, nunca hablaste con un gringo?"

A: "Con nadie, de gringos no. A la tienda ibas, tomabas tus cosas, ibas a la registrador y no preguntabas nada. Si te salía una cosa equivocada, te ibas a tu casa y la tirabas o te la comías. No preguntabas, ni podías leer."

K:"Como no podías hablar con la mayoría de la gente,"

A: "No."

K:¿Pero todavía te gustava estar aquí mas que en Mexico?"

A:"Si."

Her lack of hesitation to answering this question made me laugh. Something that makes no sense to me, is so certain to her. It's these moments that I find so fascinating, which emphasize just how different our understandings of what is important to us in belonging. While I too have my own hesitations about interacting with white people, I also know I cannot avoid them entirely and would rather the interaction not be so tense or uncomfortable.

[78]K: "¿Porque? si no podías hablar con…"

A:"Nunca pensé que eso era tan difícil. Nunca. Porque a todas partes que iba, había un Mexicano dirigiéndonos… Un casíque que mandaba todos los Mexicanos."

My grandmother's anecdote and her responses to the questions of her relationship to gringos paints a picture of almost complete isolation and separation from them on a social level. Back then, she couldn't have a relationship with white people because of the language barrier, but also

[77] Refer to translation document section (19)
[78] Refer to translation document section (20)

she didn't want to have one. She never made an effort to find modes of communicating with them directly. She would rather avoid interaction with gringos altogether than address a mistake at the grocery store. If the need to communicate with a gringo did arise, there was always a middleman to explain for both parties, although this was only at work for the most part. For me, imagining not being able to communicate directly with white people is one thing (and to some extent the difficulty of communicating clearly with white people still exists generations down), but avoiding interactions with them altogether is seemingly impossible in my mind. She makes it sound so easy: to maneuver without having any sort of understanding of the language or desire to talk to many of the people around her. It was about either avoiding interactions altogether or finding someone she could communicate with to help her interact with white people. It wasn't about learning how to engage with the new population that she found within this space, it was more about finding ways to avoid engagement with them almost entirely. My grandmother was able to find belonging and strong connections to this new space while actively avoiding its assimilative aspects. She picked and chose what parts of the space she interacted with, refusing to participate in aspects that highlighted her difference or strengthened feelings of not belonging.

There is a dramatic difference in the ways we view the necessity to interact with white people: what plays such a huge role in my feelings of belonging has seemingly been becomes something to avoided entirely by her. These confrontations with white exclusions and racism populate much of the literature around identity formation and work by scholars of color, the work I come to relate to so much because of these shared experiences. Anzaldúa encapsulates the feelings that white people bring out in us:

> "I have split from and disowned those parts of myself that others rejected. I have used rage to drive others away and to insulate myself against exposure. I have reciprocated with contempt for those who have roused shame in me. I have internalized rage and contempt, one part of the self (the accusatory, persecutory, judgmental) using defense

> strategies against another part of the self (the object of contempt). As a person, I, as a people, we, Chicanos, blame ourselves, hate ourselves, terrorize ourselves. Most of this goes unconsciously; we only know that we are hurting, we suspect that there is something 'wrong' with us, something fundamentally 'wrong'."[79]

These feelings of worthlessness and being seen as less by white people is such a big part of my life and the way I view myself. The exclusion by whiteness is a major player in my unbelonging. For it to be something my grandmother merely ignored, or was able to somehow evade is astonishing to me.

I believe what comes to define our interactions with white people are the expectations we have of them. My grandmother had never met or dealt with white people before coming to the US, and therefore was able to craft a completely different association with them. She had lived much of her life without interacting with them, having already crafted an identity that wasn't built around a comparison to them. I grew up interacting with white people and the way I have come to view myself has been shaped by how they have viewed me growing up. Because of this, I still seem to have a sort of hope that they will recognize me as someone who belongs here just as much as they do. It's as if this hope or acceptance by white people is missing from my grandmother. Missing perhaps isn't the best word; I feel it is instead non-existent and has no place in creating a sense of belonging here. As discussed in previous chapters, my grandmother was able to find belonging in so many other ways that she actually does not feel any need to be accepted by the people in the space. While I wish I could feel the same as her, I find myself continuously having to justify my existence to white people in the US. I am regularly disappointed, but in those moments that I find ant-racist white people or moments of belonging through all this hatred and exclusion, that I feel like I somehow am supposed to be here. As

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[79] Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 67

much as I hate to admit it, there is a desire to be accepted by white people within this space, that their acceptance plays a role in my feelings of belonging here.

While I was impressed and find her strong anti-white interaction stance so admirable in her migrant experience, it felt as if she was able to maneuver around this massive force of exclusion and discrimination that I interact with on a daily basis. The racism was still there, but she did not experience it as an exclusionary force in the same ways I do. I need to remind myself that she is the one who was an undocumented immigrant and has been deported from this space in the past. Here arises another one of those moments during our interactions where it can feel like she is able to find feelings of belonging here more than me, that I am somehow more undocumented than her at times. I suppose I was looking for some sort of solidarity with my grandmother's racist experiences, a shared hatred for interactions with white people and feelings of unworthiness we could bond over. It sounds so childish in hindsight, but I wanted to hear about racist experiences she lived through in order to justify my relationship and feelings with gringos.

> [80]K: "¿Nunca paso algo, como los gringos umm siendo malos con ustedes? ¿Ser racistas?"
>
> A: "No, no porque… no. En mi caso no, porque yo nomas trabajaba y no peleaba con ellos, ni discutíamos nada."

At least my grandmother's emphasis on her particular experiences is an acknowledgement of the racism and discrimination a lot of others go through, as well as how her experiences of racism may not be similar to mine but still permeate through the systems of exploitation she was working under. There is an admission that what she has been through isn't necessarily reflective

[80] Refer to translation document section (21)

of what other migrants have been through. I have read so much about the discrimination and abuse of migrant populations for the purpose of this thesis. and I was seeking it in my grandmother's story. Patricia Zavella's "Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty" chronicles the forms of labor and sexual abuse that was so common to many undocumented men and women.[81] There was a fear of it being a reality for my grandmother. She acknowledges that she only worked and never had any sort of engagement with gringos, as if to claim that is why she has been able to avoid particular abusive or racist interactions. Perhaps it was these variations in experiences that allowed my grandmother to have such a stronger feeling of belonging in the US, or it was the common occurrence of these forms of abuse that shape it as a normal part of a migrant narrative. What she thought was normal is strange and uncomfortable to me, which again goes back to the expectations we have from those around us. I have some sort of hope to be seen as belonging constantly by those around me, even though I am usually reminded of my otherness. This being seen as not-belonging to particular people is something my grandmother existed with and was normalized from the beginning. Her identity was crafted from not being like white people and not engaging strongly with US culture, whereas mine is about connecting to a culture that I am not seen as belonging to.

My grandmother's experiences of racism seem to be a lived experience of exploitation, whereas my experiences of racism seem to be more moments of actual conflict, where my presence or identity specifically are being called attention to as unworthy of deserving the same respect. It would seem like my grandmother was able to avoid these types of interactions because of the way she was working in spaces where it was deemed she belonged as a migrant body. My presence in higher education, or in spaces that are typically white-dominated, invite active

[81] Zavella, "Mexicans' Quotidian Struggles with Migration and Poverty," 236-239

discrimination. I am told I am not wanted here. My grandmother, by contrast, was where white people wanted her to be. We are exploited in the spaces we are deemed to belong in by white people, and we are harassed and discriminated against in the spaces we are seen as not belonging. Regardless, racism and exploitation by white people has and continues to persist in our lineage, but that connection to space and the types of labor we do changes the types of discrimination we deal with as well as our expectations of white people

I was curious if these feelings persisted, if she still has continued to have no desire to interact with gringos.

> [82]K: "Hasta hoy, todavía como nunca hablas con gringos, y no tienes como amigos gringos tampoco."
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> A: "No."
>
> K: "Y piensas… es porque…"
>
> A: "Es porque… no siento que puedo ser yo igual que un gringo. Yo soy muy Mexicana y tendrïa que cambiar yo todo. Es otra cultura. Nunca platiqué con los gringos así como para dicer 'o tenemos una buen amistad,' No. Mexicanos si, aunque viviera acá todo el tiempo, llego ya platicábamos y si podía platicar mas. Yo nunca dejé Mexico para decirte mejor"

My grandmother has never, and will never have a relationship with white people, because she is not willing to change herself. She knows that it would have to be *her* accommodating to American or white culture, that if she truly wanted to have any sort of relationship with a white person it would be her putting in all the effort to make them feel comfortable with her presence. I completely understand this feeling. Whereas I feel constantly exhausted by the code switching

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[82] Refer to translation document section (22)

and the fear of being seen as not belonging, she avoids this myth of acceptance-through-assimilation altogether, almost knowing that there's no point to it. Her migration experience wasn't about becoming American or learning to live with gringos; it has been one of creating a unique setting and lived experience that felt comfortable for her, one that involved retaining a way of life that she grew up with. In a way, she didn't migrate alone; she migrated an entire culture and mode of life that she cultivates and maintains daily. To this day, she never has to speak English, and she knows how to maneuver in California as if it is Mexico. The land didn't change her, she changed the expectations of what it means to migrate.

She feels more comfortable with other Mexicans and Latinx migrant people who share similar cultural understandings and modes of communication, even brown people who have lived here their whole lives. My grandmother is able to cultivate a culture she is comfortable with here through her interactions with people from a similar background. Ramon A Gutierrez identifies this shared culture she finds as *Latinidad* and explains how Latinx women come to bond and create this shared new culture of otherness in this new space:

> "When women gather in the stairwells of their apartments to gossip about local affairs, when women commiserate about the poor education their children receive, when they gather at the local laundromat, when they wrangle over the price of tomatoes and potatoes with a local vender, and when they chat about their personal worlds and commiserate over their life challenges, they interact in the Spanish language, connect with Latin Americans from different places, and by doing so give *Latinidad* tangible meanings. Of course immigrants from Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Guatemala do not quickly or easily lose their nationalities, but by constantly interacting… women are creating the behavioral, interactional foundation for *Latinidad."*[83]

My grandmother can relate to other Latinx women and communicate with them much easier than a white person; there's an immediate connection to people who look like you and have a shared history of marginalization within this new space. While her participation in *Latinidad* is built off

[83] Gutierrez, "Whats in a name?" 45

of a way of life she had in Mexico, this bonding over the systems of exploitation also becomes valuable for the way she finds belonging here. She can't bond with white people over the racism she faces, or the discrimination her and her children deal with. She resides in an intersectional space of oppression where can only find solidarity with other intersectional people that deal with similar issues, unable to split herself into either her womanhood or brownness. This is something we both share, these strong connections to people who look like us and the way that we bond over shared moments of discrimination with those who also find themselves in intersections. While I do not have that strong lived experience in another space, *Latinidad* continues to play a role in who I engage with comfortably, with those who also struggle with finding belonging between two worlds. We joke and laugh about the ways white culture doesn't make sense to us sometimes, bond over micro-aggressions we deal with on the daily from our peers. We bond over our imperfect ways of speaking Spanish and how our parents can't comprehend some of our decisions because of cultural differences. *Latinidad* is a survival tactic that is based on finding community, one that continues far past the point of migration.

The act of self-discovery that occurs to people of color when comparing themselves to white people is described by Fanon in his critique of ontology. He states "Ontology does not allow us to understand the being of the black man, since it ignores the lived experience. For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man."[84] Whereas I am forced to engage with whiteness as someone who has been raised in this culture, my grandmother is able to craft a new identity through her non-interactions with the white people here, an identity that would not have come to be if she had stayed in Mexico. While she avoided white people for the most part, that recognition of them as something different that she didn't

[84] Fanon, *Black Skin White masks*, 90

want to interact with had a profound effect on the way she saw herself and who she chose to interact with in this space. My grandmothers *Latinidad* challenges how Fanon discusses otherness; it was not about being ones identity in relation to whiteness, but could be instead understood as a devaluing of whiteness and desire to not integrate with it at all. My *Latinidad* is more reflective of this confrontational engagement between worlds, as much as I hate to admit it, I do see value in whiteness and have a desire to feel like I am accepted by it. Fanon's words seem to become more and more relevant the longer we engage with whiteness.

My grandmother first experiences the identity of being an other when she migrated to California for work, but I have lived here my whole life and grew up around whiteness. Still I feel that getting along with white people can take so much effort on my part, and we both feel a kinship with other brown folks regardless of our migrant status: the feeling of "outsider acknowledging outsider" that is immediate and unique to non-white folks. There is something that Fanon touches on that feels so relevant, the statement of not being able to be ourselves entirely ever, that we are always working in a comparison to whiteness and the ways in which whiteness affects how we find value in ourselves. It would be easy to claim that I despise whiteness for everything it has done mentally and emotionally to us, but at the same time, I have also been able to find meaningful and supportive connections with white people. The connection is entirely different though, as anti-racist as they are, there is still always a discomfort or hesitation when it comes to addressing moments of discrimination I face. It feels as if I always have to be policing my feelings around white people, that I am unable to highlight my race too much or it would push them away. My grandmother picked up on this early on, in the way she also understands that it is always so much more labor for us to make sure that white people are comfortable around us.

Even with white queers it can feel exhausting, even more so. At times their marginalization seems to take precedent over those of black and brown queers, and they feel justified in their racist views because they believe to be just as marginalized, even though they are not. The reminder of their whiteness is seen as an attack, while our reminder of non-whiteness is built into every interaction we have with people. These feeling of being others in queer circles extends into the literature as well. Much like the way Fanon points out how whiteness takes precedence in the field of ontology, Jose Muñoz addresses how queer studies is also heavily skewed towards the well-being and study of white people:

> "Most of the cornerstones of queer theory that are taught, cited, and canonized in gay and lesbian studies classrooms, publications, and conferences are decidedly directed toward analyzing white lesbian and gay men…The field of queer theory… is---and I write from experience---a place where a scholar of color can easily be alone in an immersion of vanilla while her or his critical faculties can be frozen by an avalanche of snow. The powerful queer feminist theorists/activists that are most often cited---Lorde, Barbara Smith, Anzaldua, and Moraga, among others---are barely ever critically engaged…"[85]

Even within these communities of shared marginalization, people of color and our knowledge continues to be undervalued and underappreciated. Everybody knows about Audrey Lorde, but her citations in academic entries and critical engagement with her knowledge is far from that of Butler or Foucault. Black and brown queer knowledge continues to be seen as just a spectacle, something to acknowledge as interesting and different, but not something that can be engaged with deeply. At times it feels as if there is no point in actually attempting to share knowledge or our experiences with white people. Perhaps my grandmother had the right idea.

The relationships both my grandmother and I believe to be the most valuable are those that come from shared experiences of marginalization by white people. White people come to play a major role in our belonging, by being exactly what we do not want to be like. My

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[85] Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 11

grandmother's claim to have never left Mexico becomes such a profound statement as an immigrant who now holds US citizenship and resides entirely in California. She finds Mexico and feelings of home in other people and her interactions with them. To her, being in Mexico, being comfortable and at home, is something she has curated for herself here through her choices in interactions with certain people, and exclusions of others. At the same time though, she also acknowledges that this isn't actually Mexico, and how far she has come to not feel like an outsider here.

> [86]A:"Ahorita me siento muy de aquí, y ya no me siento que soy mas poquito que un gringo no, siento que ya podemos ester en el mismo nivel, nomas que unos son mas, puedo dicer mas ricos tienen mas bonitas cosas tienen todo, pero eso no… no me hace sentir que no soy como igual. Que si soy Mexicana puedo ya ser gringa y ser pobre como soy"

Whiteness, in her mind, has always been connected to income and stability in living in California, that she did not have the ability to be equal to a gringo because of her income, always being poor; that white people and whiteness were things she could never really have access to because of her economic standing. White people were the people you always worked *for*. But now she claims to feel equal to them, that although she is just as poor as she first was, that she can be just as white as them; that she is Mexican *and* gringa. Perhaps she somehow lost that feeling of needing to be equal in terms of income or social status, and for her it has become more of a feeling of belonging to a particular place that makes her believe she can be white, being able to be just as comfortable in the US as the white people here: "I can be white, and be poor like I am." It's a humorous and very dense statement, but I understand it in a way. Poor white people

[86] Refer to translation document section (23)

exist obviously, but there is a connection of income and class to the Mexican migrant that plays a role in their belonging to greater extent. Many of us/them come here for economic growth, and most never find it. She has never found it, but she found something else. In the end, it's not that white people were missing from her story, it's that they never played the same role they do in mine.

My grandmother's ability to engage with and identify with certain aspects that she considers white echoes Muñoz's act of "disidentification." Disidentification is a mode of resistance that minoritarian populations use consciously or unconsciously (I argue) to find relatability to the world around them. Living in a society where the way we have been thought to think about ourselves comes from primarily white histories and knowledges forces us to find modes to feel not completely absent from conversations. While my grandmother acknowledges she is not white, and has made it clear that she does not want to be part of or with white populations, there are qualities of whiteness that she identifies with. Primarily it is the feeling of comfort and stability that she believes whiteness in the US exemplifies. Because she is now in a place of comfort, she can disidentify with whiteness, creating a feeling of belonging in this different culture. There are times I feel very white myself and rely on the act of disidentification to justify my belonging or existence within spaces. My connection to whiteness is separate from class though and is more about being free from racial discrimination. At times I feel that freedom from discrimination because of the way I speak fluent English without an accent, the way I can maneuver this space somewhat freely because of my citizenship, and even my higher education can make me feel very white. There are white scholars whose knowledge I find very valuable and have a profound effect on me even though their work does not address or take into consideration populations of color. At the same time, feelings of belonging emerge within these

spaces. There are moments where I prove my capabilities and ability to succeed in these long-dominated white environments that remind me that I can belong, but it is a belonging on their terms. There is a continuous act of making space for myself within these white-dominated environments that relies on an understanding and mimicry of whiteness. There is no way I would be accepted within these environments if I spoke or discussed these same issues in the way I do with other people of color. This act of disidentification has its limits though, almost as if I can only disidentify to a certain extent. There is a limit to how much ignorance I can ignore around me and within textbooks. At times this disidentifying and putting myself in places where I am in conversations that do not acknowledge POCs expose me to harmful language or experiences. I am able to explore these spaces of and conversations around whiteness because of my privileges, but at the same time they can come to harm me. It's a balancing act of never being completely other, but never being completely white. It is because I don't fall into this imagined stereotype or can always relate perfectly with a Mexican culture that I sometimes instead feel white in comparison. In many ways, I am also Mexican and Gringo, but never really feel like I fit into either perfectly. While we continue to disidentify with white populations, how we come to connect to whiteness and what it signifies for my grandmother and me has shifted over generations; it is no longer just about envying their income but also their freedom from racism and the need to change themselves to be accepted that we have dealt with.

The conversation of the populations that surround my grandmother and me up to this point has been focused on the white population in the US that we've either avoided entirely or learned to navigate through. It is equally important to have a greater discussion of Mexican people and the ways my grandmother has treated them and positioned them in her migrant experience. I would argue that for myself, white people have played a much larger role in my

feelings of not belonging, but Mexican and other Chicanx people as well have had a significant place in my mind when it came to situating myself in this environment. I would be lying if I said that Mexican/Chicanx did not also create a sense of not belonging at times in my experiences, although in much different and not in actively exclusionary ways that resemble my interactions with white people. Whereas my exclusion from white people relates to how they view me, my exclusion from Mexican/Chicanos can be at times a matter of how I view them. In the conversation with my grandmother about people who look like us, I am angered by some of the similarities and a continuous perpetuation of wanting to be different and better than where we come from and those who look like us.

My grandmother's feelings of not belonging in Mexico or with a majority of Mexican people emerged when my family moved back to their home country. My grandfather did not want to work for other people anymore, and so they attempted to start a life in Mexico. My grandmother didn't want this; she enjoyed working and making her own money, and had gotten used to a type of life in California. It seemed like most of her hesitation was going to be about the loss of independence and freedom that would come with being a stay-at-home mother in Mexico, but it also brought along many feelings of fear and anxiety about being around people she didn't feel comfortable with anymore. Class difference played a crucial role in how she positions white people and it equally played an important role in how she positions other Mexicans and herself in relation to them.

87A:"Había much gente, que yo no confiaba en nadien. Yo veía gente que no podia confiar en nadien."

K:"¿No mas tu y tus hijas?"

87 Refer to translation document section (24)

A:“Pues no mas es que yo quiera que estén bien protegidas, de que no fueran como otras que yo las veía como muy, come que no valían. yo quíera que las mías valieran… Nunca consideraba una amiga que fuera del nivel de ellas.”

K:“¿Y que eran las diferencias?”

A:“Que yo pensaba que eran muy pobres, que las mias eran mas ricas. Porque nosotros vivíamos en una buena casa, aunque la rentábamos era buena, teníamos carro, teníamos rancho, muchas amistades de dinero, familia. Y personas que podían ser amigas de mis hijas buenas, no mas tenían como una casita así de gente pobre y no tenían el dinero que to abuelito llevaba a las casa para que gastáramos… encontraron muchas personas de un nivel como elllas, pero aún asi yo todavía dije ‘Y ella quien es? Y quien es su mama? Y donde vive? Y a que se dedica?’ Bien feo que era yo, no conviví, me separe de la gente que ubiera podido como irme de pinta”

K:“Lo hiciste porque te quieres proteger”

A:“Quería que come que supieran que yo era de otro nivel. Eso yo quiera ser, que era la señiora que iva de, de acá de otro lugar…que yo era como de otro país pues… Y que mis hijas eran muy bonitas y que muy pocas veian allá que fueran del nivel de las mías. Eso fue lo que me paso alla en Veracruz.”

She describes a fear of not being able to trust anybody, that she was afraid of her daughters being like the people that surrounded them. She couldn’t trust or be close to anybody because she didn’t want them to think they were as good as her and her daughters. My grandmother would box people into perceived “levels”, determine their worth and right to interact with her based on income and who they knew. She didn’t want to be seen as just another Mexican while she was in Mexico, she wanted to be identified as somebody from some other place. It was as if she felt she

deserved respect for the work she did in the US. She no longer wanted to be associated solely with Mexico, she wanted to be seen as an identity that has some connection to both of these spaces.

Her return to Mexico was one of isolation and fear of returning to a time before her migrant experience. The country that was once all she knew, was now a place she did not want to be solely associated with.

> [88]K:"¿Pero cuando estaban aquí en Watsonville, no te importaba tanto, eso de los nivels?"
>
> A:"No, Watsonville nada de eso. Watsonville era como, come que yo estaba bien no había tantas competencis. Watsonville no, todo estaba bien, todos éramos iguale. Y allá (Mexico) no. Había muchos nivels"
>
> K:"En Watsonville te sentiste igual a todos…"
>
> A:"Igual"
>
> K:"Pero cuando regresaste a Mexico, es cuando empezaste a tener miedo de las personas"
>
> A:"Miedo de las personas, miedo de estar bien fracasada, mas fracasada todavia. Hasta que si, hasta que si paso lo que uno piensa pasar. Hasta que se acabo todo todo todo, hasta que fui bien fracasada es quando regrese."

Her sole reason for migrating was to make money, but she still was never able to make a large sum of money. All she knew here was working in fields with other migrant people, not owning anything, and there being no real economic stability. To her, there was not even a conversation about competition with other Mexicans or being better than those around her. She was here to make money, not to show it off. In Mexico though, my grandmother wanted to be seen as an

[88] Refer to translation document section (25)

other. She felt a sense of competition, a need to stand out, to not be seen as just another person there. She became so fixated on this notion of "levels" that she never brought up in any other part of the interview, acknowledging that in her head, this hierarchy she describes feeling only exists within Mexico. In Mexico, there was no longer the white population exploiting her, which she used to find common ground with other Latinx people.

Without white people, something that became an important staple in the way she found comradery and belonging with others, she began to fill that space of other with people who looked like her. Instead of figures of solidarity, they became reminders of a previous life or warnings of what she would become if she was not successful in the US. Her time in Mexico became a reminder of possible poverty that she had been trying to escape with her initial migration to the US. Whereas white people became a symbol of comfort and stability in the US, Mexican people became symbols of instability and discomfort in Mexico. Although she was poor and never really had much money in the US, returning to Mexico reminded her of a reality and group of people she could easily become. She didn't like white people, and felt she couldn't have a relationship with them, but she also didn't like just any Mexicans and was so critical and judgmental of them to the point of self-isolation.

She walked a middle ground of being a poor migrant worker in the US, and being an affluent housewife in Mexico, never really feeling comfortable and trusting of people there. Anzaldúa acknowledges this struggle of the woman of color:

> "Woman does not feel safe when in her own culture, and white culture, are critical of her… Alienated from her mother culture, 'alien' in the dominant culture, the woman of color does not feel safe within the inner life of her Self. Petrified, she can't respond, her face caught between *los intersticios*, the space between the different worlds she inhabits."[89]

[89] Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera, 42

My grandmother was still a migrant in her return to Mexico; she still resided in this a space of ambiguity even back home. There was a different act of disidentification with the population she came from, one that is more focused on not identifying with something; she could no longer relate perfectly to them and relied on white populations to ground her newfound identity in a way. Fanon addresses the change that occurs after having experienced whiteness: "The black man who has lived in France for a certain time returns home radically transformed. Genetically speaking, his phenotype undergoes an absolute, definitive mutation."[90] It was as if my grandmother found something in the US that made her feel more complete, more advanced than those who hadn't in Mexico. In the US, my grandmother was never really worried about being equal to white people, or really establishing some sort of affluent presence. It was as if she knew that was never going to be attainable, so instead of focusing on moving towards whiteness, she wanted to move away from what her life was like in Mexico. I want to emphasize that this move away from Mexican-ness was not at the same time a move towards whiteness. She never wanted to be white; she wanted to be something different entirely here. She wanted to be Mexican in the US, but in Mexico she wanted to be recognized as someone who has experienced the US, another radical view on the migrant experience, one that is critical of assimilation but that also acknowledges that there is a desire at the same time to move away from a previous identity. Her identity is thus an active act of negotiating aspects between two cultures, choosing what she appreciates in each and creating something unique to her experiences that she solidifies through community with others in similar situations.

This space of ambiguity and in-betweenness is felt by both my grandmother and me, and continues to be exemplified by Fanon's work. In Stuart Hall's reflections on Fanon's writing, he

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[90] Fanon, Black Skin White Masks, 3

points out how it is not the opposition of whiteness that necessarily preoccupies the subject of color, but it is instead this ambiguity of being both:

> "Since the text so remorselessly returns to the binary opposition, *black/white, colonizer/colonized,* I wonder how many of his readers unconsciously slip into reading him as if binaries are the exclusive focus of his tale? As if the real title of his book was 'Black Skin, White skin'? Ignoring the fact that, though his subject is, of course, framed throughout by the dichotomous and manichean structure of racism as a binary system of representation and power, it is the split or divided self, the two sides within the *same* figure… which centrally preoccupies him."[91]

Hall reminds us that while this division between white and other is very real, the struggle we feel also stems from not being entirely non-white or the other. My grandmother struggles with this ability to identify with people who look like her in Mexico after being exposed to her exploitation by white people and a different type of society. Her identity was changed to take into account this oppressive, dominating population that controlled her life in many ways, and she can no longer relate to a previous way of life. She is caught in this realm that I was born into, where we are constantly comparing ourselves to people who don't look like us just as much as we compare ourselves to those who do look like us.

Part of me was infuriated with her classism and the way she talked about being scared of those who looked like her, but I also empathized with that feeling of wanting to feel more worthy, and that internalized racism that comes with comparing yourself to other Mexicans in order to feel like you are more worthy. It's a disgusting, sick feeling, one that works its way into your subconscious, that you have to actively remind yourself is wrong. You remind yourself that it's a relic of colonization, that it's not your fault you had that thought. It's an unconscious survival tactic to make yourself feel like you are not just as disposable as all the other brown bodies, that you somehow are more worthy to white people and that hopefully they won't kill

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[91] Hall, "The After-Life of Frantz Fanon: Why Fanon? Why Now? Why Black Skin, White Masks?," 18.

you. And in this way, I empathize and see a lot of similarities in struggling to find who we are and where we belong. Cherrie Moraga reminds us though that women of color, and I would add other marginalized bodies finding themselves in such intersectional identities, cannot keep avoiding each other because of discomfort or fear, that we must work together to overcome this violence:

> "If we could make this connection in our hearts of hearts, that if we are serious about a revolution--better—if we seriously believe there should be joy in our lives… then we need one another…The real power, as you and I well know, is collective. I can't afford to be afraid of you, nor you of me. If it takes head-on collisions, let's do it: this polite timidity is killing us."[92]

When you've lived your life between two worlds literally, or simply mentally and emotionally, you start to create signifiers for each and try to compartmentalize who means what. White people become those who exploit us, other black and brown people become sites of exploitation and harm, and we just try to not fall into either. It is in overcoming this fear of each other, the fear of acknowledging being part of the other, that we are able to find belonging and true happiness.

My grandmother and I both are able to deal with this ambiguity through the communities we choose to interact with. There are moments of solidarity and belonging I also only find with people who have similar experiences to me. Other migrant/first gen youths who are struggling to find where we belong and are actively working against the internalized racism we've been taught by the state and, at times, by our family. When I was younger, I was so terrified of being identified as Mexican because of the discrimination it entailed, as demonstrated on the news and the stereotyping in media. But now, I would never want to be identified as white, and I would never choose to be with white people over other brown people. The connections with other white people always run out at some point, but my connections with brown people last for centuries

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[92] Cherrie Moraga, "La Guera" in *This Bridge Called My Back, Fourth Edition: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 4th Revised edition (Albany: State Univ of New York Pr, 2015). 29.

and spans generations. We understand each other in ways that white people can never, and communicate in ways that (although they may be in English and in the US) are still so foreign to white people. My grandmother as well would never hang out with white people, and while she may have a fear of being like other Mexicans while in Mexico, here in the US she finds comfort and community with Mexican/Chicanx people here. We both are able to relate because of the culture we come from, the Spanish we speak, the foods we eat. Our community is built from the memories and feelings we have, my grandmother's lived experiences in Mexico and mine from my connections to the culture that lives on in my family. The migrant experiences of ambiguity and seeking new connections that pull from previous ways of life continue generations later, even for those of us who have no previous way of life. For both of us, it is about understanding what makes us comfortable and uncomfortable from these two cultures, and creating something entirely unique that comes to be realized through the connections with those around us.

Populations have and continue to play significant roles in the way we find belonging as migrant bodies. My grandmother didn't seek belonging in white people, but she found it through shared experiences with other who felt similarly about them. White people came to signify wealth and stability to her, and in that way she was able to disidentify with them when she had achieved some sense of comfort. White people also came to alter the way she connected with an "other," and ultimately had a profound effect on her ability to find community in Mexico. Without white people and their treatment of her, she came to place Mexicans as the "other" that she did not identify with in the same ways. White people continue to have a massive impact on my own feelings of belonging, even as someone who was raised around them. Their significance has shifted though, and to some extent I can relate to whiteness because of my own privileges. Mexicans and other brown folk as well continue to play this role of other for myself, and can still

be seen as populations to be afraid of associating with because of our treatment by institutions in the US. Ultimately though, it is with other POCs that both my grandmother and I find moments of belonging, in these communities and forms of solidarity we are able to craft with each other through all the trauma and discrimination. We find our belonging in our complaints about white people, in our foreign language and cultures, and our ability to survive together. We find belonging with those who also caught between worlds and unable to identify with any culture perfectly. Populations and the people we interact with affect our migratory feelings, our ability to find feeling of belonging. As people living in the intersections, the woman of color migrant and the queer of color, we find solidarity in those others who continue to be displaced by the populations around them as well. While my grandmother may have had such a strong immediate connection to the US and the labor she was able to find here, the populations she interacted with also allowed her to find even more belonging through the creation of this new identity, an identity that no longer allows her to feel entirely comfortable in Mexico either, a migrant identity that is caught between worlds. She belongs here with this new population and community that also finds themselves caught in intersections more than anywhere else.

Chapter 4: Citizenship and Doubt

At this point we have addressed three major ways in which my grandmother has come to find belonging and meaning in her migrations between the US and Mexico: the forms of comfort she feels in each space and what they provide, how she engages with different populations in each, and the importance of labor as a means of finding belonging and worth. Already, my grandmother has challenged many assumptions about the migrant experience. She did not feel discomfort or the need to assimilate to a new landscape and culture, her experiences have been one of negotiating what she enjoys from both Mexico and the US in order to craft a new space where she is able to experience belonging when she is unable to find it in either of the dominant cultures. There isn't a feeling of leaving a country in her narrative, nor about engaging with a completely unfamiliar one, it is about crafting the new space that is formed at the same time between these two countries and separate from them both. While I believe that these three sections have already been very informative in terms of engaging with the discussion of what migration can look like and how we experience belonging, there is a noticeable absence of the discussion of citizenship and what that provides to migrants in terms of belonging. Up until this point, I have deliberately attempted to avoid the discussion of paperwork and how the state comes to play a role in her belonging for my own reasons, but those reasons are selfish and it would be self-centered of me to avoid discussing something that has played such an important role in my grandmother's belonging.

Citizenship and what it means is a loaded site of contestation, but I believe that Alejandra Castaneda describes its multifaceted aspects best in her analysis. She states:

> "Citizenship is most commonly assumed to be a legal status defined within the framework of the nation-state. However, citizenship also refers to belonging to a

> community, imagined or otherwise. Formed and protected by laws lived and enacted by individuals, citizenship both forbids and necessitates migrants… Rather than accepting migrants as marginal actors confronting the nation-state, I argue that citizenship is constructed by nation-states and by migrants' transnational practices and embodiment of the law. In those instances where the nation-state and people converge, citizenship is performed, contested, and reformulated, thus shaping migrants' culture of citizenship."[93]

I believe this notion of a culture of citizenship is radical, and in many ways this has been exemplified in previous chapters through the ways in which my grandmother has been able to find and create moments of belonging without documentation in the US. At the same time, I believe that the discussion of documentation cannot be ignored. Documentation comes to actively play a role in the belonging of my both my grandmother and me, it is about a culture we cultivate but that culture is affected by our documentation. Castaneda's notion of a culture of citizenship is useful too, but how is it that this culture itself was not enough for my grandmother? How is it that I relate to this notion of a "culture of citizenship" without being a migrant? I will address that mode of documentation and recognition by the US as a citizen and the validity of that recognition for particular populations in order to expand on this conversation of the culture of citizenship, exploring how having and not having documentation plays a vital role in the cultivation of that cultural citizenship. Citizenship and its discussion in a US context are a much more complex site of negotiation for Mexicans specifically. How does my grandmother view her citizenship and how has it provided her a feeling of belonging to a space in which she was previously deemed a legal "other"? Has acquiring US citizenship affected and strengthened her feelings of belonging here? How does the gaining of another form of citizenship affect how she values and situates her Mexican citizenship in her belonging? What are the similarities and differences in the way we situate our citizenship in our understanding of belonging? I would

[93] Castaneda, "Roads to Citizenship: Mexican Migrants in the United States" 144.

argue that my grandmother was able to curate that "culture of citizenship" before acquiring literal citizenship, but then what does citizenship really do for us?

My understanding of and connection to citizenship is specifically within a US context, a country whose shaping of the "citizen" and the "undocumented" has tended to rely on Mexican migrants and their criminalization as a way to reinforce the solidarity of the US population. Nicholas De Genova points out how US foreign policy has been almost solely focused on Mexican populations and the increasing constrictions of legal Mexican migration, stating:

> "Mexican migration to the US is distinguished by a seeming paradox that is seldom examined: while no other country has supplied nearly as many migrants to the US as Mexico has since 1965, virtually all changes in US immigration law during this period have created ever more severe restrictions on the condition of 'legal' migration from Mexico… Beginning in the1960s… and ever since, persistent revisions in the law have made it virtually impossible for the great majority who would migrate from Mexico to do so in according with the law and thus played an instrumental role in the production of a legally vulnerable, undocumented work force of 'illegal aliens'."[94]

It becomes clear through De Genova's insights that when there is a discussion of illegality or citizenship within the US, it is always in conversation with the understanding that what is attempting to be kept out is primarily Mexicans. Citizenship and belonging to the US then becomes about not being Mexican. Mexicans are a work force, a population that is allowed to work here temporarily but not allowed to stay permanently or acquire the same rights as US citizens. The US has created an "other" to itself through its foreign policy, and the legal "other" that has been targeted through its conversation about citizenship is the Mexican.

What comes from this history of legal othering is a culture of discrimination and hatred that is built off of the legal construction of the Mexican as "not belonging" in the US. With the Mexican being central to the discussion of illegality, those of us who have a Mexican background continue to be identified as the "other" even though we have only known the US our

[94] De Genova, "The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant 'illegality'," 61

whole lives. In his investigation into Latinx identity, Ramon Gutierrez encapsulates this legacy of illegality that Chicanx populations continue to struggle with:

> "Despite the fact that the majority of ethnic Mexicans were born in the United States… their phenotype is equated with the stigma of 'illegality,' which frequently results in racial profiling and harassment by the police, thus robbing them of the equal protection the law guarantees. When accused of crimes in the past times, they were rarely judged by their peers, were handed stiffer sentences than whites, and were constantly surveilled, trends that have continued to the present."[95]

This othering regardless of citizenship status is something that both my grandmother and I have had to manage even with our different citizenship journeys. But my grandmother has dealt with deportation and migration through insecure means, very real struggles that I would legally never have to deal with. While the value of citizenship is questionable to those of us who are still systemically discriminated, there is still some façade of security in terms of deportation and legally residing within the country.

This othering stigmatization has only increased recently. The 2016 US election of a president whose campaign was built off the condemnation of Mexican people, a chant and promise to create a fortified defense to keep them out, and the slander of those of us born here to undocumented Mexican migrants as "anchor babies," has given a voice and empowered the xenophobia of Mexican and Chicanx people within this country. Those of us with citizenship are still seen as not belonging or being equal to white people nor even equal to white populations who lack citizenship. The way we look matters more than where we were born. My citizenship is stripped of some of its rights; my citizenship does not guarantee me protection here. My existence is a site of illegality although all I have known is the US. My family's history of un-documentation did not end with me, I continue to live with the stigma of un-documentation, an afterlife of migration. I must acknowledge that citizenship has provides some semblance of

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[95] Gutierrez, "What's in a Name?" 39

reassurance that my grandmother previously didn't have, but that reassurance is limited. Citizenship for the Mexican-migrant is complicated and messy, we don't need it to feel like we belong as my grandmother has demonstrated, but at the same time there has to be this acknowledgment that it has provided something for us and our family.

The discussion of undocumented immigrants tends to fast-track the conversation of migration toward the act of undocumented migration, which is never the idealized form of migration. Undocumented migration is done because it is the only way for a majority of people to get into the US, it is a manufacturing of illegality by the US primarily for Mexican people where the US's policies are targeted towards their specific exclusion (as De Genova has pointed out). My grandmother never wanted to enter the US undocumented; she applied with the appropriate documents and waited to be approved in a border town. Although she did everything "right," she was still denied, twice.

[96]A: "No mas no se los querían dar"

I don't feel comfortable including how she came to cross the border without appropriate paperwork, nor do I believe it a defining part of her migrant experience. It was not her first choice, nor was it a pleasant experience. She immigrated in 1966, at a time when there were increased anti-Mexican policies being implemented, such as the end of the Bracero Program in 1965. De Genova discusses how even if you had migrated legally previously, you were no longer allowed to do so, making "illegal" migration the only method for many who relied on US labor opportunities.[97] There was virtually no way for my grandmother and others to migrate legally. They had known about methods of crossing without documentation because it was so

[96] Refer to translation document section (26)
[97] De Genova, "The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant 'illegality'," 73

commonplace; people knew people who could help them do this. It speaks to the lack of legal support to come to the US, as well as people's ability to create secured means of crossing.

Again though, while this was a common practice, she describes how coming to the US without citizenship policed the types of experiences she could have here.

> [98]A:"La ropa le lavamos en el rio, había un rio. No se ensusiaba mucho la ropa, nos podían llevara al la lavandería del pueblo pero nosotros no queríamos.
>
> K:"¿Porque costaba?"
>
> A:"Porque era difícil y nos daba miedo que nos encontraran alla. Mucha gente se la llevaban la migra de las lavanderías. Llegava inmigración y se las llevava a Mexico. Los sacaban"

According to her, you avoided going to public places if you could. They heard stories of being taken away during mundane everyday moments of being out in public. She discussed how her life was contained in this way because of immigration; she was not able to enjoy the US in a normal way.

> [99]A: "Ellos se bajaron, y nosotros no nos bajábamos porque nos daba miedo que nos vieran y nos fueran a, como agarrar para sacarnos del pais. Entonces el decía 'ustedes quedense aquí en el carro todos, nadien se baje. Puede ser peligroso'

Her undocumented status made her interactions with the space very regulated. This regulation is what led her to find community with those who had to learn to navigate in similar ways, these restrictive regulations forced them to construct *Latinidad*. Those around her would warn her about the dangers that she could bring to herself and others like her if she attempted to navigate within the US in the same way she would navigate Mexico. Her undocumented status made her

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[98] Refer to translation document section (27)
[99] Refer to translation document section (28)

reliant on others to help her maneuver the space through secure means. Her lack of citizenship was not just about the dangers of being found out and returned to Mexico; it also meant that in the US she would have to be dependent on others to help her navigate. She would either learn how to engage with the space through methods of remaining incognito, or she needed somebody who could engage with the space legally to help. It begins to make more sense why labor and working in those fields were seen as so valuable and freeing for her. When the only times you could be outside were for labor, labor would begin to take on an oxymoronic experience of freedom though it is also constrained and exploitative. Labor came to embody more than just profit; it became a way to navigate the space and experience belonging without proper documentation.

This security in labor ends up being false though. Although she avoided going out to potentially dangerous locations where she could be identified as an undocumented immigrant, she was not able to avoid instances with immigration officers even at work. She describes on encounter she had.

> [100]A: "Escuchamos que decían 'la immigracion' y si ya iban los senores, los de la immigracion por la montañita. Y nosotros empezamos a decirs vámonos cuidando aquí. Y mucha gente corria. Nosotros no, nosotros allí nos quedábamos sentádos. Pues que íbamos hacer teníamos los niños. Y nadie nos dijo nada, pasaron y se fueron como buscando los que iban corriendo. Y nosotros allí nos quedamos."

She and other migrant workers would warn each other about incoming immigration officers, but there was only so much you could do to avoid them. It became a game of chance: stay put and hope you aren't questioned or attempt to make a run for it. Labor seemed to provide moments of

[100] Refer to translation section (29)

freedom and belonging (as discussed in the previous chapter), but these moments were unable to last because of her lack of citizenship. She connected to the spaces she occupied through their similarity with home, but she was unable to engage with them as freely because of the lack of citizenship. Citizenship came to have a profound effect on how my grandmother had to find belonging when her abilities to engage with and interact with space were always being policed by the state. It's not that citizenship kept her from finding a sense of belonging in the US, but it affected the ways in which she could that differed from how she would in Mexico. Belonging was found through that lack of documentation, through the community that she was forced to rely on and engage with to navigate this new status. Un-documentation became a key part of her *Latinidad,* her understanding of belonging was crafted in management of not belonging. In this way, the lack of citizenship is intrinsically tied to the culture of citizenship she has crafted. My grandmother was able to find value in un-documentation, to make un-documentation meaningful and important to her belonging.

My experiences of exclusion and finding belonging are similar and inverse. I still fear the state even though it is their job to protect me. At times it feels like I am still restricted to spaces where I am deemed to belong. As discussed in the sections on space and labor, it still feels like I am told I belong in those fields picking fruits with the other migrants and not in classrooms or other spaces that are dominated by white populations. Suzanne Oboler addresses these feelings:

> "For as the lived experience of Latino/as and African Americans increasingly attests, citizenship is meaningful only in the lives of those who continue to be excluded from the rights and benefits it guarantees. Moreover, as several scholars have long emphasized, the

> connotations of US citizenship, particularly with reference to racial(ized) minorities such as African Americans and Latino/as, are centered around issues of exclusion."[101]

There is a hopelessness in our citizenship as black and brown bodies. We continue to be hunted by the state and have to pretend to belong more than the legal "other" of undocumented black and brown bodies. The fact that I can even attempt to engage with these different spaces though comes from my citizenship, and perhaps it is in the slow act of gradually making space for ourselves that we gain from the belonging found by our families, from the citizenship that they are able to find. At the same time, I don't want to credit citizenship or believe that it is vital for us to find belonging. I do not want my belonging to be premised on the taking or creation of space within problematic white institutions. It is a strange to find myself thankful for the opportunities that citizenship has provided me, but doubtful of the actual belonging or methods of belonging it supposedly allows me to engage with. In a way, my *Latinidad* is found in this struggle to understand my connection to citizenship. It is with other Latinx citizens who are also navigating exactly what this status means for us. Citizenship isn't about simply having it or not; the culture of citizenship is never completely detached from this status of legality. My grandma could not engage with spaces because of her lack of citizenship and was able to find belonging through not having it, whereas I have citizenship and find belonging in the struggle to connect with it, a culture of not having citizenship vs a culture of questioning citizenship.

Living with this type of fear and inability to go where they pleased and already having been denied visas and crossing the border without documentation, there weren't many methods for my grandmother to gain legal residency. This wasn't a solitary experience though, as

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[101] Oboler, "Redefining Citizenship as a Lived Experience," 8

discussions of how to make it easier to acquire documentation were common with other migrants working alongside her in the fields.

> [102]A:"Me empezaron a decir 'pues ustedes deberían de tener un hijo nacíedo en este país porque eso ayuda pa que ustedes arreglen."

My grandmother didn't want children; she was happy working and finally making her own money. A child would only take her away from her work and back to the domestic life she was originally looking for a way out of. But it was the easiest way to guarantee a more secure position in the US. Having a child here would bring along with it greater opportunity, a way to retain and expand on the freedom she had found here. For her story in particular, I find it humorous. She wanted to escape domestic life and make her own money in the US, but in order to do so she would have to have a child and return to a domestic lifestyle for a moment in time. Even after obtaining residency, wanting to have her kids in the US was still really important and moved her back and forth between Mexico and the US.

> [103]A:"Me vine embarazada de Wendy, y no quise que Wendy naciera aya. Dije no yo tengo que regresar alla, a que nazca ella para tener la seguridad de ella también"

Instead of being about her attaining documentation, it was also about making sure everybody else did too; it was now about keeping the family together and making sure they would all be able to maneuver these spaces together.

Perhaps it's because I come from this family that I don't believe it unorthodox in any way to use one's offspring for security, or to deliberately choose to have them in a country where you don't have citizenship. My mother, who also did not have US citizenship, relied on this tactic as well. Being a first gen child, everybody's parent was undocumented at some point in time, and

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[102] Refer to translation document section (30)
[103] Refer to translation document section (31)

we were the tools that helped them work towards citizenship. This was almost a necessity for specifically undocumented Latinx migrants in order for them to achieve citizenship, as De Genova once again makes clear:

> "… a legalization procedure was available to undocumented Western Hemisphere migrants who were the parents of children born in the US (hence, US citizens). In effect, a baby born in the US to an undocumented Mexican migrant served as a virtual apprenticeship for eventual legal residency. Thus… Mexican migrants would be required to serve a term as undocumented works but then could eventually be 'legalized,' contingent on bearing a child in the US."[104]

In this way, my experience and those of my friends are the expected norm. Our birth and the space we are born in are part of a greater process of legalization that was constructed by the US specifically for Mexican and Latinx peoples. One of the only feasible ways my grandmother could attain legal residency was to come here undocumented and then have a child.

Although we've had very different means of acquiring our US citizenship, I've realized that both my grandmother and my citizenship are very communal objects that are specific to our culture and where we come from. Some of her children are roots planted in the US that came to provide an easier mode of accessing documentation, a responsibility they were imbued with as first gen-children. My mother was one of the few children who was born in Mexico, and so I carried on that role of providing support for her documentation through my birth in the US. It's a unique experience where us children of Mexican migrants aid our parents in getting their citizenship. We become the foundations of our families' future in the country. In this way, our citizenship isn't just ours and it comes to provide for the people before us as well. My grandmother's choice to deliberately have children in a country she did not have documentation in wasn't just for their futures, but for hers as well. This communal view of citizenship comes to carry so much more value to me—that my citizenship is bigger than just me and has a history

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[104] De Genova,"The Legal Production of Mexican/Migrant 'illegality'," 73

beforehand has helped me come to appreciate it more. Although I was born in the US, my birth and existence were vital in aiding the documentation of my family that come from Mexico.

This familial and communal aspect of citizenship is just a start though, and having children with US citizenship didn't automatically guarantee documentation for my grandmother. She still had to deal with applications and wait times, all the while choosing to work and migrate between the two countries without documentation. This lack of US documentation was never something that halted her from living lives in both countries.

> [105]A:"Ya tenia todo aplicado, ya era aceptada pero tenia que ir a Mexico, y yo estaba aquí. Esa fue mi travesia que tuve que hacer porque no me daban mis papeles. Estaban tardados y yo tuve miedo de quedarme en Mexico y que tu abuelito se veniera solo. Yo dije No, yo me voy a ir, y me vine."

The irony of already being in the US when she was approved for her green card is humorous to me. Throughout her story, it seems that citizenship was something she wanted and would aid her incredibly with what she wanted to do, but it was never something that kept her from doing what she wanted. It was always something she was working for, but never letting it halt her from migrating. It's moments like these in my grandmother's narrative that keeps me guessing about the importance of citizenship and documentation then, if she had already figured out how to maneuver the two spaces and made it clear that nothing was going to keep her out.

I was curious then, if gaining residency *did* change anything dramatically in her life or the choices she made in the US.

> [106]A: "Cambia mucho ya, una seguridad. Te sentías como que podías ver la luz del día."
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> K: "¿Pero que cambio?"

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[105] Refer to translation document section (32)
[106] Refer to translation document section (33)

A: “Que no tenias… como si estoy trabajando y llegan al ratito la immigracion, si estas trabajando estas agusto no hay nada de miedo.”

K: “¿Pero esa era la única cosa que cambio? Es como que ya no tenias ese miedo?”

A: “Si”

K: “¿Pero todavía estábas haciendo el mismo trabajo?”

A: “El mismo trabajo, piscando manzana”

K: “¿Y no como buscaste otro trabajo mejor? ¿Tu allí estabas feliz?”

A: “No, quería ganar mas dinero, pero no me iban a dar mas trabajo si no tenia una escuela de preparación. ¿Quien me iba dar?”

It would seem that residency didn’t bring any change in terms of social or economic standing; it would only provide my grandmother with a sense of security at the same jobs she had been working at since she first migrated. This security should not be downplayed, especially when it seems like immigration raids at workplaces have increased in recent years, with the 2016 Republican administration and the spotlight it has shone on Mexican migrants. Although, for my grandmother who had already been deported a couple times and still managed to make her way back routinely and have a life in the US, it doesn’t really seem like it changed much of her life and the choices she made. She still had the same hurdles (lack of education being the biggest one) to overcome for her upward mobility. She now had the security to apply for better jobs, but the actual likelihood of getting anything better were just as low. She continued working the same job as before, but without the fear of deportation. My grandmother is allowed to legally reside in the US, a residency that brings with it the same issues of otherness and exploitation that she has dealt with before. It’s like she said previously, she’s a gringa but still a Mexican as well.

Her residency also came to play a role in migrations between Mexico and the US, it now becomes a status she has to maintain.

[107]A:"Tenia que regresar acá, para no perder los papeles qu yo tenia acá, la residencia." She now was legally able to reside in the US but that meant that she also couldn't stay away from it too long without losing that status. She still had some kids and the rest of her family in Mexico, so her resident status began to work against just how much time she could spend with that other life she had in a different country. I think it's much more interesting to think about residency and documentation as not just providing security in the US but also how it actively moves you away from another life you have. It becomes a juggling act during this period. You legally must spend a certain amount of time in US, not just because you want to anymore, but because you *have* to in order to retain the documentation that you worked so hard to acquire.

My grandmother received her US citizenship in 2001. She had a 6th grade education in Mexico, could not read, write, and could hardly communicate in English, but she passed the exam in English. She listened to the exam study tapes everyday on her commute to and from work and would study with her daughters after work at home. I asked her about why she wanted citizenship, what made her want more than just her residency.

[108]A:"Porque los derechos son muchos, puedes votar, en las oficinas seguro social, de ser trabajadora en un empreza es más fuerte el que seas cuidadano. Porque ya es ciudadano, no se va ir a mexico cada ves."

K: "¿Si no aceptaran, y si te dijeran algo que no podías ser ciudadana, todavia te quedares aquí?"

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[107] Refer to translation document section (34)
[108] Refer to translation document section (35)

A: “Si, no mas no iva ser ciudadana pero me iba quedar. Yo tenia segura mi vida aquí, el ser ciudadana era para tener otro beneficios buenos. Era luchar para ser mejor aquí.”

K: “¿Y piensas que si?”

A: “Si! Si me ayudo mucho. Seguridad. Empeze a sentir bonito cuando iba a una oficina y ‘¿cuidadana or residente?’ ‘Cuidadana” y rápido era otro cambio. “O eras ciudadana entonces tienes este otro beneficio’

K: “¿Entonces también las personas aquí te empezaron a tratar diffferente?”

A: “Diferente, si.”

Much like residency, perhaps citizenship didn’t change her life much when it came to social standing or the economic opportunities she was always looking for here. It did change the way she felt though, and how she believes she was seen by others in the US. Her citizenship gave her a greater sense of belonging for sure, it made her feel like she no longer had to worry about losing what she had created here, and it brought along a new sense of respect she felt she always deserved. It became an added component to the feelings of belonging, although I would like to reinforce that this sense of belonging was not centered around this newfound citizenship. Her belonging was crafted through her own experiences and connections, not by anything the state necessarily provided. My grandmother had cultivated the “culture of citizenship” that Castaneda has describes above through *Latinidad*. The citizenship she had acquired did not radically alter her life in terms of belonging to a culture, becoming a US citizen for us does not enact nor guarantee anymore security. We still continue to deal with exclusion and state violence.

It’s an uncomfortable position to be critiquing and investigating the importance of receiving documentation in my grandmother’s migrant experiences, but at the same time feels necessary as we continue hear about ICE raids where those who have citizenship are still

separated from their families. It comes to affect the way I view the so-called security my grandmother started to feel. Nothing changed for her but that sense of security, that "security" that to this day does not keep us safe or free from harm in this country by the state. I can't help but reflect on passages written by Afro-pessimist scholars, particularly ones that describe the ways in which Black people continue to be living in the afterlives of slavery. There is a hopelessness to expecting change or believing in change from the inside.[109] Mexican migrants have been used and moved between Mexico and the US purely for labor purposes, and—with almost every foreign policy working against Mexicans legally belonging—it's clear that we are seen as subhuman by the US state and its white citizens. There is also a hopelessness in living the afterlives of Mexican migration in the US as well. We have citizenship and belong to the US, but we can't make change when we are not given any opportunity to make change. If we do not conform, we are killed. If we do conform, we are still in just as much danger and continue to be exploited. My grandmother acquired citizenship, but it did nothing to better her social or economic standing. We continue to experience state violence, the exploitation of our labor, separation from our families. What then do we really gain from citizenship? It often feels like a false sense of security that is only meant to keep us from real change. If we are told we are US citizens while being exploited, I suppose the exploitation doesn't feel as bad.

None of these beliefs are ever meant to be confrontational or against my grandmother's beliefs, and I can imagine that citizenship brought a great sense of comfort to someone who has actually been deported. Equally, I believe there can be gratefulness for citizenship while also being critical of its actual worth for certain populations. But our connections to citizenship will never be the same because of the different experiences we have had in regard to our

[109] Wilderson, *Afropessimism*.

documentation statuses. She has actually experienced things that I only have heard of and fear will happen to me. I was born with citizenship; I have never had a previous life before citizenship. My feelings of belonging are not actively connected to my citizenship status. It is not something I am often forced to take into account during my discussions of belonging. The ability to ignore it and not see it as playing major role in my belonging is a privilege, one that I am able to have because of what my family before me has gone through. Through my grandmother sharing her experiences, I get a glimpse of what that life was, and it makes me value not just my citizenship, but also the strength and resiliency of my family. While this chapter was primarily focused on how citizenship plays a role in belonging, it has highlighted more thoroughly the role our families and their experiences prior to ours play in creating a space of belonging. It's not citizenship that made my home here, it was my family and everything they did before my birth to secure a space for me.

Another major difference between our connections to citizenship is that my grandmother has dual citizenship, having an entirely prior history of citizenship with Mexico. The way conversations tend to focus on the lack of US citizenship when discussing Mexican migration, in my mind, comes to damage not just the identity of migrant bodies, but also the countries they come from. It marks them and those countries they do have citizenship in as lacking. My grandmother feelings on this are similar to mine.

[110]K: "¿Y nunca te sentiste que no debieras estar aquí o que no era una buen idea?"

A: "Nunca, nunca"

K: "¿Siempre te sentiste que aquí deberías estar?"

[110] Refer to translation document section (36)

A: “Que podía escoger… cual seria mi lugar mejor. Eso era un derecho bonito que yo sentía. Quiero estar en Mexico, me voy. Quiero esta en Estados Unidos, estoy acá. En hacer ciudadana, pero irme a vivir alla y no me affecta en nada. Y si era residente tenia que esta seis meses alla y seis meses acá. Entonces yo siempre pensé no, yo quiero los dos paises pero para vivir este. Por seguridad aquí.”

K :“¿Entonces nunca era como de escapar Mexico?”

A: “No. Quiera tener cosas buenas de Mexico, divertirme alla con cosas que me gustan de alla. Pero en unos mesas la venir a los Estado Unidos a ganar dinero. Es lo que se me hiso lo mas bonito, ganar dinero tener tu dinero.

Even before citizenship, my grandmother felt she had a right to belong where she wanted to, that it was never about trying to escape Mexico or residing entirely in the US. She valued Mexico and the lifestyle over there, and she valued the US and her ability to make money here. And so, she wanted to have both, and be able to go back and forth as she pleased without having to worry. With citizenship, she no longer had to deal with the 6-month residency rule or with the more insecure modes of travelling between the two countries without US documentation. She didn’t want citizenship to stay in the US, she wanted citizenship to be able to leave it, knowing that she could return whenever she wanted.

That freedom of movement between these two spaces that she now has, between the space she was born in and the one she has prospered in, is something I envy. I only have US citizenship, and this is not to say that I am not grateful or wish to have another experience with citizenship, but my grandmother’s journey has given her a freedom to live and travel between two very different spaces that she has such strong connections to. I think about my connections to spaces, and how I have no strong desire to expand my citizenship status as she has, how in a

way, she has the upper hand out of the two of us in terms of our ability to move. I am the more stationary body, and she the more migrant, untethered body. Citizenship has a way of tying us down to a space, but migrant bodies challenge that in ways less necessary to generations down the line. When I was in Canada to study, all I could think about was how uncomfortable it felt to be in that space, how it was so different from everything I was used to, the ways in which it lacked the peoples and culture that made me feel comfortable. My grandmother was able to find figures of belonging throughout her migration to the US, whereas I felt that that my existence in Canada was so futile and that it was too different for me to feel like I could prosper there. I think there is something to say about how different the spaces were, Quebec-to-California vs Mexico-to-California, but equally important are our abilities to overcome that difference and find belonging for the purposes of progression. I felt as if I was better suited to California, whereas she continues to exist within both spaces in many ways. She can move back and forth between the spaces, picking and choosing what she likes from each. I, instead of looking for a new space with greater opportunities, tend to try and see how I can change the space I currently reside in.

This discussion with my grandmother about citizenship and its role in our belonging has changed my perspective on what citizenship can encompass, as well as just how we can come to connect to it. I still believe that legal citizenship can be overrated to a certain degree, but that is natural for us marginalized peoples who are born with it. It does not guarantee economic security or safety to the bodies of color that are routinely discriminated against in the US. Being born with US citizenship, I am critical of the way the US actively works to systemically exclude and devalue the lives of citizens of color, how we are seen as less worthy than white citizens or even white bodies in general regardless of their documentation. My grandmother's acquiring of US citizenship did not bring any sort of upward mobility or progress in her social standing either.

She worked the same manual labor jobs she always did, and she continued to have the same life she had already cultivated before gaining even residency. What citizenship gave her was a reassurance for everything she already had, a stability, and not necessarily more mobility within US institutions. What citizenship means to us is different, and it plays different roles in how we come to find belonging. For my grandmother, the lack of citizenship forced her to connected with other undocumented people and find the *Latinidad* that comes from a culture of un-documentation. Her lack of citizenship was in a way more important to cultivating an identity and belonging within this space than having citizenship. My connection to citizenship is inverse, in that I have always had it, and my *Latinidad* and culture of citizenship stems from navigating what that citizenship actually means to me. Citizenship is vital for us, in both having and not having it. While it does not guarantee safety, it affects how we identify and how we find those we connect with through shared struggles of belonging. In this way, not having citizenship is of equal value when it comes to our ability to create community and find a "culture of citizenship." Citizenship does not demonstrate belonging, but it does play a role in how we find it.

My connection to citizenship and belonging is different. I have the privilege of ignoring it for the most part, because of the sacrifices of my family, and I am critical of the belonging it supposedly brings. My citizenship is tied to those before me and has been used to provide citizenship to my mother. My citizenship is not my own. My citizenship is communal, and with that comes a sense of value that I often overlook. If I cannot value my citizenship for what it has done for me, I can value it for what it has provided for my mother, and the sacrifices that have been made for me to have the ability to be critical of it. Citizenship as well has lost some value in that it does not have that same signifier of mobility for myself. I cannot engage with another space in the same way my grandmother continues to with Mexico. I am most comfortable here

and it is difficult to view another space as having greater opportunity, whether it be because of difference or my own inability to find belonging in the way my grandmother has. The afterlives of migrations is about engaging with the complicated relationship we now have with citizenship, acknowledging what it has and has not provided for us and our family. It is about navigating a country that has been seen by one's family as valuable but has viewed you as lesser. We are passed the point of attaining citizenship, and it is now about what this citizenship means for us? What do we do with it? There is value in our citizenship, if not in what it brings to us, than for what it brings to our family. Let us navigate what this citizenship means for all of our sakes.

Conclusion

[111]K: “ya llegamos al fin”

A: “¿Lo creas?”

I found introducing the topics and ideas for my thesis to be a very uncomfortable and personal task to overcome. It was a struggle to claim that the lived experience of my grandmother and myself were as worthy to academia as Fanon’s or Anzaldua’s. Although I have already written it and am now coming to the end of the experience, that struggle still weighs on my mind. How do I conclude such a personal project, which is connected to my life and my grandmother’s so intimately? Our continued struggles, which have persisted through our lives and will continue to long after this document is closed? Writing the conclusion to an essay about systemic discrimination and exploitation that continues to persist across generations for my family asks me to reflect on everything that has happened and what I hope will happen to us. My grandmother did this, this is what I’m doing; has there been progression in our belonging? Where do we go from here?

What I can acknowledge with confidence is what these discussions have provided for me emotionally, and how this process of excavating my family’s history of migration and my present day connections to it has broadened our understandings of what migration encompasses as well as how many facets of that migration continue to persist generations later. In addition to following our migration narrative over generations (as opposed to the belief that migration concludes with citizenship), our narratives focus specifically on the Mexican migrant experience

[111] Refer to translation document section (37)

in the US. I have learned that specificity is so important when discussing migration, as the relationship between the US and Mexico is very different from migration to Europe or elsewhere, or even migration to the US from any country in the global south that comes through Mexico. The discussion of Mexican migration to the US is not just about migration itself; it encompasses racial politics, a history of legal discourse concerning the construction of an "other" to the US, the history of the physical US Southwest and the exploitation of specific populations over generations. In this way, this thesis about my grandmother and myself at the same time clarifies the need to expand our understanding of migration in general while at the same time acknowledging the specificity of our experiences as people who come from Mexico. Fanon and Anzaldua are still so relevant, but context is important when discussing them. I can only dream of how Anzaldua would write about the Chicanx identity in the current political and social landscape, or how Fanon would interpret the legal othering of the Mexican in the US or the unique connection of Mexicans to US citizenship. Equally, the specificity of the Mexican migrant narrative analysis continues to require exploration, as there is no similar experience in the world and the relations between the US and Mexico continue to shift socially and politically.

Each of the themes addressed has dealt with belonging in their own unique way for Mexican migrants and the generations that follow. What I find most challenging from these various conversations though, is how time spent in a space never played a critical role in having a sense of belonging for my grandmother. Nor does the amount of time you spend in a space necessarily correlate with an increased sense of belonging. Belonging comes in waves, moments of belonging as opposed to an idea of somehow ultimately attaining it. Equally, I've learned that we find belonging throughout the struggle of not belonging, by connecting with those around us who also don't belong. Not belonging, is a state that we move ourselves and each other in and

out of, a process that is often at times totally disconnected from the state. I find belonging in those same classrooms where I am reminded I don't belong, I find belonging in the working towards creating more inclusive spaces, there are moments of belonging throughout this life of other. It is something we have been through already, and will continue to go through, and it will only become increasingly important to identify what brings those feelings of belonging to each of us.

> [112]A: "Yo sonaba con que, iba a vivir… que iba estar bien. Yo siempre pensaba que el tiempo pasaba y yo iba estar mejor. Eso era lo que yo pensaba pero nunca era. No sucedía. No pensaba eso."
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> K: "¿Como que no paso?"
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> A: "No estábamos acomodados. Seguimos mal. Fracasados pues."
>
> K: "¿Pensabas que iba mejorar?"
>
> A: "Mhm, como no perdía la fe. Pero no se venían buen las cosas"

As migrants, we have a history of movement and instability, always hoping for the best and having faith that we will achieve better. This is what we are comfortable with, always seeking something better for ourselves and our loved ones. It is in that search for belonging that we find our belonging. We have faith that someday we will get to where we want to be, and while we may never get there, we regularly find moments of it along the way that keep us going.

The discussion of space and what we seek from it when relocating became a site of contestation for both of us. As a Mexican migrant without many work opportunities, my grandmother framed the US as a space of possibility and growth, indulging in the popular narrative of the "American Dream" and the space being seen as the land of opportunity. My

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[112] Refer to translation document section (38)

grandmother was able to have a rapid emotional attachment to the US for a variety of reasons, the most prevalent being an immediate recollection of home within this new space. Castenada discusses the construction of a social space, which my grandmother did do, but I believe that this ability to find home in the unknown is something my grandmother's experiences suggests is a mechanism specifically Mexican migrants use when coming to the US. As Anzaldúa points out, much of the US South-West was previously Mexican territory, and before that was populated by Native populations who would eventually come to be included in both US and Mexican territories. Space and how we are able to connect becomes a radical site of reclamation when discussed specifically in the US-Mexican context. The Mexican migrant narrative challenged how we think about who land belongs to, how the history of a land can continue to reverberate to people generations later, and how migration can actually be a kind of coming of home.

In contrast, my experiences with spaces have been primarily tied to the US, never having tried to migrate or start another life in a different country. This has created a different connection to the US, the immediate comfort my grandmother was able to create for herself is lacking in my experience. I was born into the unfamiliar, I come from migrant parents whose culture was heavily tied to Mexico. I was born into the space of the US with the identity of a Mexican migrant but lacking a connection to Mexican space. My home is a space of conflict and othering. What comes from this is a longing for a new space where my existence is not questioned, and the imagined possibility of being freed from this othering. My grandmother also dealt with feelings of not belonging in the space she was born into because of the ways it limited her opportunities. She found belonging in an unknown space through its geographic and historical significance to Mexico and its peoples. My grandmother was able to find belonging through the both the similarities and differences between these two spaces, I find my belonging building off of those

same aspects. There are qualities of the US and Mexico that are exclusionary but at the same time fulfilling. We both attempt to blend qualities from two different cultures to create something entirely unique. It is not about assimilating perfectly to either dominant culture, it is about challenging its expectation of what it means to be someone who belongs. We both belong without being recognized as belonging, we create our spaces of belonging as a reaction to that exclusion.

The second theme of labor and exploitation of brown peoples is another constant throughout our experiences. My grandmother had a strong connection to spaces through her ability to work, manual labor in the US became a form of finding individuality and a sort of freedom that she would not have been able to find in Mexico at the time. Labor played such an intricate role in her feelings of belonging: she found belonging in her labor within a space that she was legally being kept out of. This same history of fieldwork that she came to be so proud of, though, has had a negative effect on my childhood, where I saw it as a badge of otherness, I've had to work through to find my moments of belonging. It was the stereotypical undocumented migrant story of crossing the border illegally and picking fruit, and it is where I come from. My history of labor has been to find work that was so distant from this type of labor, work that would somehow erase my family's history and in some way provide me with a greater feeling of belonging. I excelled in school, and I found myself using academia to create that distance between my family and me. This creation of distance worked, but also highlighted how little belonging I found in academia and some of the work I was doing there. I found myself being exploited in many ways within academic institutions: my identity and where I came from were still being used for the profit and knowledge of white populations. It was only when I chose to do work that dealt with the issues of discrimination my family felt that I found meaningful moments

of belonging, where I bridged the labor done previously to the labor I am doing now. Our labor has always been a site of both exploitation and fulfillment, and it feels like one cannot exist without the other. In the ways that both my grandmother and I continue to balance feelings of belonging and not belonging in the US, there is a balance in the labor we do. I cannot every move past my family's exploitative labor history, because it is also where I find my most fulfilling work to come from. It is still in those fields where my family picked fruit I find valuable information to be tilled from. Bringing my families labor into the classroom is not simply reliving a past history of exploitation, but one of reclaiming that lived experience and labor as a site of knowledge that has been deemed as invaluable and unimportant. It is about finding belonging in a labor that is at times difficult and exploitative, just as my grandmother did.

The third theme of population addressed how we connect to those around us, the ways in which people we interact with affect our sense of belonging. My grandmother had a very distinct view on who she chose to interact with in the US: no white people! She believed them to be too different and she knew that it would have to be her doing the labor of making white people feel comfortable with her presence. Instead, she chose to seek community in those with similar experiences as her. Through solidarity with those who have had similar experiences, she was able to find an entirely new identity, *Latinidad*. It is built off of shared experiences of discrimination and otherness within the US, an entirely new identity she could not have crafted in Mexico. Her experiences in the US also changed how she viewed other Mexicans when she moved back to Mexico. She began to view herself as different and better than just any Mexican, wanting to be seen as more worthy because of her experiences in the US. In the states, she was fine just being another Mexican and hanging out with other undocumented Mexicans. In Mexico,

you had to have a certain income, come from a good family, be worthy of her time. Her identity shifted and took into consideration the difference in populations while moving back and forth between Mexico and the US. It was never only about who she was, it was always about who was around her. Her identity became one of negotiating what aspects of both cultures she wanted to carry on while moving between these two spaces. Again, we see that this negotiation between two different cultures happening and understandings. It is not about trying to identify perfectly with any dominant identity, it is about crafting something entirely unique to her experiences and finding other that are equally caught between worlds. Identity for the migrant is built around disidentifying. It is in the ways we do not align that we are able to find alignment.

This method of finding oneself has continued throughout my life, generation after the initial migration. I was raised in the US, I was raised around the forms of discrimination that my grandmother experienced later on, and it is something I have learned to navigate as opposed to avoiding engagement entirely. I acknowledge that I have similar characteristics to whiteness: being raised here, speaking English fluently, and having been born with citizenship. These are markers of privilege within this space and differentiate me from Mexican migrant populations, putting me in this space of neither white nor Mexican or entirely tied to Mexican culture. In the way my grandmother found an identity through shared struggles, I also find and solidify my identity with other marginalized bodies living in this ambiguity. My grandmother's *Latinidad* is informed by a past life in Mexico, where as mine is informed by the culture I come from. My *Latinidad* is still about a negotiation between what I enjoy and participate in in US culture, and what I value from my family's culture. In this way, both of our stories are anti-assimilative and work against the notion that in order to find belonging or community, we must discard previous ways of life. We become a population that is unique: it is not an advancement towards whiteness

because that will never happen nor is it a move away from brownness because that is our lived experience and culture. It is an identity that is molded through not belonging. It is a migrant identity, one that that is constantly in flux and taking shape, never reaching a home or having one to return to but at the same time never alone.

Finally, the discussion of citizenship has addressed how documentation comes to affect the feelings of belonging for Mexican undocumented migrants specifically, and how I have struggled with—but ultimately found the importance of—my own citizenship. For my grandmother, citizenship was always something she was working towards, something that was elusive and determined how she was able to engage with a space. It was in those experiences of un-documentation that she found community and engaged with group who also struggled with the migrant experience. There was value found before citizenship, people who she connected with and who would aid each other in navigating this space. Ultimately when she received documentation, her social life did not change, she still continued to exist in the US in similar ways that she did before. It was in lacking citizenship, that she found the strongest feelings of belonging. I have come to find belonging in my citizenship through other means though, by what my citizenship has provided for my family before me. My grandmother giving birth in the US meant that she would have easier access to citizenship, and my citizenship allowed my mother to acquire her legal residency more easily as well. In this way, my citizenship has worked as a tool for my family to acquire their own; it is not a singular experience but a communal one where our citizenship does not just benefit us, but the ones before us as well. My grandmother found her belonging in the life before citizenship, and I find mine in what it provides for others, in this way, that act of owning citizenship isn't in and of itself a form of belonging. Belonging is found around our citizenship, not through it. Citizenship does not define where or how one exists, nor

does it provide security for people of color in the US, it is the communities we find through our negotiations with citizenship that come to play the most important roles in our belonging.

I want to return to a question I asked in the introduction: Does the migrant identity require a desired space to reside in as an end goal? Can it instead be centered around our persistence to thrive and work within systems of exclusion? Through the conversations with my grandmother, the comparing of our experiences and how we find belonging, I have found that migrant identity is not solely about the act of moving between spaces. Migrant identity can be shaped through the inability to securely fit into any population or space; it is about the navigation of various spaces (either physically or metaphorically) and how we are able to find belonging through an inability to belong. My grandmother's migration was about finding independence and an identity that she was more comfortable with than the one allowed in Mexico. In coming to the US, finding labor that brought her pride, and engaging with others that were similarly struggling to find belonging, she found that new identity. It wasn't just about getting citizenship, citizenship would have meant nothing if there wasn't something to lose here. My identity is one formed within this space of exclusion. It is an identity that is constantly moving back and forth between privilege and discrimination, searching for spaces and groups where I feel comfortable with that are not tied to a state. It is in that searching for belonging that the migrant identity takes shape, the constant work against exclusion and being told that there isn't space for us. There is no end goal, because we have no idea what that would even be, but we are able to find instances of belonging throughout that journey.

When considering future research in the field of migrant studies or the modes of belonging found by people color, I believe this reflection and bridging of personal histories and sharing of experiences to be crucial. This examination into my grandmother's experiences not

only sheds light on just how different she views her migrant experience than how I imagine them, but also creates a sense of solidarity between our experiences. It challenged me to understand a different perspective on migration, one that I found to be frustrating at times because they didn't align with my own feelings. It made me expand my understanding of what belonging looks like and how we attain it. She has found belonging in so many ways that I couldn't have imagined, at times feeling more secure in her belonging here than I do. Connecting to those who have dealt with these issues provides roadmaps to what we as a community have been through, what has worked for some of us, what doesn't work anymore or no longer seems relevant, and what continues to be important across generations. I wish to purse this type of work and expand it to those outside of my own family, to do direct work with those in my community or similar communities and continue gathering conversations between us that will continue to challenge our understandings of belonging and how we ourselves can create it. It solidified a lot about where I come from, and what we've done together and apart, how she has dealt with exclusion and worked against the state trying to keep her out. At times, it feels like there is no hope in trying to find belonging as bodies who are othered, but this project has reminded me that we have found belonging, and continue to find belonging in so many different ways. It is not about achieving this state of belonging, but about the lived experiences of seeking out those elusive moments of belonging that come to have so much more value. Discovering that working as an undocumented fruit picker provided independence and stability to your life, or discovering that critical writing about modes of discrimination we face, these are moments of belonging that do not rely on any state's intervention.

While the findings of this project were not what I expected going in, I can confidently say that this thesis has provided me with exactly what I was hoping to achieve. It has made me

reflect on my own insecurities and privilege, and understanding a different perspective of the US. Yes, I continue to experience discrimination from the state and so does my grandmother, but she has learned not to expect much from it and seeks her belonging from other places. This project has not made me more grateful for this country; on the contrary learning about her experiences has made me even angrier at its treatment of migrants and citizens of color. It has also reminded me and highlighted our power and resilience, and how we are able to find home wherever we go. Through all these trials and tribulations, my grandmother was able to create a home space and find value in everything she's been through. Maybe it comes with age or time, maybe it comes from this extension of family and offspring. Perhaps one day my kids will be angry at me for not being angrier at the systems in which I am working, and which is profiting from my labor. In the way my grandmother's journey continues to live through me, mine will continue as well. And I think that's what the afterlife of migration is: a delayed feeling of generational anger, the wish for things to have been better for the ones before us. To use our migrant histories to acknowledge what we have, but not settle, to be grateful and angry, to move forward while not forgetting our past, to carry ourselves and our family's labor into a place where it has more value. We don't stop migrating, because it is still not good enough, and in that migration, we continue to challenge what it means to find home and belonging.

113K: "¿Como piensas en tu vida? ¿Come te fue en la vida?"

A: "Pues… como… muchas bajas, muy bajas, y otras altas. Mi vida tubo altas y bajas. Pero fue bonito porque se cerraba un puerta y se abría otra. Y sigo pensando que las vida es haci. Nunca es lavarla tan parejita así. En mi caso no. Alomejor otras families an podido estar estables, sin movimientos de nada, pero la mía fue como el mar. Con unas

113 Refer to translation document section (39)

olas altas altas altas, y luego se baja. Así fue, porque así era. Me enseño a ser mas fuerte. Me ensaño a tomar riesgos, yo e tomado riesgos. Y digo '¿lo ago? ¿O no lo ago? Si lo ago.' Y Dios a sido muy quidadoso conmigo porque en los riesgos que yo e tomado… no creo que me arrepiento."

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Translation Document

(1)
A: We started to plant strawberries and take the girls. Your mom, Pati, Hilda to help us because that was a requirement they had.
K: You had to take your kids?
A: Bring your kids to help during vacations and weekends. And if you can find somebody from your family to work you can add them. But it was very important that they wanted families, to help families. And to make the job cleaner and more safe. Because if the strawberries grow and no one pics them, they lose money, the ones who rent the land… and when its your own family they have to work.
K: Yea but why was it necessary to bring your kids, why couldn't it be friends?
A: No, because its to help families.
K: But did they pay the kids?
A: Why the kids learned how to work and they were in school.
K: But they didn't pay them.
A: No no you didn't pay them, it wasn a requirement you had to pay them, they're your kids.
K: Yea but they're working.
A: But they are living with you, you give them an education. How are you going to have them be lazy?
K: Well in that time it was illegal to let children work.
A: No because it was in your house. Like is it illegal if you mow the lawn for your mom?
K: What Driscoll was doing
A: No, Driscoll wanted families to be responsible for the work. It's like if you buy a house, and they say 'if you put your children to work in your home that you bought its illegal?'"
K: Well that's work in a home, not for a business.
A: That was a job so that our kids could live. There were Filipinos, there were Mexicans, there weren't any white people because they didn't apply I think… they picked for a bit and then they went to play. They didn't spend the entire time working.

(2)
A: "Your great grandfather said 'Look Juanita, I know that women in the United States work. And they make money. What are you doing here?'."

(3)
K: "Why were you going to go? Just to make money?"
A: "Your great grandfather told me 'Look Juanita, here Jesus (my grandfather) own property, but its very small and he's always going to be a gambler… I know that the women in the United States work, and you are really great at working. You are not okay here. Jesus is a cattle rancher, he's a gambler, he's really good as a rancher, but he's a gambler. You are not secure here, it's not in your best interest to stay here.'."

(4)

A: "…passing through some beautiful wood harvesting plants, seeing all the deer on the roads, some really pretty places that made me feel like I was back at my ranch where I was born. Because that's how it was. It was reminding me everything about the land and the ranch I was born on because it was the same. There was nothing nearby, you just drove on road without seeing towns. None."

(5)
K: "When you were in the United States, did you ever miss Mexico?"
A: "I didn't want to return to Mexico"
K: "Never?"
A: "I wanted to stay and I didn't miss Mexico. I saw that I could do a lot of things here… It was like a nightmare imagining that I would go back to Mexico. I would have nightmares where I'd say 'why'd I return? I didn't need to come back to Mexico.' I did have dreams like that… and then I'd wake up and say 'oh thank thank goodness, thank goodness that wasn't real,'."

(6)
A: "I didn't want to go back to living on a ranch, living on a ranch is really hard after you've learned to drive a car, having seen such beautiful places, the money you make working and it's yours."
K: "How did it feel returning to Mexico?"
A: "I felt like I had return and cross the border again, it was the only thing I could think about. I now how to do it, I have to do it again."
K: "You couldn't live over there anymore?"
A: "No, not anymore, I felt like I couldn't anymore."

(7)
K: "You don't think you can live in Mexico anymore?"
A: "No, not for more than… 3 months."
K: "Why not?"
A: "Because I feel like all of a sudden you don't have any money. And I get frustrated with how people live over there, it exhausts me."
K: "What exhausts you about it?"
A: "That I cant just get in my car and go to a store and buy what I want, almost everything, over there I cant do that. I never have enough money. The stores over there don't have a lot of what e have here.
K: "So theres just more to do here and more stuff here?"
A: "For me, yes."

(8)
A: They said "here the work ends in a week. Now, if you two want to keep working you'll have to go to Oregon. In Oregon there are cherries, great for picking. The women work, the men too. And there is somebody to take you for a price. That man will wait for you to make money from working there before needing to pay him."

(9)

A: They told us “Want to work?” Of course we want to work. They said “Go walking to this place where they pack apples and they’ll give you work. They’re looking for men and women.” We went, we went walking.

(10)
A: I wish it didn’t have to end. I loved it so much there
K: But what did you love so much?
A: To be out there picking fruit, that was to tasty. And they gave us a little stove and some dishes so that we could cook, the boss, the rancher, the owner of the land.

(11)
A: I was already pregnant. I was throwing up everyday.
K: And you still went to work?
A: Yes, yes, I worked like that. But everyday I had to throw up once. There wasn’t a single day I didn’t, that went on for a many months

(12)
A: We would take the kids to the fields to work.
K: How old were they?
A: Well they were months old.
K: And you took them to work.
A: We took them with us and we’d put them in a box. A carboard box while we worked. And we took the milk and we would feed them there. Poor things, yea we’d put them in a cardboard box. And when they would cry we would go comfort them for a bit and then put them to sleep and then go back to work. We kept working.”

(13)
K: Why did you like it so much if you couldn’t go out?
A: Because, well I didn’t really have any reason to go out. I wanted to work, I wanted to have money, to spend, to have.
K: To spend where if you couldn’t go out?
A: But to go back to Mexico when we left. We came to make money, we didn’t come to stay and live here. We came to make money so we could leave.

(14)
K: So you wanted to return to make money.
A: Of course, and not be over there waiting around for someone to give you money. And also I didn’t trust that your grandfather was going to take care of me forever. I didn’t know if one day he would decide to leave me. What would I do then? I had faith in myself, but not in him taking care of me forever.

(15)
A: No, there was nothing for women. And I had already learned on the first trip that the women over here could take care o themselves working. They had their own money and it was equal to what a man made. Your grandfather and I made the same money. We worked together and he

made the same amount as me when we got paid. That was really really great for me. There wasn't that in Mexico.
K: It was more than the money, it was to be able to be your own person.
A: Yes

(16)
K: And you didn't care that the only work you had was difficult?
A: I never had a difficult job here in the United States. Never.

(17)
K: "So, you didn't know any white people?"
A: "We called them 'gringos'"

(18)
K: "You didn't talk to them or just didn't have any reason to talk to them or?"
A: "I did. For my first job I had to know the numbers one through ten, know how to say them. My first number to work with a gringo, I was given the number one. They paid you for the amount of boxes you completed. And they told me 'When you out a bucket in the container of fruits, he is a gringo and you just tell him number one, numero uno. You're just going to tell him one'."

(19)
K: "In your life outside of work, you never talked to a gringo"
A: "No, not with any gringo. You would go to the store, you'd get your things, youd go to the register and you didn't ask or say anything. If something came out wrong, you went home and you either threw it out or you ate it. You didn't ask, you couldn't even read."
K: "You couldn't talk to a majority of the people"
A: "No."
K: "But you still would prefer being here than in Mexico?"
A: "Yes."

(20)
K: "Why? If you couldn't talk to…"
A: "I never thought that was so difficult. Never. Because wherever you went, there was a Mexican telling you what to do… An aid that would lead all the Mexicans.

(21)
K: "Nothing ever, like, happened where a gringo was being bad to you guys? Was being racist or?"
A: "No, no because… no. In my case no, because I just worked and didn't fight with them, we never even discussed anything."

(22)
K: "Even to this day, you still never talk to gringos and you don't have any like gringos as friends."
A: "No."

K: “And you think… its because…”
A: “It’s because… I don’t feel I could be like a gringo. I’m very Mexican and I’d have to change everything. It’s a different culture. I never talked with the gringos to be like ‘we have a good friendship,’ no. Mexicans yes, even if they lived their whole lives over here. I’d arrive and we would talk and we could talk more. I never left Mexico to put it better.”

(23)
A: “Now I feel very much from here, and I don’t feel less than a gringo, I feel like we could be at the same level, just that some, you could say, have more money, have nicer houses, have everything, but that doesn’t… doesn’t make me feel like I’m not equal to them. I can be Mexican and now be a gringa and still be poor like I am.”

(24)
A: “There was a lot of people I didn’t trust. I saw people and I couldn’t trust in anybody.”
K: “Just you and your daughters?”
A: “Well, its just that I wanted them to be protected, that they wouldn’t be like others I saw, very like, like they weren’t worth anything*. I wanted mine to be worth something. I never allowed them to be friends with someone who was outside of their level”
K: “What were the differences?”
A: “That I would they were really poor, and that mine had more money. Because we lived in a nice house, even though we were renting it was nice, we had a car, we had a ranch, lots of friends with money and family. And these people that could have been good friends to my daughters, they just had a little house, like poor people and didn’t have the money that your grandfather would bring us to spend… sometimes they would find people from a level like them, but even then I still asked ‘and who is she? And whose her mom? And where does she live? And what is she into?’ I was so mean*, I didn’t socialize, I separated myself from people that I could have like hung out with*.”
K: “You did it because you wanted to protect your daughters”
A: “I wanted, like, them to know I was from another level. That’s what I wanted to be, that I was the woman* that came from over here from another place… That I was like from another country I guess… and that my daughters were very pretty* and that very few girls from over there saw themselves as equal to mine. That’s what happened to me over there in Vera Cruz.”

(25)
K: “But when you were here in Watsonville, you didn’t care about this whole thing with levels?”
A: “No, in Watsonville there was none of that. Watsonville was like, like I was good, there wasn’t any competition. In Watsonville no, everything was good, we were all the same. And over there (Mexico) no. There were a lot of levels.”
K: “In Watsonville, you felt equal to everybody else…”
A: “The same”
K: “But when you went back to Mexico, that’s when you started to be afraid of other people”
A: “Scared of the people, scared to be a failure/poor*, even more of a failure/poor* still. Until what on thinks will happen, happened, Until everything ended* until I had really failed* that I left (Mexico).

(26)

A: “They just didn’t want to give them”

(27)
A: “There was a river we would wash our clothes in. Our clothes didn’t get very dirty, they could have taken us to a laundromat in the town but we didn’t want to go.”
K : “Because it was expensive?”
A: “Because it was hard and we were scared that they’d find us there. A lot of people were taken from laundromats. Immigration would show up and taken them to Mexico. They’d get take them out.”

(28)
A: “They would get off and we wouldn’t because we were scared they’d see us and they would, like get us and get us out of the country. And so they’d tell us ‘You stay here in the car, nobody get off. I can be dangerous,’.”

(29)
A: “We would hear them say ‘Immigration!’ and here came the men from immigration over the hills. And we started saying lets stay here. Lots of people ran. We didn’t, we stayed there sitting. What could we do? We had the kids. And nobody told us anything, they passed by us looking for the ones who ran. And we just sat there.

(30)
A: “They started telling me ‘well you two should have a son born here in this country because that helps you get your papers together’.”

(31)
A: “I came pregnant with Wendy, I didn’t want Wendy to be born over there (Mexico). I said no I have to return over there (the U.S.), she’ll be born there there to have security too.”

(32)
A: “I had applied and I was accepted, but I had to return to Mexico and I was already here. That’s the trouble I had to get into because they wouldn’t give me my papers. They were taking too long and I was scared of staying in Mexico and your grandpa coming alone. I said no, I’m going, and I came.”

(33)
A: “A lot changed, there was a security. You felt like you could see the light of day.”
K: “But what changed?”
A: “That you didn’t… like if I’m working and immigration shows up. You’re working comfortably and there isn’t any fear anymore.”
K: “But that was the only thing that changed? That you didn’t have that fear anymore?”
A: “Yes”
K: “But you still had the same job?”
A: “The same job, picking apples.”
K: “And like you didn’t look for a better job? You were happy there?”

A: “No, I wanted to make more money. But nobody was going to give me a better job if I didn’t finish school. Who was gonna give me a job?”

(34)
A: “I had to return over here to not lose the papers I had, the residency.”

(35)
A: “There were a lot of rights. I could vote. In the social security offices, to be a worker, its better to be a citizen. Because if you’re a citizen, they think you’re not going to be going back to mexico often.”
K: “If you didn’t pass, and they told you that you couldn’t be a citizen, you would have stayed here still?”
A: “Yes, I just wouldn’t be a citizen but I would have stayed. I had my life secure here, the being a citizen was to have other benefits. It was to fight to be better here.”
K: “And you think it helped?”
A: “Yes! Yes it helped me a lot. Security. I began to feel better when I went to an office and they’d ask ‘citizen or resident?’ ‘Citizen’ and real fast they changed. ‘Oh you’re a citizen then you have these rights,’.”
K: “So the people here also started treating you differently?”
A: “Different, yea.”

(36)
K: “And you never felt like you shouldn’t be here or like it wasn’t a good idea?”
A: “Never, never.”
K: “You always felt like you were supposed to be here?”
A: “That I could choose… which place would be better. That was a right I felt. If I wanted to be in Mexico, I’d go to mexico. If I wanted to be in the Unites States, I’m here. In being a citizen, I could leave to live over there and it affected nothing. And in being a resident I had to be six months over there and six months here. So I always though, I want both countries, but to live here. There’s security here.”
K: “So it was never about like escaping Mexico.”
A: “No. I wanted good things from Mexico, have fun over there with things I like from there. But after a couple months, come back to the United States to make money. That what was the nicest to me, making and having money.”

(37)
K: Well, we made it to the end.
A: You think so?

(38)
A: I dreamed that, I would live… that I would be okay. I always thought that time would pass and things would get better. That’s what I always hoped but it never happened. It didn’t happen. It never happened.
K: Like what didn’t happen?
A: We were never stable, bad things kept happening. Failures I guess.
K: But you thought it would get better?

A: Mhm, like I didn't lose faith. But things never went well usually.

(39)
K: So what do you think about your life? How did your life go?
A: Well… like… lots of lows, very low lows, and some highs. My life had highs and lows. But it was beautiful because one door would close and another would open. I keep thinking that that's how life is supposed to be. It's never about having it super stable. In my case no. Maybe for other families, they were able to be more stable, without any movements, but mine was like the ocean. With some waves really really high, and then low. That's how it went, because that's how it was. It taught me to be stronger. It taught me to take more risks, and I have taken risks. I say "do I do it? Or do I not do it? Yea I'll do it." And god has been so careful with me because in the risks I've taken… I don't think I have any regrets.