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**The (trans)formation of illegality as an identity:
A study of the organization of
undocumented Mexican immigrants and their children
in New York City**

by

Jocelyn Solis

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York**

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Abstract

**The (trans)formation of illegality as an identity:
A study of the organization of undocumented Mexican immigrants and their children in
New York City**

by

Jocelyn Solís

Advisor: Professor Colette Daiute

This dissertation studies the psychological formation of illegality as an identity among undocumented Mexican immigrants and their children living in New York City. The research context was a community-based organization working at the grassroots level with Mexican immigrant families to defend their human and legal rights. Parting from Vygotskian, sociohistorical theory and discourse psychology, the identities of Mexican immigrants and children were conceptualized as social positions of power that develop from and through their goal-directed use of discourses and cultural practices available institutionally. Data were collected primarily in field notes capturing participatory observation of the organization for more than three years, 16 bulletins written by its members on numerous topics, a writing workshop conducted with five focal children and youth, and an in-depth interview with their mothers. Discourse analyses revealed four grounded topics in relation to illegality, including Language, Citizenship, Religiosity, and Violence through which the discourses and other cultural practices of both the organization and of individual participants were analyzed further. The undocumented Mexican immigrants involved in the organization were found to

develop from an "illegal" to an "undocumented" identity that functioned to make their presence visible, claim rights, and counter societal claims about their legitimacy and citizenship entitlement. Availability of social structures other than undocumented status such as race/ethnicity, class, language and gender were also used by Mexican immigrants and children to position themselves and draw contrasts or make moral judgments that served to identify themselves. The children of immigrants demonstrated the most developmental diversity and points of conflict in their developing identities evidenced at one extreme in their experiences of illegality as a violence. The study illustrates how personal and societal histories intersect in the psychological transformation of Mexican immigrants and children of one organization in New York City to produce complex, concurrent, multidimensional, and multidirectional lines of development. It concludes with practical and scholarly implications.

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can live up to the standards you set.

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Jocelyn

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PART I:
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

Transformations of identity: Being “illegal” as told from the borderlands of Manhatitlán

I cannot recall where I first heard or saw the term “Manhatitlán;” regardless, it serves here as a metaphor capturing multiple layers of meaning that converge in this study. Manhatitlán is a hybrid term, a place, the result of a process of identification, a name with a particular history, and a product of human invention. It is one of several terms circulating among Mexican immigrants to re-name and, indeed, appropriate New York City, a place undergoing transformation by this new group of inhabitants.

Always a thorny issue, the study of immigration becomes increasingly complex when it is accompanied by social changes caused by a population of color that is mostly poor and undocumented. The situation of this population at this particular time and place in New York history creates a specially complex sociopolitical problem with psychological consequences worthy of investigation. This study is about psychological development, particularly the formation of identity of undocumented Mexican immigrants. This is an object of analysis that requires serious consideration of the sociological context in and from which psychological phenomena emerge.

Using Vygotskian sociohistorical theory as the overarching analytic tool in this study, I investigate how Mexican immigrants create tools to appropriate and transform their surrounding context as they concurrently define and transform themselves. Whether the end result is a meeting between Manhattan and Tenochtitlan or between Puebla, Mexico and *Nueva York* (to create *Puebla York*), such creative transformations take place in a cultural,

historical, and personal context, and represent the capacity of human beings to produce and change collectively and individually pre-existing conditions for their own purposes. This dissertation seeks to understand how undocumented Mexican immigrants develop their own identities through interactions with the challenges and pressures of society, and to describe this development in its situated emergence from the margins of mainstream society. Moreover, the purpose is also to understand the psychological functions of identity in material ways: how undocumented Mexican immigrants identify themselves and what this allows them to do, think, and know at particular times and places. In this sense, identity is used in this dissertation as an overarching cultural frame for knowledge, thought, and action, rather than as one component of human development.

Broadly speaking, this study is about how undocumented Mexican immigrants and their children make psychological use of their immigration status in their everyday lives. An initial motivation that led to this study was a question about how individuals negotiate or integrate into their identities negative societal values, opinions, and attitudes toward undocumented immigrants with their personal experiences and understanding of illegality. While this question is thought-provoking in relation to adults, I was particularly interested in including the experience of children who become undocumented immigrants as a result of circumstances beyond their control, as well as the experiences of U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants who may also be drawn into a world of illegality in spite of their own legal status. Therefore, a primary goal was to investigate how illegality develops as an identity and whether illegality as an identity is distributed across members of families, even among children who are not themselves undocumented. Another goal was to study this from

the perspective and in the voices of undocumented immigrants and their children. By understanding whether illegality becomes a functional identity, one could potentially make predictions about the consequent psychological development and social participation of this population, inclusive of both undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens. However, my intention was not necessarily to detect a uniform developmental progression between parents and children, but rather to understand what the different consequences of illegality may be on such individuals' psychological formation.

Taking sociohistorical theory as a cornerstone, I questioned whether predominant societal values regarding undocumented immigrants at one extreme and personal experience and justification about one's undocumented status at the other extreme are disparate viewpoints to be somehow integrated in the formation of an identity. Initially thinking about illegal identity in terms of Vygotsky's scientific and spontaneous concepts (1986), I theorized that its meaning on the scientific level emerges out of social institutions in the form of an abstract, general, and formal or "official" discourse. That is, the scientific concept of what it means to be "illegal" is a societal-institutional interpretation that is spread through the media as well as through legislation, and ultimately through popular opinion becoming the legitimized version of illegality at a societal level. All of these are practices that set constraints and provide particular avenues of development in certain people's lives. On the other hand, the development of an illegal identity on the spontaneous level has its basis in meaning generated from everyday, personal experience. The spontaneous concept of illegality, then, develops from immigrants' actual experiences in their home country, their motivations to move to New York rather than another place, their integration into New York

City and subsequent lifestyle. This includes the way they manage to reside in a place without access to legal documents and how this is justified to and by their children. Therefore, by studying the experiences and thoughts of undocumented immigrants and their families, one could detect whether and how scientific-institutional and spontaneous-individual meanings are integrated.

Although the concept of an illegal identity under this theoretical understanding has separate origins and processes of formation, I wondered whether there were conditions in which both processes met. If spontaneous and scientific concepts about illegality are contradictory and have different origins, how do undocumented immigrants and their children come to terms with both? Do parents communicate their understanding of illegality to their children? How do children make sense of their status, in turn, when faced with contradictory, yet equally powerful institutional viewpoints? These were the driving questions that laid the groundwork for this study.

By focusing on the dialectical tension between individuals and society, this dissertation takes into consideration the emergence of illegality as one possible historically-situated identity. Issues of immigration are often controversial and politically-charged, raising concerns about the extent to which the presence of newcomers affects the country on a societal, (social, cultural, economic) institutional level. Illegal immigration, in particular, has been an ongoing focus of public discussion in the United States, reemerging especially strongly during times of economic recession and presidential campaigning. Due to geographical proximity, as well as a distinctive history with the U.S., Mexican nationals are often at the center of debates on illegal immigration, and the object of xenophobic discourse

when represented in the media as a threat to the country's stability in terms of economic, linguistic, and cultural homogeneity (e.g., Wolfe, 1997). In spite of such disapproval, Mexican migration to the United States has increased at great speed, especially to geographic sectors that were not formerly receiving sites. New York City is an example of such a receiving region. While an understanding of the social, political, historical, and economic conditions that exist in both Mexico and the United States is necessary to make sense of undocumented immigration, this study seeks to focus on the societal level through individual migrants' experiences and organized actions.

According to Scribner (1985), Vygotsky divides the study of psychological phenomena along several levels of history. In Scribner's modified version, they include four simultaneously-occurring levels: the history of the species, the history of individual societies, the life history of the individual, and the history of a particular psychological system. I based the dissertation along this multi-developmental organization, specifically along the last three levels of history in a heuristic sense. That is, this organization allows me to parcel out important levels of analysis as one way of conceptualizing the problem of illegal identity with the understanding that such separation is really a theoretical tool to understand how each level is present in an integrated way when the problem is studied empirically. The opening chapters describe how societal history comprises the wider, large-scale, institutional situation of illegal immigration, while individual history (ontogeny) represents the more local practices associated with undocumented immigrants; the third level of history is the development of identity as a psychological system. Again, illegality as an identity is theorized as the integration of societal and individual history, rather than as a separate,

hierarchical, or linear level as the term “level” might suggest. To avoid such confusion, herein I replace the term “level” for “dimension” of history. The review of relevant literature in chapters 1 and 2 were incorporated with this structural organization in mind and elaborate the theory further.

The theoretical argument I elaborate in those chapters is that immigrants enter certain conditions in the United States that prescribe the existence of both legal and undocumented immigrants, and that those conditions are produced through mass media, immigration policies, unfair informal practices, and social structures that are based on exclusionary ideologies justified through discourses of liberal democracy. For example, mainstream media provide a view of immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, as unwanted outsiders who deplete the country of its resources in the form of employment, social services, and revenue designed for “real” Americans—citizens who hold the necessary documents, who have not broken any laws, and who are therefore entitled to certain rights and privileges (Edstrom, 1993). I argue that immigration policies also dictate which persons belong in the country, thus pre-supposing the potential existence of those immigrants who do not belong. The militarization of the border designed to ensure that this potential existence does not become a reality also reinforces the idea that those immigrants not belonging in the country are criminals who deserve to be persecuted and prosecuted. Such activities on the societal level produce an image of unwanted foreigners who fall into more than one underclass according to U.S. social structures based on legal status, class, race, and language background (Espenshade & Belanger, 1998). That is, undocumented immigrants are generally portrayed as unwanted, unbelonging foreigners, tinged with an undesirable second-

class color, language, and income. Discourses of liberal democracy are constructed through the media, legislation, and social structures such as class or race as a means of protection and justice for those who are considered legal citizens. As such, my review of the relevant immigration literature suggests that the militarization of the border and consequent death of hundreds of persons attempting to cross the border each year without proper legal documents is justified according to this institutional discourse.

An **illegal identity** emerges as a mediational tool (Vygotsky, 1978) between these discourses of division and exclusion, and those individuals who adopt this already available social position. That is, what mediates between the individual and such social conditions I have described is one's identity: the personal adoption of a particular social position, a position of power, as a way of making sense of one's place in the world, and in relation to other people.

The introductory chapters review social psychological theories of identity, and provide the rationale for my choice of poststructuralist discourse theory to analyze illegality as an identity according to multiple positionalities (Henriques et al., 1984). In this case, the social position available to border-crossers is that of an illegal immigrant, one who falls under the definition of illegality as prescribed by U.S. societal discourses (defined as a rhetoric of liberal democracy, border militarization, immigration laws, etc.). This individual's personal adoption of such an identity thus emerges in her or his activities of concealment and ways of making sense of one's social behavior and obligations that follow, logically, from these pre-established social conditions. Undocumented immigrants who adopt an illegal identity are silenced regarding their status, make few legal demands, and suffer uncontested

exploitation and racism at the hands of employers, landlords, and other persons in higher positions of power according to the prescribed social order. In this way, my review of psychological literature requires alongside it a review of sociological and anthropological literature on Mexican immigration that necessarily politicizes our understanding of identity.

What may be most interesting about investigating the way that unequal relations of power operate in society is discovering the potential that disempowered individuals have to produce change through social movements. There are individuals residing in the country without proper legal documentation who contest predominant discourses of illegality. I argue that they develop an **undocumented identity** based on their own meanings, experiences, and beliefs. Regardless of whether they actually refer to themselves as illegal or undocumented, labels used by undocumented immigrants on an everyday basis are not, on their own, the foundation upon which identity develops. Rather, it is the multiplicity of activities (physical, linguistic, affective, mental) that together provide the grounds upon which identity emerges. Thus, activity theory (Leont'ev, 1978) has been an important tool for analysis and is discussed in more detail in chapter 2. This is especially important when considering that the research took place in a community-based organization affiliated to the Catholic Church, operated by Mexican immigrants in defense of their own rights. Here, societal-institutional, counter-institutional, and individual units of analysis come together. Chapter 3 describes the general operation of the organization, and my entrée into it as a researcher, while chapter 4 outlines the design, grounded methods, and rationale for using multiple analyses.

The four subsequent results chapters contain empirical data that address each simultaneous dimension of historical analysis; they are divided according to routine activities

of the community organization discussed by participants, and they reveal the emergence and functions of an undocumented identity. Chapter 5 discusses the discourse processes that serve as transformative tools in the education or consciousness-raising of Mexican immigrants and the consequent emergence of an undocumented identity. Chapter 6 reviews the political agenda of the organization and describes how an undocumented identity functions to redefine mainstream notions of citizenship. Chapter 7 discusses the relationship between an undocumented identity and immigrants' religiosity and moral judgments about themselves and others, particularly through the use of social structures as class, race, and gender. Chapter 8 examines some limitations on the organization's transformative power, especially among youth who confront violence toward their identities as a result of their undocumented status and who become, potentially, violent youth themselves.

The concluding chapter examines the long-term and large-scale implications of the development of undocumented Mexican families in New York in terms of their projected assimilation and/or transformation of society, as well as the relevance of such implications for immigration, educational, and health policies regarding Mexican families. Chapter 9 also considers the future of research that integrates sociohistorical activity theory with participatory action design to create collaborative communities of change.

This dissertation marks the beginning of a research agenda set out to inform mainstream U.S. society about the growing number of Mexican immigrants arriving in new areas of the country whom we are largely unprepared to receive. It emphasizes immigrants' personal stories of development in complex social, cultural, and political contexts. In this way, public arguments will be informed by the complex conditions and multiple possibilities

of psychological formation created socially for and by undocumented immigrants and their children. Researchers, teachers, policy-makers, activists and others who are interested in the impact that illegal immigration can have on society, on the relationship between identity and action, and on the sociocultural, political, and psychological development of future generations of citizens and leaders need to understand and partake in the formation of Mexican immigrant families, the largest Latino population in the United States. In New York alone, Census 2000 grossly undercalculated the size of the Mexican population at a little more than 260,000 people. Unofficial figures estimate that there are well over 500,000 Mexicans living in the state of New York. Considering that most of this population is young and undocumented, the need for research on its development is both necessary and immediate, especially in light of recent talks between U.S. President Bush and Mexican President Fox to discuss illegal immigration reforms (Schmitt, 2001). Xenophobic reactions spanning the nation after the terrorist attacks of September 11th also demand that we take a moment to consider carefully the role that immigrants play and how they affect and are affected by societal institutions. This study intends to shed light on the formation of illegality as an identity by paying close attention to the words and actions of Mexican immigrants, adults and children, involved in social and personal changes in New York City.

CHAPTER 1

The emergence of “illegal identity” in societal and individual history

In this chapter, I argue that illegality as an identity must be understood in its social-historical emergence whereby it becomes a tool for individuals to make sense of themselves psychologically. Becoming “illegal” is a process that has its origins in societal activities that I will describe below; immigration makes it possible for immigrants to fall into either of two categories: legal or illegal. My use of the term “illegal” here is quite deliberate; it signifies the negativity that is expressed in societal activities. Regardless of whether such negativity is justified, I argue that through societal activities, the potential for the development of an illegal identity pre-exists immigrants entering the United States.

The organization of this chapter reviews the literature on identity along three parallel or simultaneous historical dimensions of formation. Extrapolating from Scribner’s reformulation of Vygotsky’s uses of history to analyze psychological development (1985), the societal dimension represents the wider, large-scale institutional situation of immigration that produces undocumented immigrants, while an individual dimension of historical analysis represents personal history, including local and individual practices that are unique to undocumented people¹. A third dimension of historical analysis stands for the development of identity as a psychological system based on the interaction of societal

¹

Although, I generally prefer to use the term “undocumented” (as do activists working for immigrants’ rights), when I refer to identity developed societally and adopted by individuals as such, I use the term “illegal identity.” On the other hand, I believe that undocumented immigrants can and do re-appropriate or counter this identity so I refer to this as their “undocumented identity.” This distinction will be illustrated further in subsequent chapters.

activity and individual ontogeny through the emergence of cultural tools that perform both material and psychological functions. (See Appendix for an illustrative figure.) It is this last integrative historical analysis that guides the later discussion of the results, especially through sites in which individual and societal dimensions intersect, or even collide. Below, I first review the societal formation of illegality.

The emergence of illegality in societal history

Mexican immigration has historically been portrayed publicly in negative ways (Edstrom, 1993). In terms of illegal Mexican immigration specifically, its strongest opposition has been based on public arguments that ignore the complex ways immigrants are identified in this country. That is, public arguments that support anti-immigrant legislation are presented in such a way that undermines both the multiple factors that sustain an illegal immigrant population in the U.S., and the detrimental effects of such discriminatory legislation on the general population. This section should shed light on such complexities ignored societally by reviewing literature that touches on legal, political, economic, and demographic changes that foment illegal immigration.

Undocumented immigrants are said to overburden welfare programs and healthcare, and to provoke the costly inclusion of English as a Second Language or bilingual programs in schools, all services to which they are not entitled. Illegal immigration is often associated with crime and poverty, also threats to the nation's well-being. Opposition to illegal immigration has led to legislation involving increases in Border Patrol surveillance, and a legal proposal for the denial of birthright citizenship for children of undocumented

immigrants (*Societal and Legal Issues*, 1995). In 1994, voters in California approved Proposition 187, a law that would curtail emergency health services and schooling to undocumented immigrants, primarily affecting undocumented Mexican immigrant families.

In this same year, Operation Gatekeeper was initiated, a \$300 million effort to fortify the border along San Diego; forty-five percent of INS apprehensions took place there the previous year (Cornelius, 1998). According to the Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IRAIRA) signed by President Clinton in 1996, the Border Patrol was to increase by another 10,000 officers by the year 2001 (Suárez-Orozco, 1998). Security provisions of this act authorized such measures as wire-tapping and tracking of undocumented immigrants through IDENT, a national fingerprint database designed to keep them from entering and working in the United States. What such measures fail to recognize publicly is that they permit the government to control and monitor both legal and undocumented immigrants, as well as citizens (Hagan, 1998). Federal opposition to illegal immigration (also termed officially as "low intensity conflict" for its military surveillance measures [Saldivar, 1997]) takes place institutionally, yet places the cause of the social problem in undocumented immigrants themselves, disregarding an entire history of sociological investigation.

In the empirical research literature, the causes of illegal immigration have been located outside of the individual. Investigation on the part of social scientists from diverse perspectives has resulted in discussions about the multiple social causes of illegal immigration, and its impact on U.S. economy and society (e.g., Baca-Ramirez & Bryan, 1980; Chávez, 1994; Houstoun, 1983; Villar, 1994). While empirical research demonstrates

that undocumented Mexican immigrants contribute more to the U.S. economy than they retrieve in services and health care, and are generally more likely to be the victims rather than the initiators of crime, mainstream media and policy makers persist in drawing overwhelmingly negative and over-simplified conclusions about undocumented Mexicans by identifying them as perpetrators and corruptors of U.S. society (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Representations of Mexicans in the U.S. media also reflect uneven relations of power between both countries (Capetillo-Ponce, 2000). These public arguments are large-scaled and they are present not only in legislative changes and media representation, but also in popular opinion. According to national opinion polls, Espenshade and Belanger (1998) find that Americans incorrectly assume that most immigrants in the United States are undocumented and that most undocumented immigrants are Mexican. Actually, the majority of Mexican-origin people in the U.S. are U.S.-born. About 40 percent of all Mexicans living in the U.S. are immigrants (Suárez-Orozco, 1998), also comprising the largest foreign-born group in the country. In fact, Mexico is the largest sender of legal immigrants to the United States (Baker et al., 1998).

As for the "illegal" population, Mexican immigrants generally assume jobs that domestic workers do not want because of their physical difficulty, long hours, low pay and working conditions that often fall below minimum standards (Mirandé, 1985). Contrary to public opinion, Mexicans do not displace workers and increase the country's unemployment rates, but instead contribute much more to the economy than they, themselves, retrieve. Mirandé (1985) nonetheless proposes that any displacement of domestic employees by undocumented workers would be abolished completely if minimum wage legislation (which

does not distinguish between legal and undocumented workers) were honored and if equal pay were given to all employees, regardless of their legal status.

Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) argues that even recent changes in legislation continue to be based on arguments blaming immigrants, mostly undocumented Mexicans, for taking away jobs, depressing wages, draining social services, or consuming medical and educational resources. In this way, societal identification of undocumented immigrants takes the form of popular opinion, mainstream media representation, and immigration policies. Their attitudes, accompanied by the poor enforcement of both minimum wage laws and the IRAIRA's legal sanctions against employers of undocumented immigrants result in the identification of migrants as both nonintegrated foreigners and exploitable labor (Gutiérrez, 1998). Public arguments thus fail to address the multiple, social causes of illegal immigration and do not acknowledge the contradictory laws that transform such immigrants from criminals into victims of injustice fostered by an interaction of societal conditions that are beyond their individual control. For instance, recent proposals for guest-worker programs with Mexico seem to provide opportunities for individual immigrants to reside in the U.S. legally while working temporarily. At the same time, however, the enforcement of labor and human rights are not enforced; such proposals make no provisions for workers' rights such as their right to organize, join a labor union, or change from one employer to another without penalty.

Public views generally ignore how patterns of Mexican migration vary according to political and economic conditions in both receiving and sending regions. For instance, the presence of Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest stems from a history of colonization that,

through either misinformation or corruption², transformed individuals from natives to foreigners. The U.S. also repatriated Mexican origin people, including U.S.-born children, once the country no longer needed their labor during the Depression (Baker et al., 1998). In contrast, Midwestern centers such as Chicago saw the advent of Mexican migration in the incorporation of *braceros*³ into the railroad and steel industry. These migrants also became "illegal" once the *bracero* program ended; as a result of policy changes or illegal overstays rather than illegal migration per se, workers who had been previously solicited by U.S. employers became illegitimate members of U.S. society (Solís, 2001).

Economic conditions have greatly affected undocumented Mexican immigration to New York, as well as other parts of the U.S. where migration from Mexico is a new phenomenon. Just as New York is a new receiving region (as opposed to the Southwest), many of its immigrant sending regions in Mexico are also uncommon. Immigrants to New York are primarily from south-central parts of Mexico, or the *Mixteca Baja* region that comprises the bordering states of Puebla, Oaxaca, and Guerrero (see Appendix). Migration between the Mixteca area and the northeastern United States increased considerably during Mexico's economic crisis in the 1980's that especially affected this region in south-central Mexico (Smith, 1996).

2

After the U.S.-Mexican War ended in 1848, Mexican territory, amounting to five southwestern states, became part of the United States. While Mexicans were supposed to be given the opportunity to stay and retain their land as U.S. citizens, it appears that unfair practices and confusion resulted in the lack of enforcement of these stipulations under the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo (Oboler, 1995).

3

Braceros were Mexican nationals recruited into the U.S. Southwest as temporary workers during World War II.

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) argues that migration arises in places encountering rapid industrialization and urbanization. A change from traditional to more liberal economic strategies in Mexico, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), was geared especially toward export development. As a result, initial changes were accompanied by a 100% rise in inflation leading to a severe economic crisis in 1982. In the following years, the minimum wage in Mexico dropped by 40%, while the peso devalued by another 15% in 1994 (Baker et al., 1998). During this time, employment opportunities simultaneously decreased in the U.S. Southwest and increased in the east coast (mostly in the service sector) by non-coethnic, or non-Mexican employers (Kim, 1999). Thus, an analysis of how socioeconomic forces in both countries foment migration reveals that illegality is a condition that emerged in the U.S. under different circumstances at distinct historical periods (Solís, 2001).

The formation of illegality in New York City

New York is a unique context for the study of Mexican migration and identity development for several reasons. Because of the recency of Mexican migration, few city institutions are prepared to handle the problems faced by this particular population. Moreover, these immigrants have entered a context where, unlike the Southwest, Mexicans are not the foremost, predominant Latino group. These conditions make it impossible for migrants to enter into a comparable, well-established Mexican population in New York. The city's unique context also requires Mexicans' identities to develop through first-time contact with many other racial and Latino Spanish-speaking groups.

Many Mexican neighborhoods have emerged in areas that were predominantly Puerto Rican. According to the Institute for Puerto Rican Policy's *New York City Latino Neighborhoods Databook* (Hanson-Sánchez, 1996), a segment of the Mexican population resides in each one of the five boroughs. In the early 1990s, the three largest Mexican neighborhoods were said to be located in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, Mott Haven, the Bronx, and *El Barrio*/East Harlem in Manhattan. Coming into contact with Puerto Ricans who make up an immigrant, more established, and predominant Latino group in New York City that at the same time possesses U.S. citizenship is a unique experience for Mexican immigrants. This can also be a cause of division between Mexicans and other groups who are just entering U.S. society's racial and legal classifications. In addition, the geographical distance is greater between New York and immigrants' hometowns in Mexico than it has been between traditional receiving and sending border areas in each country. In sum, this new form of contact in New York entails the formation of Mexicans' unique and different legal, geographical, linguistic, dialectal, pan-ethnic and racial identifications.

Societal arguments against illegal immigration also ignore the more local practices of immigrants and how these interact with policy decisions. For example, illegal Mexican immigration increased in spite of amnesty laws under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, designed in part to grant legal residency to undocumented immigrants who could prove that they had lived continuously in the U.S. since 1982. Since Mexican immigrants generally plan to stay in the U.S. only temporarily, many would not have been able to take advantage of amnesty because they were fairly recent immigrants, had lived in the U.S. intermittently, or did not have records that could prove their continued residency.

Yet even with these considerations, three million undocumented Mexican immigrants were granted amnesty through the program (Baker et al, 1998); Mexicans comprised about 75% of all immigrants in the U.S. who were legalized at this time (Suárez-Orozco, 1998).

Despite such figures, however, undocumented migration and settlement have persisted. The amnesty program was found to promote family reunification in the U.S. when legal residence was attained by the person (usually male) who first migrated (Smith, 1996). Nevertheless, an aspect of illegal immigration that has not been studied is how *illegal* family reunification occurs when individuals meet family members living in the U.S. without legal residency. Some research in California has found that undocumented women's activities lend themselves to family settlement (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1995). Having children, establishing networks to ensure stable employment and offset everyday costs of family maintenance, and seeking assistance through public institutions are activities that drive Mexican women toward permanent settlement. They make their role fundamental to the settlement process of undocumented families, even in situations where permanent residency is not their goal.

To reiterate, political measures and public discussion against illegal immigration are often largely based on oversimplified arguments. They inherently discriminate against the poor in order to preserve an apparently stable, national prosperity. This is de-contextualized information that reflects insensitivity to the complex economic, historical, and political interaction between the U.S. and Mexico, as well as a critical understanding of the local practices of undocumented immigrants and their families.

These complex, multiple societal conditions set the stage for the development of illegality as an identity. Being "illegal" is a potential identity that emerges through the

interplay of social, economic, political, and individual conditions. For example, a New York immigration law adopted in 1996 required sponsors of new immigrants to earn at least a \$19,500 annual income. Mexicans, who are among the poorest immigrants, would not have been able to afford to legally bring family members into the city (Dugger, 1997). Yet, dire economic need in Mexico and job availability in New York force many individuals to emigrate, whether or not they hold the necessary documents. Many of the hundreds of thousands of Mexicans currently living in New York City are recent immigrants who are undocumented. Estimates of the size of the Mexican population in New York such as the 260,889 counted in the 2000 Census, and the number of undocumented Mexicans residing in the city are, at best, informed approximations since many counts are based on inaccurate information. Undocumented immigrants do not respond to demographic or census questionnaires for fear that personal, identifying information will become public, making them susceptible to deportation.

Nevertheless, the significant numbers of undocumented Mexican immigrants thought to be living in New York belie vast differences in class background, education, age, and gender. The societal conditions of illegal immigration illustrated here need to be complemented with an understanding of the individual immigrant's personal history of migration, as well as personal networks and resources used to make the transition, become integrated, and make sense of her or his place in U.S. society. Assimilation theory has been an important area of sociological work on immigrant incorporation.

In their review of assimilation theories, Alba and Nee (1997) present a number of findings that discuss the large-scale factors that seem to ensure the successful incorporation

of immigrants and their children in U.S. society. Some of the measures of successful incorporation or assimilation of immigrants are their socioeconomic, educational, linguistic, and residential mobility (Massey & Denton, 1992). That is, immigrants, and especially their children, are said to assimilate successfully as they learn English, reach higher education, and move to middle-income homes. However, such broad-scaled work on immigrant assimilation and incorporation rarely discusses the details of structural barriers like racial discrimination or immigration status that may keep some immigrants from becoming upwardly mobile, nor how others manage to overcome them. Moreover, assimilation theories only tend to consider how well immigrants and their children attain social mobility as this is prescribed by society, rather than by the cultural groups under study. Particularly when studying the assimilation of second-generation youth, this can make their unsuccessful assimilation, or "segmented" assimilation into an "underclass" (Portes and Zhou, 1993) look like an explanation for youths' seemingly permanent failure to succeed in society. Contrary to assimilationist theories of success, Matute-Bianchi (1991) found that Mexican students in California who had stronger ethnic identities and stronger knowledge of Spanish were the most academically successful; she studied identity in the form of self-labeling among Mexican students, and according to the quality of their participation in school activities. Portes and Schauffler (1996) also claim that contrary to nativist views, immigrant children are likely to become English-dominant and, actually, to be at risk, instead, of losing their native language.

In addition, research based on assimilation theories rarely describes whether and how immigrant groups come to alter the standards of mainstream society. How immigrants and their children align themselves ideologically within, above, or beyond larger, societal stances

has also been overlooked by this literature. Such important details, however, would be best acquired through closer, ethnographic study rather than large-scale, correlative research. The integration of Mexican families is especially important when considering their long-term impact on U.S. society. U.S.-born Mexican children will become voting citizens when they turn 18 years of age. At that point, they will also be able to solicit legal residency for their parents, possibly the only alternative undocumented Mexican immigrants in New York will have to adjust their status since they do not generally meet eligibility criteria required by other immigration reforms such as the 1986 IRCA, or more recent initiatives such as the 2001 extension of section 245i of the Legal Immigration and Family Equity (LIFE) Act.

The emergence of illegality in individual history

This section reviews literature on undocumented Mexican immigrants that examines some of the more local, or personal conditions that characterize the psychological formation of such individuals in the United States. Whereas the previous section described the societal dimension of illegality, this section focuses on its individual dimension. It includes a discussion of some ways that the experiences of undocumented Mexican immigrant adults and children have been studied, conceptualized, and described. For instance, some literature addresses the conditions (i.e., poor social services, little education, inequities) under which undocumented Mexican migrants live. Siems (1992) provides a personalized account of the lives of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. through the publication of letters written by migrants in California and their families in Mexico. The letters disclose individual narratives of everyday battles with poverty and unemployment, sickness, illiteracy, and racism that must

be confronted in the United States.

Although he only touches on the issue of illegality peripherally, Guerra (1998) elaborates on the linguistic strategies used in letter and autobiographical writing among a Mexican community (some of whose members are undocumented) in Chicago, and their counterparts in Mexico. As an example of one way researchers can study both societal and individual dimensions of analysis in day-to-day practice, he distinguishes between "contact zones" and "home fronts," the former being instances of personalized, communicative practice in moment to moment transactions, and the latter being conventional, linguistic procedure. Under this framework, migrants' writing reveals both conventional-societal and original-individual texts through which their lives are narrated. Urrea (1993) provides a different type of personalized view of illegal immigration; as an activist helping border inhabitants, he provides a participant-observer's narration of the everyday lives of individuals living in alarmingly harsh conditions of poverty, isolation, corruption, and disease that exist in Tijuana, along the Mexican border, and that obligate many of them to migrate to the United States.

Other literature has focused on the affective experiences of Mexican families. Aside from some literature on "mourning" processes describing what may be typical emotional readjustment on the part of immigrants in general (Ainslie, 1998), others have focused on personal experiences of "survivor guilt" among adolescent children of Mexican immigrants in California (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Survivor guilt is often expressed among academically successful children of Latin American immigrants who attribute their success to the sacrifices their families made by leaving their home countries for their future

benefit. Generally, their personal narratives produce similar recurring themes such as the need to repay their families after becoming educated at the expense of the families' or communities' sacrifices, and to share their academic and economic success with them (Suárez-Orozco, 1991).

In a longitudinal, ethnographic study, Valdés (1997) similarly found that for undocumented Mexican families in Texas, personal fulfillment was not subject to individual monetary rewards and rights. The families she studied expected to live economically stable lives in which they could provide an education for their children who would, in turn, mature into socially responsible adults and maintain connections to their families. As such, their individual experience is organized by a world view about society in which adults are hard-working, children are provided for, proximity to family is central, and success is considered communal, rather than individual. Much of this research, however, has more to do with the general cultural make-up of immigrant families who come from lower-income backgrounds. Attention has not been placed sufficiently on the way Mexican culture and identity in the U.S. are organized according to practices having to do specifically with the immigration status of families. Personal accounts, affective experiences, and practices of what it means to be undocumented should be understood within a complementary societal account that addresses how illegality develops as an identity among Mexicans in New York City.

Members of undocumented Mexican families in New York have been characterized as living in fear of deportation, and being subjected to physical and psychological abuse because of their immigration status and unfamiliarity with their legal rights in this country (Kim, 1999; Smith, 1996). Undocumented immigrants often live and work under substandard

conditions and fail to demand back wages (Dominguez, 1998), live with untreated diseases (DeLeon, 1998), or do not have their children properly immunized (Parra, 1998). Generally speaking, it is said that undocumented parents mistrust institutions such as the schools their children attend (Pease-Alvarez & Vasquez, 1994), and that undocumented children live in fear of getting caught or of losing a parent who may be deported (Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Often, undocumented Mexican immigrants feel that they do not come to the U.S. by their own choice, but that life circumstances obligate them to migrate back and forth even though they hope to only work here temporarily (Bustamante, 1985; Cornelius, 1992). They do not see the U.S. as an ideal place to live or raise a family. Subjective emotions, as well as the person's way of organizing, or making sense of, his or her experiences in general are facets of the individual that should inform an account of what being "illegal" means.

Therefore, personal experiences and justifications for an individual's migration must be considered. Some migrants may identify information distributed through networks of people or "funds of knowledge" (Moll, 1997) as facilitators, but surely other conditions must accompany the decision to migrate. For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) reports that many married women travel to the U.S. against their husbands' wishes, relying on their own networks of friends and relatives for emotional and financial support, as well as pertinent information needed to cross the border illegally. Thus, the formation of illegality as an identity is a process situated in societal-historical conditions, as well as in one's personal economic need, desire to make a living in the U.S., and other personal conditions in Mexico and in the U.S. that enable illegal immigration.

Men and women who cross illegally must be knowledgeable, as well as in good

physical condition to make the arduous trek north; successful border-crossers must be able to avoid or protect themselves from treacheries ranging from wild animals to border bandits, murderers, rapists, corrupt smugglers, and armed INS officers. Hagan (1998) reports that between 1993 and 1996, at least 1,185 migrants died crossing into the U.S. following the enforcement of border surveillance. National changes in border control force migrants to cover more perilous terrain, increasing their chances of dying of dehydration or hypothermia; they also pay higher smuggling costs, and increase the payment and use of fraudulent documents (Cornelius, 1998). In June of 2000, border crimes received media attention following a series of migrant murders as a group of Arizona residents, or "migrant hunters" took border reinforcement into their own hands (Hernandez, 2000).

Illegality as an identity is situated in activities that originate in Mexico. Mexican immigrants who come to New York have been found to cross the border in Tijuana and continue to San Diego or Los Angeles where they make arrangements for domestic travel to New York City. Although some secondary migration takes place in California, migrants generally tend to continue travel to their original destination in the Northeast. Plans for migration are initiated in Mexico where networks of friends and family who have already been to the U.S. inform future migrants of employment and housing opportunities. Learning about the labor market in some potential destination initiates a pattern of decision-making in Mexico, migration, and eventual return to Mexico. The power of migrant networks is so great that migrants choose to follow their informants' indications even if this means taking a longer route (see map in Appendix). Bustamante (1998) found that most migrants coming to New York in the early 90's were entering from Tijuana into California, even though those

coming from the state of Puebla would be geographically closer to their destination if they entered from Laredo into Texas. Thus, both societal and individual histories must be taken into account simultaneously to understand the complex emergence of undocumented Mexicans in New York.

The emergence of illegality as a psychological system

Identity is a psychological system that integrates the individual's external-material activities with psychological activity. That is, my argument is that external structures (e.g., legal status, race/ethnicity, gender) are adopted by individuals through activities to identify themselves in certain ways. In other words, identity is a developmental process, continuous and malleable according to the surrounding context, material and social conditions (Deaux, 1993, 2000; Moscovici, 2001). The formation of illegality as an identity can be thought to have its origins in external conditions, outside of the individual. As I have argued elsewhere (Solís, 2001), as long as the world is arranged according to ownership of territories enforced by structures of protection and control, there will be borders to cross either legally or illegally. The identity category "legal/illegal immigrant" is already available to Mexican immigrants *before* they cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Therefore, I argue that an "illegal immigrant" is an available identity that pre-exists individual people. It comes to function as an identity when it is adopted by individual people for a purpose, such as to understand the organization of U.S. society and their own place in it.

Illegality as an identity serves as a political and moral divider, one that validates some as insiders, or people who "belong" in the U.S., while identifying others as outsiders who

have committed an illicit act. Moreover, it serves as a racial divider since illegal immigration is generally associated with non-whites. The development of illegality as an identity in an individual's history thus has its origins in the broader, societal history and social structures that set up categories of membership and non-membership. As a psychological system, personal identity is a phenomenon that is constructed historically, politically, and culturally. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how psychological theories have addressed the sociocultural nature of identity development.

A related body of research has investigated the sociocultural formation of the self from the perspective of the social psychology of identity (Deaux & Philogène, 2001) and social cognition. For instance, Leahy and Shirk (1985) argue that through social interactions, children come to distinguish between themselves and others; over time, their sense of self becomes less dependant on interaction with others. Similarly, Hart and Damon (1985) argue that children's sense of self as an entity separate from other people becomes increasingly integrated and synthesized as children move from one developmental stage to another. While these researchers and others (e.g., Smollar and Youniss, 1985) suggest that the formation of a self-concept comes out of one's participation in interpersonal relations and events, their methods fail to look directly to such activities by relying on interviews and scales that cannot describe the developmental process in a contextually-rich manner. Moreover, their theoretical perspective stresses the developmental sequencing of self-formation and fails to question its teleological assumptions and cultural relativity. Such research leaves little room to understand the origins of developmental diversity, variability, and multiplicity in the formation of selves.

Social representation theory also states that the formation of cognitive phenomena is rooted in social interaction and communication between individuals and groups of people forming a dialectical relationship between individual thought and social conventions (Augoustinos and Walker, 1995). Moscovici (2001) defines social representations as the everyday thoughts and common knowledge or assumptions constructed by a collectivity and shared by individuals. Within a similar perspective, Jones et al. (1984) examine the way in which self-concepts are formed through social comparison. Making the political context explicit, they discuss the effects of stigmatization by others on the formation of the self that result in low self-esteem and social withdrawal. They also mention the potential individuals have to form alternative social comparison groups that resist stigmas imposed by those in power as might be the case in the formation of an "undocumented" identity. However, much of this work is theoretical, requiring examination of the activities through which social comparisons become available to individuals, and analysis of multiple, simultaneous, and contradictory social comparisons that give rise to unified and/or fragmented concepts of the self. Social psychological theories of self or identity formation also tend to leave unquestioned the function of this development, another indication that identity has become a naturalized given in psychological literature.

Taking the political context into account further, it is not surprising that much of the Mexican American/Chicano literature takes issue with the development of racial/ethnic identity in adults and children (Garcia & Hurtado, 1995; Hurtado, 1996; Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Meier & Ribera, 1993; Sánchez, 1993). As race/ethnicity is a critical divider or organizing social structure of U.S. society, the existence of a Mexican identity to be studied

and affirmed functions as a vehicle for political existence and representation. People are grouped according to racial/ethnic identities as a way of becoming visible and being acknowledged, one way or another, by those in power.

The formation of ethnic/racial identity has also been conceptualized as a psychological reaction to racism and discrimination. Cross (1995) states that a primary, defensive function of African American youths' "oppositional" identities is to protect them against racism and the resulting psychological stress. He argues that a fully developed black identity also offers a sense of purpose and affiliation, and serves as a mechanism to facilitate interaction with non-blacks. In other words, this identity emerges as a reaction to societal prejudice against racial minorities. Thus, studies of racial/ethnic identity also serve to counter predominant ideologies and to create the possibility for multiple identities to exist for investigation.

Although politically relevant, much of this literature examines the functions of racial identity in its own right. This dissertation seeks to characterize the specific ways in which immigration status intersects with the formation of identity for Mexican children and adults in the United States. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how illegality acts as one way of organizing the Mexican community in New York within particular political, social, historical, and personal contexts. However, it is important to keep in mind how other social structures are embedded within the complex development of identity of Mexican immigrants and their children. Illegality as an identity is thus multifaceted, encompassing not only immigration status, but also race, ethnicity, language, and geographic location. Physical proximity and close interaction with diverse groups in the city (e.g., in one's neighborhood,

school, workplace, church, etc.) creates multiple possibilities and sites for the formation of identity. For instance, I argue that the activities (mental and material) in which undocumented immigrants and children engage can serve as grounds for the formation of an illegal or undocumented identity at particular moments and places.

Social constructionism offers a method to de-naturalize psychological phenomena by deconstructing objects of study such as identity, and locating their basis in history, culture, and politics. Postmodernism (Lyotard, 1984) and post-structuralist views (Poster, 1989) also question the teleological, unitary, and hegemonic stances taken by social theories. Unlike traditional theories which essentialize people as one personality category or identity, Henriques et al. (1984) posit that the “positionalities” of subjects of theory and research must be considered in contexts of power and multiplicity, where assumptions and values are politically created and contested. Rather than study identity, then, as a hegemonic and progressively cohesive, naturally-occurring entity, it must be re-defined and studied through multiple and simultaneous subject positions (e.g., “illegal” immigrant; parent; worker) occupied or transformed by individuals in complex, continuous, and changing relationships. The next chapter discusses how these theoretical perspectives were integrated with sociohistorical psychology and activity theory (Leont’ev, 1978) to form the bases of this study of illegality as an identity.

CHAPTER 2

Integrating societal and individual histories: Activities of identity

The objective of this dissertation was to understand whether and how individuals arrange the Mexican community along illegality and how this organization functions as an identity. Another aspect that I investigated was whether children and adults share similar ways of organizing the Mexican community in the U.S. and of locating their place within it according to illegality. For Mexicans living in the U.S., subdividing one's ethnic group between those living here legally and illegally can serve to reproduce socioeconomic class differences in Mexico and generational distinctions between Mexican-origin people in the U.S.; only those who are poor and/or recently arrived are likely to be undocumented, and therefore stigmatized by U.S. society. In other words, it was important to investigate whether Mexican children's own processes of identification operated similarly to that of their parents.

The goal was not to discover a psychological system describing a natural progression of identity formation between childhood and adulthood, but to examine whether the way a person becomes identifiable varies according to the social structures and contexts with/in which the individual participates. The formation of identity, thus, was not studied in a teleological fashion, where identity changes in age-related increments until it reaches some fully developed form. Rather, identity was understood as a psychological form that emerges under simultaneous, intersecting societal and individual dimensions of history outlined in the previous chapter. This is a post-structuralist stance where identity formation and human development in general, are not necessarily assumed to be uniformly progressive, universal

processes. In other words, my objective was to discover some of the contextual and cultural factors that make illegality as an identity possible in the psychological formation of Mexican immigrants and their children.

Integrating societal and individual history as a psychological system

Central to my discussion of identity as a psychological system is the notion of activity. Developmental theories have placed a great emphasis on defining the role of activity to explain psychological change (Brandtstädter, 1998). While some have emphasized the individual's key psychological activities to lie in internal, self-regulatory mechanisms and cognitive operations, others have also emphasized the physical and material actions of the individual on the environment in a number of ways. In this dissertation, I borrowed the Vygotskian notion of activity captured in the dialectical relationship between the outer, social world and the individual's inner consciousness. Vygotsky's Marxist psychology tells us that human mental functioning is never solely habitual nor solely cognitive but is always developing in this dialectal relationship. Practical activity, or human goal-directed behavior, is mediated by the creation of cultural tools that function to re-orient one's activity, transforming it from material activity to mental activity which is then exercised on the material, social world (Vygotsky and Luria, 1994). Vygotsky's explanation of the development of thought exemplifies these principles best. As the child is exposed to and participates in language (which is culturally created), she comes to acquire the language of her world in a functional sense; that is, external speech becomes egocentric, allowing the child to "think aloud" and plan future actions when involved in practical activity; in time,

egocentric speech is transformed into inner speech or thought, yet serves a similar purpose: to plan and coordinate actions on the world (Vygotsky, 1986). In this way, language is a cultural tool transformed into signs, a symbol system developed from the actual social practices and relationships that gave it its meanings; eventually, signs mediate between the individual's outer social world and inner consciousness through practical, meaningful, and intentional activity.

In order to understand the place of interaction between individual and societal histories, there needs to be an appropriate unit of analysis: *cultural activity* that comprises both the resources and structures already available in society, and the individual's participation and employment of them as tools that help her achieve a particular goal. Using Vygotsky's explanation of the relationship between language and thinking, one cultural activity to be examined in this study of illegality as an identity is discourse. Leont'ev (1978) states that Vygotsky "isolated two principal interrelated features that must be considered basic to psychological science. These are the equipped ('instrumented') structure of human activity and its incorporation into the system of interrelationships with other people" (p.59). In this framework, *discourse* is understood to encompass not only structural aspects of language, but also a broader system of communication and understanding. Discourse is a pre-existing semiotic system, a cultural resource, that can reflect, construct, and even change social reality. As adopted by the individual for practical action, discourse becomes constitutive of the mind. Thus, self-identity can be one outcome of discourse, where discourse is both a societal condition and a personal resource (Daiute, 1998; Guerra, 1998). This is the theoretical juncture in which Vygotskian sociohistorical psychology meets post-

structuralism in this study.

Discourse psychology has offered a more contextualized and dynamic account of psychological phenomena than have traditional studies of identity that view identity as a composite of traits inherent to the individual (Parker, 1997). Falling within the rubric of social constructionism, it posits that psychological phenomena such as identity emerge from discourses present in social institutions, embedded in relations of power. Social constructionism provides a lens with which to critically scrutinize structuralist views of the self by examining the cultural and political basis of its formation (Gergen, 1990). Again, identity is not conceptualized here as an essential entity, but rather as the individual's variable occupation of a social position within a system of available locations of power (Harré & Gillett, 1994; Parker, 1997). Stetsenko & Arievidt (1997) argue that social constructivism, unlike other "constructionist" approaches, studies psychology according to the individual's participation in language-based, meaning-making activity within a larger community of people. In this sense, identity is constructed through language activities that produce one's social positions; thus, identity is a point of convergence of both societal and individual development (Gergen, 1991; Parker, 1997).

National discourses on illegal immigration take the form of societal, institutional responses (e.g., by way of the media, or the law) that presume to maintain the ideals of American liberal democracy, such as justice to all law-abiding citizens. This type of discourse makes it possible for undocumented immigrants to be denounced, both at an institutional and individual dimension, as unsolicited individuals, undeserving of jobs and social services that pertain to others. Public, social institutions present discourses of national

homogeneity and stability, characteristics to be defended by combating the invasion of "illegal" immigrants (Edstrom, 1993). Such discourses become available by institutions to U.S. citizens to use as a means of understanding one's position within the problem. Institutions in general are social structures governed by certain ideological premises that set up markers of inclusion and exclusion. Discourses, as the language of institutions, convey certain messages formalized by guiding ideologies they are designed to maintain; some have called such discourses "speech genres" (Bakhtin, 1986) or society's "grand narratives" (Lyotard, 1984). By the same token, however, institutions are made up of individual people meant to represent the whole, however the whole is defined. As such, one can see that the public and private realms are virtually inseparable as public, institutional discourses and private, individual understanding become mutually constitutive.

This study understands the psychological formation of illegality as an identity to be situated in networks of Mexican immigrants, members of institutions whose activities give meaning to this identity. Moreover, their identity functions as an overarching framework through which knowledge, thought, and goal-directed actions are formed. In this way, it is important to understand how Mexican families negotiate multiple societal values, opinions, and attitudes toward undocumented immigrants with their own experience and understanding of what it means to be undocumented, and what they do with this understanding. Again, this must be viewed within the individual's discursive participation, cultural activities, and social positions within certain institutions.

The formation of identity through narrative discourse

One particular discourse genre that is relevant to the study of people's lives is narrative. Some researchers have posited that narratives can be considered a universal mode of thought that is developed culturally (Bruner, 1986; Nelson, 1996). At the same time, however, Bruner (1986) theorizes that narratives are variable as they are formed through cultures and institutions; multiple cultural narratives reflect potential worlds of individual knowing. Therefore, narratives can be a source for understanding variability in human development. Rather than examining narratives to understand their structural universality (Labov & Waletzky, 1967), I adopt the view that narratives can be examined for cultural multiplicity, and therefore cognitive variability.

For instance, van Dijk (1993) illustrates that certain narratives reproduce racism and social control in stories he examined about participants' neighborhoods. He found that in these stories, descriptions of immigrants and minorities, reproduced social relations from the narrators' position of white dominance. One might say that these stories were reflections of the narrators' reality. However, Freeman (1991) theorizes that narratives do not only reflect, but rather *constitute* culture. I argue that narratives about undocumented immigrants are produced by individuals in both dominant *and* disempowered cultural places, as well as in institutions. In this sense, then, conflicting narratives about undocumented immigrants are produced in institutions of power through the media (Espenshade & Belanger, 1998), as well as in governmental activities designed to contain immigration along the border (Hagan, 1998). Immigrants are said to be the foundation upon which U.S. society is formed, and to be key historical figures that add to the country's prosperity; yet immigration policies often

tell a different story about the country's discriminatory acceptance of foreigners.

Holland and Valsiner (1988) have argued that cognition is a historical, cultural, and developmental process mediated by cultural tools. Therefore, narrative thinking can be understood as a process constructed in cultural activities. Penuel and Wertsch (1995) have extended this understanding to research on identity, arguing that individuals are actively engaged in constructing identity through their use of cultural and historical resources.

The formation of identity through cultural activity and historical tools

In this dissertation, I argue that the formation of certain institutions can be thought of as cultural-historical tools that mediate between individuals' material and mental activities. Nationally, grassroots organizing by immigrants of different ethnicities has been surfacing to advocate for common issues and rights; labor unions have similarly sought to unite both American citizens and undocumented workers toward a common cause (Gutiérrez, 1998). These efforts counter the fragmentation of groups resulting from differences in legal status or class and nationality, and create new forms of identity based on common goals.

The site of my research, a grassroots Mexican immigrant organization in New York City, makes this study particularly unique. Specifically, I theorize that community organizing has been one instrument for undocumented immigrants to adopt a publicly recognizable position, a rather uncommon stance taken by a population that generally needs to remain hidden. Here, I re-state my theoretical distinction between an "illegal" identity as that pre-existing social position adopted by Mexican immigrants, and an "undocumented" identity, a *counter-position* constructed by Mexican immigrants specifically to contest predominant

discourses about them. Community organizing, then, especially at the grassroots level serves as a cultural-psychological tool for contestation of an illegal identity, and for the emergence of an undocumented identity. I will describe throughout this dissertation how, through its counter-discourses, the community organization raises people's consciousness about the contradictions upon which an illegal identity is based, and how it advocates for the adoption of what I have been calling an "undocumented" identity based on visibility, rather than concealment; outspokenness, rather than silence; justice, rather than unwarranted exploitation and racism.

Within this particular kind of organization, I argue that Mexican immigrants are confronted with both institutional narratives of rejection toward undocumented immigrants, *and* counter-narratives of acceptance and inclusion of undocumented immigrants in U.S. society. Thus, a key question addressed in this dissertation is how illegality as an identity emerges through individual, predominant institutional, and counter-institutional discourses about or by undocumented immigrants. Understanding how narratives and counter-narratives produce a sense of self requires examining points of conflict between those narratives available to, and those constructed by, undocumented immigrants themselves. With this understanding, psychological studies of identity can examine personal narratives more qualitatively by examining closely their divergent content, point of view, purpose, audience, and functions. More research is needed to reveal how identities emerge in and through conflicting cultural narratives producing developmental diversity and variability.

Although narrative discourse is one important site for the formation of identity, I also argue that a sociohistorical analysis calls for close examination of these discourses along

with their concurrent, material activities. In other words, discourse practice is only one type of cultural activity, and a limited source of knowledge if it is not studied in conjunction with the actual activities and social practices of those individuals or institutions producing narratives of identity. Leont'ev's outline of activity theory in relation to personality development (1978) is especially relevant to the study of identity formation. He explains personality to be the individual's sense of wholeness whose transformations can be traced to changes in goal-directed activities giving rise to changes in self-consciousness. Recently, cultural psychologists have similarly described the self as a historical product serving particular functions (Shweder et al., 1998); identity, then, is the sense of self derived from one's membership to a particular community through one's participation in its cultural practices.

In this sense, identity is never developed once and for all, is always context-dependant, emerges interpersonally, and performs social and psychological functions. It is important to note again that the formation of selves and identities, even their scientific study, are historical and cultural products (Baumeister, 1997; Holland, 1997). Postmodernism offers a critique of psychological phenomena as self-contained objects (Glick, 1994), and, instead, places their analysis in the individual's greater social relations and power positions (Danziger, 1997). If we can no longer assume that identity is contained in people, nor that it is stable, consistent, and reflective of some internal state, then we must turn to interpretive methods that emphasize the volatile nature of people's identities. Thus, the social world through which individuals are constituted needs to be made central in psychological analyses of self and identity (Sampson, 1989).

However, turning to the social structures that enable and constrain the social locations, or power positions individuals adopt should not diminish our understanding of the individual's potential for agency. Therefore, analyses of identity need to account for the structural enabling conditions that set up both possibilities and limitations in which individuals can and do act and think on their own behalf.

The organization that served as the site of this research provides a critical transition space in which to study Mexican immigrants' re-appropriation of identity, in particular through their re-definition of illegality in highly public cultural activities and discourses. As a result, the dissertation describes how one possible developmental shift between being "illegal" and becoming "undocumented" takes place as individual and societal histories converge in the cultural-psychological activities of the organization (see figure in Appendix). In subsequent chapters, I describe how an undocumented identity emerges for individuals through their participation in community activism, itself a process of consciousness-raising and self-empowerment. The activities of the organization generally serve to build community by fostering a shared identity through a common history, shared experiences, spaces, and needs, as well as by documenting activities and accomplishments. Often, many activities are made public beyond the Mexican community defined internally by the organization. In this last sense, community is defined by internal institutional activities and cultural practices, but also relationally with respect to the general population as outsiders to the community's self-defined history, experiences, and needs. While my focus is on the formation of illegality as an identity, Mexican immigrants are also drawn into U.S. social relations where they are also defined and recognized according to race, class, gender and other structures of identity.

To illustrate, feminists have revealed how gender is enacted or performed through language, ways of speaking, as well as through corporeal activity (Butler, 1990). In this way, material, cultural activities have been examined in order to theorize and explain social injustice. The historical oppression of women is evident in psychological theory and research that reproduce the inferiority of girls and women (Wilkinson, 1997), a reality that can be applied to any political minority (Fisher et al., 1998). Research and theory on undocumented Mexican immigrants must, then, be reflexive of its methods and account for immigrants' own perspectives and activities that take place within a matrix of social relations, power positions, and structural conditions. It is through the sociological content of everyday, goal-directed actions that we can understand the psychological processes through which identities emerge. Therefore, illegality as an identity must also be examined in light of other available social positions adopted by Mexican immigrants. Although a large part of this dissertation will focus on the cultural-psychological development of identity among undocumented Mexican immigrants and children who participate in the organization, the context of their individual and societal histories, in their own right and regardless of the organization, must also be considered.

Research questions

In summary, I posit that an "illegal" position of disempowerment pre-exists the individual as it is a concept made available by the discourses of predominant social institutions. It can become a psychological tool for organizing, constructing, and understanding one's social positions and memberships in a society. Identity is a product of

certain discourses and other cultural activities. It becomes a psychological activity that functions to make sense of oneself and one's actions in a relational system of locations defined by social structures and power. However, I have also posited that an "illegal" identity may be contested; therefore, the formation of an alternative "undocumented" identity must be studied. Moreover, illegality can be taken as an identifying position opposite to that of legality or citizenship. Thus, a question about the formation of citizenship should also be raised.

The theoretical framework outlined in these introductory chapters was used to study how illegality as an identity emerges from the activities, discourses and other cultural practices, of an institution and its participants in New York City. It calls for multiple methods that correspond to the multiple dimensions of historical analysis I have discussed, primarily societal (institutional) and ontogenetic (individual) histories that together form a psychological (cultural) system of illegality as an identity. Again, the appendix includes a graphic depiction of all three dimensions of history that serve as the primary theoretical basis for analysis of illegality as an identity.

The theoretically-grounded practical objectives of this research were formalized in the following questions:

1. How does an illegal/undocumented identity emerge for Mexican immigrants? Is it shared by their children? What function(s) does it serve them? Is their understanding of citizenship involved in this formation of identity?
2. How does grassroots organizing function in the development of an undocumented

identity? Through what tools, discourses and cultural activities?

3. What are some other pre-existing structural and institutional conditions that undocumented Mexican immigrants use to identify themselves? How are these conditions used as resources to position oneself and others?

The following chapters discuss the methods used to respond empirically to these questions. Generally speaking, the methods address the means used to reach institutional and individual dimensions of analysis through cultural, discursive, and goal-directed activities. In this process, activity theory was extended through the work of critical studies by examining the conditions and social relations of individuals belonging to politically marginalized populations. My belief was that a close examination (as a co-participant) of the quality of activities undocumented Mexican immigrants and children perform would reveal variability in the kinds of identities they develop. Therefore, the next two chapters describe the research design and ethnographic methods used to capture the diversity of discourses and cultural activities engaging Mexican immigrants and their children. Later chapters qualify how those activities operated in a psychological system of illegality as an identity.

PART II:
RESEARCH METHODS

CHAPTER 3

The home of my research: La Organización Guadalupana, its members, and mission

Before finding my research site and prior to starting this study, I had to take a number of ethical considerations into account. One of my initial concerns was how I would convince people that speaking of their identities as undocumented immigrants would not only help educate others on the subject of illegal immigration, but also would not place my participants in a vulnerable position by having to disclose personal information. I worried about whether there were means I could use as a researcher to guarantee this; I was also concerned about how my research would be interpreted by others once it became public, and I wondered about what would happen if it fell into the “wrong hands” so that information could be used later against my participants or against undocumented immigrants in general. In addition, I had to foresee how the research proposal would fare with my university’s Institutional Review Board, and determine what measures I could take to ensure confidentiality and ethical treatment of my participants by me and by future readers of this work.

Conducting research on/with undocumented immigrants and other ethical dilemmas

I also did not want my research to condone the kind of voyeurism to which ethnographic research is subject (Bourgois, 1995; Lewis, 1965). Although learning about the details of an “underground” population is inherently captivating, my purpose was to conduct conscientious research that would disclose information only in relation to my stated topic of

study, and that would lead to scholarly discussions of the theoretical and practical relevance of the work. Since an objective was to disseminate information about undocumented immigrants that would educate others and motivate improvements to their quality of life, it was important for me to think of ways of engaging people directly in the research process as active participants. The question was how to do this without exposing people in a dangerous way, or exploiting further an already severely exploited population.

In the process of weighing the feasibility of the research I planned to conduct explicitly on illegality, I learned that there is no law in New York State that legally protects confidentiality between researchers and participants as there exists between journalists and informants, lawyers and clients, or doctors and patients. It became increasingly clear to me that there were few means available to ensure that I could not be legally bound, at some point, to disclose identifying information about my participants. Although a few attorneys I consulted believed such a situation could be easily overturned, I realized that I needed to take all of these considerations into account as I planned the research design. There had to be a way to gain access to undocumented immigrants about illegality without having to disclose identifying information such as their workplaces or places of residence where immigration raids often occur. This was, indeed, a paradox: how to conduct a study about undocumented immigrants' identities without accessing potentially identifying information.

I began to think about conducting the research in public institutions that handle problems faced by undocumented immigrants, and whose public, service-oriented nature could provide a less invasive and innocuous space than people's homes or workplaces. As I learned more about community-based organizations in the city that provide services to

Mexican immigrants (Solis, 2001), I came across a Mexican grassroots umbrella organization that I contacted and questioned about whether there might be an interest on their part in engaging in the research I intended to conduct. Upon their affirmative response, I became a participant observer and this organization became the site of my research. The rest of the discussion in this chapter is based on knowledge I derived over three years of participation, and that was captured in field notes and journal entries. I will discuss the nature of my participation and data collection methods in more detail in the next chapter.

The home of my research

The community-based organization I am referring to is the largest Mexican umbrella organization in New York City, claiming to reach more than 10,000 people. It was founded in 1997 to help Mexican immigrants, the fastest-growing Latino population in New York, organize themselves, defend their human and legal rights, and advocate for changes to immigration laws. Since many of these immigrants were and still are undocumented, the inception of this organization in the city created an institutional mechanism, working ground-up, to address the problems that are particular to this population. In this sense, the organization provides an interesting double front: it is at the same time an official establishment, as well as a place that can handle private matters pertaining to the "underground" of undocumented immigrants in continuous contact with a public, societal audience.

I argue that the institution itself serves as a public tool for the private needs of Mexicans in New York; it is a resource used to publicly defend their human rights while

educating the community internally about these rights. The organization provides an institutional space to address injustices faced by the Mexican immigrant population; it is at the same time a safe haven and a recognized public space. It also serves to establish the existence of a large Mexican community in the city by promoting ethnic pride through public civic, social, and cultural activities, and by coordinating political action. Given the undocumented status of many Mexican immigrants currently residing in New York, the organization's primary campaign is a movement for unconditional General Amnesty for all undocumented immigrants living in the United States. In spite of its brief existence, it has become the largest, and most public Mexican organization in the city's Spanish-language media, with transnational connections to human rights' organizations, churches, labor unions, and political supporters both in the U.S. and Mexico.

Transformations of institutional identities

I posit that through their participation in community organizing, immigrants have found a means to transform this kind of public institution into a psychological tool that allows them to understand themselves in particular ways, and to act on their worlds in a deliberate manner. As a result, they are able to make use of the public front the organization provides to uncover unjust treatment, challenge existing relations of power that identify them in derogatory ways, and reposition themselves according to grounds that diverge from those that dominate public discourse. The organization affords immigrants a means to contest erroneous grounds upon which their identities emerge on the societal dimension. As I have argued, societal conditions produce an "illegal" identity for certain immigrants to adopt,

while the organization's local and national activities provide a means to contest and counter-produce what I call an "undocumented" identity.

In addition to its presentation as a Mexican immigrant organization, this community group is institutionally affiliated with the Catholic church and receives office space, general operating support for its administrative activities, and two salaries from the New York Archdiocese. More important, its affiliation to the Church affords Mexican immigrants a sense of trust and familiarity. Therefore, members of this organization identify themselves first, and foremost, as *guadalupanos*, or worshipers of the Mexican Virgin Mary.

In this dissertation, I will refer to the organization as *La Organización Guadalupana de Nueva York*. Although I am using a pseudonym, I should acknowledge that disguising the organization's true name as a means researchers use to protect identity works against the ideology and cultural practices of the Organization. As I have described, its objectives are to unearth abusive treatment against Mexican immigrants, build community among those who share similar difficulties, join people together along their cultural, religious, and national backgrounds, and make this organization of Mexican immigrants public knowledge in the city. By making itself public, the Organization disseminates information that reaches more immigrants than its membership includes, and becomes known to outside funders, philanthropists, potential volunteers, and others who may want to support the Organization's work. It also enables acknowledgment of the Mexican immigrant population and their contributions or accomplishments in New York City to be diffused. Most importantly to its fundamental goals, the Organization's high public profile teaches undocumented immigrants that they need not be silenced about injustices they face, and that as a unified community

they are capable of creating a safe space through which they can make demands publicly that change and improve the quality of their private lives.

Standard research practices that are assumed to protect individuals and groups need to be theorized further. Within the culture of the organization that served as my research site, this practice is a contradictory one. By assigning pseudonyms, the research becomes complicit in reproducing the notion that the identities of undocumented immigrants must be concealed. As a researcher, I am ethically required to protect my participants from even unanticipated dangers, and I have chosen to use pseudonyms for this reason. However, the identity of the Organization is not concealed when I am asked to speak publicly on its behalf. The possibility of publishing documents in collaboration with participants of the Organization also raises the likelihood of using the institution's real name. Therefore, my position to use pseudonyms in lieu of the Organization and its participants' real names ought to remain problematic as this is an unresolved issue.

La Organización Guadalupana de Nueva York is a pseudonym that alludes to the organization's real name and points to a marker of membership that only an insider would know. That is, most Mexicans are *guadalupanos*, or worshipers of the Virgin Mary as represented by Guadalupe, a mestiza version of the mother of God. She is supposed to have appeared to Juan Diego, a poor native man, speaking to him in Nahuatl, an indigenous language, and wearing attire common to the natives at the time. This Church-acknowledged apparition is said to have taken place in 1531 during Mexico's colonial period on a hillside outside of Mexico City called Tepeyac that had served as a site of veneration for an important indigenous goddess, *Coatlasuueh*, prior to the Spanish conquest. This apparition

is held responsible for the widespread evangelization of native Mexicans at that time. However, *Guadalupe*'s attire contains symbolic references to *Coatlasupeuh*, a potentially subversive act. Guadalupe is said to have asked Juan Diego to build her a shrine there; several have been built to date, and the site has served as a place of both pagan and Christian pilgrimage. Given this history, *Guadalupe* embodies racial and religious hybridity, as well as colonial subversion.

Since her apparition, *la Virgen de Guadalupe* has historically been a Mexican symbol of religious faith, a national icon, and a political model, representing those who are oppressed and marginalized (Castillo, 1996). *Guadalupe* represents all those who are struggling at a time of transition (Anzaldúa, 1987); her banner has been present during major political movements in both Mexico and the United States, and is carried during all of the Organization's political, religious, and cultural events. Therefore, the name of the Organization is a symbol of refuge and membership to all those who are *guadalupanos*, with the understanding that this signifies Mexicans, particularly those who are currently struggling against social perils such as poverty, immigration laws, racism, and abuse. The name positions the Organization as a vehicle of subversion because it represents and legitimates the needs of Mexicans who are silenced, implicitly those who are undocumented and oppressed, while presenting a publicly acceptable front to even those outsiders who may not support service in favor of this population.

Organizational history, mission, and membership

According to materials the *Organización Guadalupeña* provides documenting its

history, it was first founded in September 1997 by Mexican immigrants who saw an urgent need to organize the fast-growing Mexican population for the purpose of defending their human and legal rights in light of few institutional resources at their disposal to do so. Below is a table listing the community organization's explicit goals taken from public materials describing its objectives and mission. I have subdivided the Organization's goals, mission, and services provided under the following major headings; their content was translated directly from these public materials.

While this population of Mexican immigrants is diverse in terms of individuals' age, gender, social class, and years of formal education in Mexico, such post-migratory problems have widespread personal effects in the community living in New York, ranging from alcoholism and substance abuse to gang and domestic violence. The Organization's solution is to unify, educate and provide service to those Mexican immigrants in need. This also conveys a philosophy about successful immigrant adaptation to life in the United States. The Organization positions itself explicitly within a non-assimilationist discourse that sets a measure of immigrant success, in its own terms, as "integration without assimilation." Thus, a non-assimilationist immigrant incorporation is the developmental outcome for which this Organization advocates. Rather than replace immigrants' cultures as an assimilationist stance would suggest, immigrant integration is an additive model in which both individuals and the society they are joining have something to gain. The means by which the Organization fosters an integrationist immigrant incorporation among its membership requires an understanding of its major activities and governing structures that together with its written materials compose a greater discourse about the Organization's identity.

PURPOSES AND MISSION OF THE ORGANIZACION GUADALUPANA

Defense, enforcement, and advocacy of human and legal rights

- to unite and organize Mexicans and their descendants in New York
- to defend and enforce the human rights of the community and of other immigrants
- to advocate for General Amnesty

Integration without assimilation

- to raise awareness and develop a sense of community among Mexicans in New York
- to form a Mexican community that can integrate itself without assimilating into the cultural, religious, educational, economic, and political life of New York and the Catholic Church

SERVICES OFFERED TO THE COMMUNITY

Support across community difficulties

- Immigrant-related concerns
E.g., INS raids
immigration-related information needs
- Job-related needs
E.g., labor rights violations
self-employment cooperatives
- Health concerns
E.g., AIDS
medical insurance for undocumented minors
alcohol or drug addictions
- Formal education
E.g., Spanish literacy
English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Youth-related concerns
E.g., youth at-risk of school failure
youth in gangs

Dissemination of information

- the publication of a monthly information bulletin for internal use to the community
informs Mexican immigrants of their rights and resources in the city

Table 1. Organizational Mission and Services

Institutional activity: Bottom-up structures and grassroots governance

Considering the potential risk of deportation their status affords, undocumented Mexicans find it difficult to trust official establishments. Founded upon this concern, the

Organization exists only by religious affiliation. Most Mexicans are Catholic, and by creating an Organization that is institutionally acceptable to undocumented Mexicans, the problem of distrust is somewhat resolved. In this way, understanding the Mexican population from within its own community has been a central component of the Organization's infrastructure.

In the spirit of leadership from within, *la Organización Guadalupeana de Nueva York* is an umbrella organization, a network consisting of forty self-run community groups dispersed in parishes throughout New York City's five boroughs and parts of Westchester County where a large number of Mexican immigrants reside. As discussed earlier, Mexicans have settled in large concentrations in each of the five boroughs, as well as other parts of New York and its environs. Each group is located in separate neighborhoods in each borough; members identify each other by neighborhood or by borough, but usually according to the name of their member parish. Each community-based group elects democratically by nomination and majority vote three to four representatives who occupy the positions of president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. These neighborhood-elected leaders form a General Assembly that meets twice a year to determine the Organization's projects for the year and to evaluate their progress. They are also responsible for the collection of donations and the production of their group's activities in their own neighborhoods, as well as for their community's representation in the Organization's city-wide collective events. All members are volunteers working on different tasks ranging from the organization of political manifestations, or cultural and religious celebrations, to leadership projects that will be described further in the next section. The forty groups are organized into eight regions based on the size of their membership and geographic location. Each region chooses one

representative out of its pool of neighborhood leaders through another democratic election so that together the eight regional leaders compose the Organization's Board of Directors. All elected representatives are nominated and selected by their neighbors for two-year terms.

The membership counts on one centrally-located administrative, service-granting office and, during its first 3.5 years relied primarily on only two paid full-time staff persons, the Executive Director and the Director of Urgent Services who are responsible for the Organization's activities, both internally and at the city-wide level. Although recent grants have somewhat improved the general operation of the Organization, the amount of services needed still exceed the number of staff capable of delivering them.

The full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff are advised externally by two teams of professionals and clergy who collectively form the Organization's Advisory Board. The Executive Director is a Jesuit brother who was asked by the Jesuit order in Mexico to evaluate the situation of Mexican immigrants in New York upon request by the cardinal and priests of the New York Catholic Archdiocese who wanted someone to help organize the Mexican population in the city. After meeting with Mexican immigrants around the city, talking with them about their common problems, and studying their situation in detail, the Executive Director helped organize those Mexican immigrants demonstrating leadership characteristics. Together they founded *La Organización Guadalupana de Nueva York* in September 1997.

One of the founders is the Organization's second full-time staff person, the Director of Urgent Services. Once a child care provider and Christian youth group leader, she now handles emergency cases such as deportations, labor or housing disputes, medical negligence,

fraud, and many other problems as they arise. Often, this requires mediating between individuals seeking service and city or State agencies, and conducting much of the groundwork of directly visiting detention centers, workplaces, hospitals, courts, and places of residence around the city. She and the Executive Director frequently coordinate events of the Organization as a whole, and develop their public relations by representing the Organization when speaking to both English and Spanish-language persons and media. They also conduct workshops with groups of immigrants interested in organizing themselves, and advise them to seek their church's pastors for permission to use their parish's space for community meetings as member groups of the Organization. In addition, the staff of the Organization provides each member group with leadership development workshops. Their objective is to someday see such groups operating autonomously and self-sufficiently around the city.

Catholic Charities, a division of the Archdiocese, is the body that lends general operating support and two of the salaries that support the staff. Funds from grant foundations and corporate sponsors have begun to also provide important income. However, due to the large amount of work and few human resources on staff, the Executive Director and the Director of Urgent Services rely a great deal on the support of volunteers. The Executive Director's affiliation to the Jesuit order has enabled some of the full-time volunteer staff to be recruited from Jesuit universities in Mexico. These volunteers are college interns who come to work in the office on a semester basis and thus fulfill their university's social service requirement in order to graduate. Many other volunteers supplement the resources on staff in their spare time. A diagram of the Organization's complex governing structure as

presented in public material is found in Figure 1 below.

The Organization's staff has also developed into more specialized departments with increasing numbers of volunteers, goals, and membership. These divisions resemble corporate administrative structures and include departments of Administration, Urgent Services, Finances, Research and Development, Cultural Events, and Programs and Projects. Each of these departments is coordinated by one person and a floating team of aides.

Currently, the *Organización Guadalupeña* is the largest, most active, and most public Mexican institution in the city. The Organization's grassroots structure builds a sense of trust, community, and ownership among members, all of whom are active volunteers and part



of some working committee, fulfilling together shared goals, and representing themselves and their own accomplishments publicly. An important material product of their active membership is that individuals receive the

Organization's official picture ID card with their name and date of birth for a monthly membership fee.

Central to communication between member regions is the publication of an

information bulletin. It is compiled by the staff, community leaders, and individual members to inform the community about their rights, and about the programs and services offered by the Organization and other city agencies. The bulletins are generally distributed every month in each of the member parishes during community meetings or after mass for a small donation of 50 cents that allows the continuation of its reproduction. This takes place in the office where the supplies and equipment needed to duplicate the bulletin are located, and where members stop by to help with its lay-out or to collate and staple pages by hand. These bulletins are also distributed in small Mexican businesses around the city. Also useful in the dissemination of information about the Organization to a wider audience is the maintenance of a web site with links describing its history, current events, and association with a national advocacy coalition for General Amnesty of which the Executive Director was a founder. The Organization serves as a regional liaison for this coalition. In addition, the Organization is in the process of introducing its own communications program, including a public access channel for the same informational purposes as its monthly bulletin.

Mexican incorporation through integrationist community activity

The Organization's major activities are always simultaneously political, religious, and cultural, a method that stems from its approach to Mexican immigrants; that is, the Organization seeks the incorporation of Mexican immigrants in the city to take place in a holistic way, tying together the population's immediate needs with traditional values in some public, communal form. To illustrate this, I will review the Organization's major collective activities, as they take place during the year with the participation of every community group.

In the process, it should become clear how a primary goal of the Organization, a movement for General Amnesty, is often enacted in its cultural activities, turning illegality into a societal and personal condition requiring change.

Antorcha Guadalupana Mass and Marathon: December 12th is the feast day of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*. Consequently, this is an important event for Mexicans both in Mexico and the United States. In New York, members of the *Organización Guadalupana* attempt to re-enact a marathon which is a tradition practiced in Mexico on December 12th where people visit Guadalupe's shrine and, following mass at dawn, carry a lighted torch from the shrine to parishes in their own towns. In New York, members of the Organization re-enact a similar pilgrimage from a central location in Manhattan to their neighborhood parishes in each borough. The event has been organized three times with some modifications due to legal negotiations for police permits that are denied year after year, yet counting on about one thousand participants who need not be members of the Organization. They are charged a \$20 fee in exchange for a uniform with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and instructions on how their participation during the event will take place.

In addition to festivities in neighborhood parishes, a special mass has been celebrated for the Organization every year at St. Patrick's Cathedral. Due to such large attendance in past years in which church-goers who could not be accommodated inside the Cathedral had to crowd around large screens to witness the mass from the outside, mass was celebrated twice in the same day with full capacity during the Organization's third attempt to arrange this event. During this mass, the Organization's accomplishments are represented

symbolically during the offertory, and a plea for General Amnesty is heard among the petitions for which the congregation prays.

Mexican immigrants also use this holiday to organize themselves by advocating for Mexican workers in the city to exercise their right to one day of rest and to observe a religious holiday because this is often denied in their workplaces. Their purpose is to incorporate a Mexican religious holiday into the city in a public way, to make visible the Mexican population's presence, and to underscore their importance to employers. With greater organization, the message members want to deliver is that without Mexican workers, the city's service industry would stop short. So far, three borough presidents have granted the Organization with edicts officially naming December 12th a holy day of observance for Mexicans in the Bronx, Staten Island, and Manhattan. During preparations in participants' neighborhoods, members also use this opportunity to educate people about this event's significance by discussing problems that immigrants typically face in the areas of housing, school, work, or health, and their possible solutions. Thus, Mexican immigrants integrate the cultural and legal resources available to them for distinct purposes.

Via crucis of Immigrants: Members of the Organization enact a *via crucis*, or the stations of the cross, on Good Friday each year. This event takes place in front of the offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service where members re-enact Christ's walk to Calvary, drawing a parallel between his suffering and the abusive experiences suffered by Mexican immigrants. At each station of the cross, members read from the bible, name their own experiences of human and legal mistreatment, and make a call for General Amnesty. They

transport a person (representing all Mexican migrants) tied to a cross, and dress in biblical attire; they also carry pickets that read such statements as “Stop the Crucifixion of Immigrants,” alluding to the immigration raids that the Organization presents to the INS and others as an injustice committed against undocumented Mexican immigrants.

Festival of Artistic Expression: In the spring of each year, the Organization sponsors a public event usually held in a large parochial school auditorium with an admission fee for non-members. The event serves to raise funds for the Organization to continue its cultural programs that lead to this yearly arts festival in which member groups of the Organization compete with each other in such categories as folkloric dance, song, and photography. The event serves to also showcase poetry recitals, photos, and crafts made by members of the Organization. Originally, it took place over the course of two days on a weekend divided between children’s and adult competitions although entire families attend both days. The winners of the first through third prizes are offered a trophy; decisions are made by judges selected from other community-based organizations and public figures who support the Organization. The Festival also serves as an opportunity to sell Mexican merchandise and food, to advertise sponsoring businesses, and to make announcements or distribute information about community issues.

The Organization actively encourages Mexican immigrants to cultivate the preservation of Mexican traditions and folklore, and the Festival is seen as a non-assimilationist, but integrationist opportunity for Mexican immigrants to incorporate themselves and their traditions into the city. Currently, the Festival has been re-structured

into several smaller Festivals showcasing different quality of performance and artwork; the Organization has also seen the formation of a professional dance team constituted by the most advanced folkloric dancers of the Organization's affiliate community-based groups. The dancers pride themselves on knowing that they are primarily undocumented workers who have made time and found energy to see this goal realized. Their message to the public has also been that Mexican cultural heritage and arts need not be imported because they are already present and part of the everyday life of the city.

Mexican Independence Day Parade and Festivities: Mexican Independence Day is celebrated on September 16th every year. The *Organización Guadalupeana* uses this date for similar purposes as the arts Festival. It is used as an opportunity to publicly showcase the work of the Organization. During its third year, the Organization planned a parade with floats, dance groups, and musical performances. Such public presentations display the Organization's cultural work, its size, as well as its advocacy goals. For example, one of the floats was decorated and named the General Amnesty float.

Day of the Dead Vigils: October 2nd is celebrated in Mexico as the Day of the Dead. Members of the *Organización Guadalupeana* implement their cultural tradition of designing altars in memory of the deceased in their homes or parishes around the city. Special commemoration is made by the Organization to those who have died on the border attempting to cross it. In addition to the altars, vigils are held in front of congressional representatives' offices in the city to raise awareness about the number of violent deaths that

take place along the border every year and to posit this reality as a reason for which immigrants must advocate for, and receive, General Amnesty.

March for Unconditional General Amnesty: Due to the Organization's close ties to a national coalition that advocates for General Amnesty for undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., members have been involved in both national and local marches and manifestations that have taken place in New York and Washington, D.C. These events serve as an opportunity for Mexican immigrants to unite with other immigrants in the city and around the country, creating new ties regardless of internal national, ethnic, racial, language or gender divisions. They also serve to educate immigrants and others about immigration policies or proposals, such as guest-worker bills, that affect immigrants detrimentally.

Along with all of these major events, the Organization also collectively engages in protests and manifestations in response to injustices faced not only by Mexicans in New York, but also by other groups as they emerge during the year. It is common to see a majority of youth or entire families with even very young children participating. All of the Organization's events are well-attended, the largest ranging from hundreds to thousands of participants at a time. *La Organización Guadalupeña* has become a reputable institution among those concerned about the protection of human rights, legal rights, and the Mexican immigrant population in the city. Its public activities, however, have not been met without some resistance. Often, city permits are denied for city marathons, parades, or the use of parks in central areas of Manhattan that would attract much attention to such events. Thus, the Organization must often modify its activities, or seek the intervention of supportive,

influential persons.

In addition to these collective events that the *Organización Guadalupeana* engages in, and that reflect much of the internal work the community conducts, there are other activities that the membership directs separately in their own neighborhoods. That is, aside from recreational work, such as leading children and adults' folkloric dance groups and sports teams, the Organization's community groups often negotiate with their parishes the use of office space, basements, or auditoriums when affiliated with an elementary school. The space they are allotted is used for meetings, choir, dance or sports practice, and fund-raising events such as socials or the selling of traditional Mexican food after Sunday mass. Proceeds from fund-raising events are often shared between the pastor (for the church's expenses) and the parish's members of the *Organización Guadalupeana*. For example, such funds are used for the purchase of special materials used during the Organization's events, including uniforms, dance attire, or other materials. Each community-based group has begun to take more responsibility for the organization of major events, the education of Mexican immigrants in the city, and personal contact with the media. In this sense, the Organization's major desired developmental outcomes of institutional independence and successful integration without assimilation are beginning to be reached.

Also, many of the member community groups conduct special visits to their neighbors' homes on the weekends. Carrying an image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, members ask their neighbors to offer their home as an abode for the image; the person who accepts joins the group in praying the rosary and keeps the image for a designated time after which she or he agrees to help find a new home for *la Virgen de Guadalupe* in their neighborhood.

The group walks together along their neighborhood's streets singing hymns in veneration of the Virgin Mary until they find a welcoming door. Members of the Organization use this activity as an opportunity for spiritual renovation, as a well as for the recruitment of new members to the Organization. Besides praying the rosary together, the group discusses common difficulties faced in their neighborhood or in their household; this keeps members of the Organization informed about current problems and helps foster collective solutions. The activity serves as a means to both evangelize and educate Latinos, especially Mexican immigrants, about their rights, the possibilities of organization, and the sharing of common problems through religious practice.

Immigrant incorporation through the integration of identities

La Organización Guadalupeana de Nueva York is a Mexican immigrant umbrella organization. While much of its internal work handles problems related to Mexicans' undocumented status, its range of activities and institutional affiliations require members to identify themselves along multiple co-existing lines: national, ethnic, legal, cultural, regional, and religious. Community begins with a common sense of history and culture, drawing upon Mexican immigrants' pre-migratory common knowledge and identities as *guadalupanos* that are later conjoined with common experiences and hardships as new immigrants facing novel experiences and novel structures of identity. Their incorporation into a new society and daily New York City life is somewhat facilitated by the Organization whose system of voluntary, shared leadership creates a sense of ownership and belonging among Mexican immigrants. While their common undocumented status, racial and language classifications would have

them ousted from meaningfully participating in U.S. society, their little spare time invested in communal self-enhancement provides Mexican immigrants with a sense of mission, accomplishment, and entitlement. They learn through their organizing activities that they can ease their transition into a new country and actively contribute to their own well-being by incorporating their values and traditions into those already existing in the United States.

This understanding of the *Organización Guadalupeana* was acquired by my own, active involvement in it as a volunteer on staff and as a researcher. The preceding description provides the overarching ethnographic background and societal history in which the Organization exists in New York City, and through which the individual identities of Mexican immigrants emerge. In the next chapter, I discuss how the research was designed to further explore illegality in more institutional and individual detail. I will begin with a description of my involvement as a participant observer, a role that has continued well beyond what I had planned, but that continues to inform this research; then I will conclude with a discussion of the ethnographic and participatory methods used to capture institutional and individual dimensions of identity for close descriptive analysis. This allowed me to consider alternative explanations of findings by juxtaposing my own point of view from that of the Organization, and of each individual participant in this study.

CHAPTER 4

Research design: Institutional and individual dimensions of participation⁴

I first gained entrée to the *Organización Guadalupeana* as part of an interview study I conducted with leaders of community organizations working with the Mexican population in New York (Solís, 2001). After this initial contact with the Organization in which I discussed the dissertation research I was planning with the Director of Urgent Services, I offered to collaborate with the staff as a volunteer. In this capacity, I have been visiting the Organization's central office consistently since February of 1999. At first, my work consisted of meeting with the Executive Director and another volunteer to conduct our business of locating and applying to grant foundations. In the process, I have also been involved in a range of other activities. One of my main tasks has been to translate the Organization's public documents into English, including all of the pages on its web site, informational pamphlets and brochures, as well as the Executive Director's press releases. In addition, I was asked to participate as a member of the Organization's Advisory Board in May 2000 until I became coordinator of Research and Development in January of 2001. This last type of service emerged after I had completed the data collection phase of the dissertation research. It has involved working with other volunteers on the design and implementation of an after-school program, as well as the beginning phases of other projects. My own

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knowledge of the Organization, no doubt, has come from this steady, continuous process of direct participation in it.

Becoming an insider through participant observation

Most of my activities have taken place primarily in the central office, with an increasing frequency of visits and responsibilities; I have met and worked with both paid and volunteer staff, and have witnessed the numerous types of cases that the staff handles both in person and by phone. I have also attended a number of the Organization's major events around the city, as well as some of the more local events organized by several of its affiliate community-based groups.

Clearly, the Organization in which I became involved was not only interested in participating in the research, but in involving me as a participant in their own everyday affairs. During this process, we established a relationship of mutual trust, familiarity, and reciprocity. I gained a better, direct understanding of the way the Organization is operated, its services, past and future programs and projects. In addition, I have become knowledgeable of the members' and staff's enormous willingness to work in spite of their little free time and of the Organization's precarious financial situation. Gaining access and knowledge about the culture of the *Organización Guadalupeana* over time and through my own participation has been a fundamental aspect of conducting grounded, naturalistic research (Strauss & Corbin, 1997). These everyday actions, rather than titles or labels, are what have afforded me access to certain people and information that would otherwise be unavailable. I initially found myself using my own position as a Mexican American researcher from New York to gain

access to the Organization.

I argue that the specific data I derived over time, and its interpretation were possible through a combination of identities based on my own and my participants' ethnic background, personal histories, *and* activist work. Hidalgo (1998) and Valdés (1997) have discussed the importance of establishing rapport through mutual respect and reciprocity between researchers and Latino families. Similarly, it is not surprising that other Latino researchers working with undocumented Mexican immigrants served as volunteers in community organizations with whom they first established relationships, and only later recruited their members as research participants (Guerra, 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Thus, being self-reflexive about my own participation and subjectivity in the Organization has been an important component in understanding the production of this research.

Although traditional social science sees objectivity as a fundamental characteristic of rigorous investigation, critics of this view posit that complete impartiality is unattainable if one believes that truth is socially constructed. Under this framework, the researcher holds a critical role in the formulation of an object of study. With this understanding, researchers in education and social sciences (Fine, 1994; Villenas, 1996) have questioned the importance of maintaining objectivity as a pole opposite to that of subjectivity. As Rosaldo (1989) proposes, scientific standards need not place this important question in terms of either-or solutions, but rather researchers must learn to constantly examine their subjectivity throughout the research process in order to avoid falling under either extreme.

One reason for the emergence of this sort of questioning is due to the rise of researchers doing work in their own communities, especially among minority and

disempowered groups (Hidalgo, 1998; Villenas, 1996). They have pointed to the perils of conducting research that fails to reflect on the researcher's role in producing the results of their work by ignoring historical and immediate contexts, and by becoming "co-opted" into traditional practices that position the researcher as a superior to participants (Villenas, 1996). Quite often, this critical research has as one of its goals the empowerment of the populations under study. This kind of action research raises important questions of partiality/impartiality, and of the extent to which political advocacy enters scientific discussion.

Harding (1996) argues for "standpoint epistemology" which would require social scientists to forego traditional views of objectivity and instead make explicit one's standpoint, or the assumptions one uses to derive knowledge from empirical research. I argue that in this research my position as a participant working with the *Organización Guadalupeana* affords me the status of an insider to the community. Although the extent to which I am an insider is not without limits (e.g., due to the quality of my involvement in the Organization, personal history, U.S. citizenship), it nevertheless has provided me with access to particular kinds of information and people that an outsider to the community would not easily reach. Nevertheless, my standpoint as both a participant and a researcher has been examined and reflected upon constantly in journal entries throughout the unfolding of this dissertation.

Using ethnographic methods (Miles & Huberman, 1984), my participation in the *Organización Guadalupeana* and observations of its activities were recorded in journal entries since the start of my involvement as a volunteer. In the process of obtaining approval of the research by the university's Institutional Review Board, one point of concern was how to

resolve the “dual role” issue; that is, I had to make sure that working in the Organization as a volunteer did not result in coercive measures when acting as a researcher attempting to attract participants. Therefore, I began to work as a volunteer with the staff of the Organization, without much direct contact with the Organization’s members who could later become my research participants. This experience allowed me to become less of an “outsider” by learning more about the Organization’s cultural activities and, with this knowledge, design better the research activities to follow. Notation of my own participation and observations of the Organization’s central office began in February 1999 with the purpose of examining how activities that are institutionally driven interact with individuals’ formation of identity, and how those activities come to involve entire families with different degrees of participation.

Degrees of participatory action: Institutional and individual involvement in research

One of the goals of this research was to locate the points at which individual and institutional identities meet and become mutually constitutive. That is, I was interested in how the institution’s position on illegality is adopted, refused, or transformed by the individual members who make up that institution. For this reason, it was important for me to understand the Organization in depth, and in its own right, as a site of the formation of identity. My purpose was to understand how its identities are constituted through public discourses and collective, cultural activities, how being undocumented emerges as one of its identities, and how such an identity is adopted or transformed by its individual members in their own discourses and cultural practices.

The design of the study's data collection consisted of three phases of research activities. The first involved the collection of documents that, along with my experience of the Organization's cultural activities, would address whether and how the *institution*, as an organizing social structure of New York City, impinges upon the formation of illegality as an identity. This consisted of acquiring the following information:

Phase I- Institutional records, texts, and discourses: I began a collection of the Organization's monthly information bulletins (designed for the community's internal use) with an issue printed in December 1998 and ended with the December issue of 2000. Printing of bulletins during this time tended to be consistent, although publication of a bulletin was skipped on occasion. Therefore, the number of bulletins I collected included a total of 16 issues. Original articles are always written in Spanish. I argue that the bulletins' written texts and graphic illustrations collectively produce a discourse of identity on the institutional dimension; thus, they were examined in terms of how illegality emerged within them, how it was defined, and how authors of the bulletins positioned themselves in relation to their immigration status or other structures of identity such as race, social class, and gender.

Due to my own participation in *la Organización Guadalupeña*, I relied on records and journal entries about the Organization's informational materials, press releases, and grant proposals documenting its history, demographics, and projects that pointed to how the Organization's functions unfolded over time. Understanding how the Organization operates and who it involves is another method to explain the institutional dimension of identity formation. In addition to this archival documentation, I also included in my journal entries

information derived from informal conversations and consultation with individual staff persons that would clarify the public positions and purpose of activities of the Organization. Their comments and reactions to the chapters in this dissertation, along with their own experience, also informed the interpretation of data reported in later chapters. As far as examining the institutional dimension of identity, I argue that oral and written discourses of identity are not isolated from, but occur in conjunction with the actual arrangements and community activities that characterize the Organization; its discourses and cultural activities can be read together as an institutional text of identity (Shotter & Gergen, 1989).

Phase II-Individual texts of identity across children and youth: Having spent over a year as a volunteer and participant observer in the *Organización Guadalupeana*, by February 2000 I had gained a certain amount of understanding of the culture of the central office, and of the Organization's major events and operations. Since I was interested in whether and how an "illegal identity" might emerge in the process of an individual's activity, and how children and teenagers' understanding of illegality might coincide or differ from that of their parents as an adult generation of Mexican immigrants with different life experiences, I designed a group project at this time to involve some of the families who were members of the Organization. The data obtained from individuals were designed to complement the on-going collection of institutional data, as well as to disclose the kinds of variability that existed among the Organization's members in terms of the quality of their participation in this institution. The intent was to examine how individuals' identities emerged from their activities and through the nature of their participation in the *Organización Guadalupeana*.

Since Mexican migration to New York is a recent trend, much of the short-dated literature on it has primarily focused on young Mexican men who are generally the first to arrive (Smith, 1996; 1998). However, we also know that immigration changes the composition of the family, and that children are often left in the care of a near relative, sometimes for significant time periods, either in Mexico or New York, especially when a parent migrates and must work many hours. In other cases, adolescents migrate on their own, without their parents, in order to find work and help support their families back home. Taking this reality into account, the research I conducted involved children, youth, and their mothers who had been living in New York for varying lengths of time.

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, extra steps had to be taken to ensure the protection of participants' identities. Immigration status is information available only to individual members of the *Organización Guadalupeña*; as an institution, however, this information is unavailable as it is not officially obtained from members nor documented in any formal way. My dissertation research, as another activity of the Organization, did not require participants to reveal information about their specific workplaces or places of residence. Although not every member of every family is, necessarily, undocumented, most Mexican adults and in some cases Mexican children living in New York are undocumented immigrants. Regardless, I considered illegal status to be a transitory classification because immigrants may be in the process of legalization, and/or engage in travel back to Mexico where they are not undocumented.

As for children who were born in the U.S., their own everyday experience and awareness of issues of immigration vary a great deal. However, regardless of their own

immigration status, many U.S.-born Mexican children in New York have parents who are undocumented. These children are still affected by immigration status and can potentially identify the Mexican community, their families, and themselves accordingly. Therefore, participants were not recruited according to their status, but rather served as agents who may or may not have identified themselves and the Mexican community according to illegality. The notion of distributed cognition has been applied to the sociohistorical perspective already (Cole & Engestroem, 1997). I was interested in what the children's personal migration experiences had been, if any, and how distributed the notion of illegality was within their community and across their identities. One important way their identity was protected was that all participants, children and adults, were provided the option of giving their informed, written consent to participate in the study by signing their name with an X, rather than signing their names in full.

My participants in this second phase of the study were primarily children and adolescents who were recruited through the Organization by word of mouth. I also advertised the project I was planning by placing flyers in the entrance to the central office. They were told that I was conducting research on Mexican families, and that I was interested in how families came to identify themselves in a new country. They were also told that I was planning a writing workshop as part of this study in which children and teenagers would be asked to write and illustrate stories about their lives in New York. The writing workshop was intended to create a meaningful activity for children and youth; therefore, they were told that their texts and graphic illustrations would be used to compile a booklet for other children and youth whose families intended to migrate or were newly arrived in New York City.

This booklet project was designed to be flexible and inclusive of children and teenagers' creativity. Although the children and youth who participated expected me to structure their activities, I constantly reminded them that they could make or alter suggestions about information they believed we should include in the booklet. The purpose of framing the booklet for parents and children who were about to cross into the U.S. was to provide an opportunity for issues of illegality to emerge, and in this way examine whether positioning oneself and/or the community according to immigration status was, in fact, a veritable method of identification for Mexican children of different ages and life experiences who were living in New York. Past research has established that socially-directed literacy activities such as writing newsletters and booklets are functional contexts for sociocultural development (Daiute, 2000; Daiute & Morse, 1993; Daiute et al., 1993). Another function of the booklet, then, was to create a resource for the community organization to provide to other children and families who were planning to migrate. For this reason, the children were asked to write the booklet in Spanish; I also offered to translate texts written in English by those who were not literate in Spanish. It is worth recognizing that this activity fell well within the goals of the Organization; it served as a way of providing service to other Mexicans, maintaining Spanish and, consequently, of resisting assimilation.

In addition, the purpose of writing for other families in Mexico made sense within a community viewed as "transnational" for its continuous exchanges between both New York and individuals' hometowns in Mexico. For instance, some of the Organization's monthly bulletins contained letters written from parish representatives in Mexico to their counterparts in New York. Similarly, the children's booklet was meant to serve as a means of

communication between Mexican children and families in the U.S. and Mexico, except that here it would be written from the child's point of view. Daiute (1998) has identified children's writing to be one kind of discourse mode that integrates both cultural and personal viewpoints. In this sense, the written and graphic texts included in the children's booklet, and oral discussions during their production were collected for analysis as discourses of identity. The children's booklet project provided a space for children's understanding of self in society to emerge according to their own views and cultural practices, without the explicit imposition of an adult's world view. This activity also served as a conceptual space in which children and teenagers could discuss illegality in a protected environment.

Production of the children's booklet took place over a total of 10 meetings. Although I met 16 children and teenagers over the course of these meetings, only a core group of five children (2 boys, 3 girls) participated consistently until the booklet was completed. Six of the 10 meetings were audiotaped and transcribed so that each of the five individual children's contributions could be investigated in detail (see Appendix for transcription conventions). Each meeting took place in the Organization's central office for about one hour and a half on Friday afternoons between February and April 2000. The group of children and youth was diverse in terms of age (the range was between five and 14 years), place of birth (Mexico or U.S.), years in the U.S., and schooling in public and/or Catholic schools (see Table 2). At the time this research took place, all five of my core participants were attending Catholic schools on partial scholarships. They were all English-dominant.

Over the course of our meetings, I reiterated that this project was part of my research on Mexican immigrants' identities and explained how the protection of identity works in

research. They were each asked to select their own pseudonym. This core group of five children and youth consisted of two pairs of siblings, and a younger cousin of one of the pairs. In addition, I asked my own younger brother, Jorge Solís, who was seventeen years old at the time to participate in the production of the children's booklet for two reasons: (1) to help me organize each meeting in which he and I would take field notes, and (2) to facilitate our group discussions and activities through his generational and ethnic affiliations with the other children and teenagers. Below is a table listing some of the demographic characteristics of the five children who participated consistently in this research.

The group's different life experiences, and ways of making sense of themselves, the community, society, and each other had to be made more explicit as their similarities and differences came to the surface. The booklet also afforded children with an opportunity to reproduce the contexts in which illegality does or does not emerge in their own lives. Our meetings, which took place in the busy and interrupted environment of the central office, consisted of the following activities:

Introductory meeting: The children and teenagers who attended the first meeting were told what the research involved: audio-taping discussions of one's experiences in New York, and writing and illustrating a booklet for future immigrant families. Parental consent forms were distributed, and informed consent from each participant was later collected. This information was repeated every time a new participant joined the group in subsequent meetings.

Meeting 2: This meeting entailed a discussion about information that new immigrants should be familiar with, and led to a conversation of the participants' life experiences and knowledge about the city. By the end of the meeting, they had produced texts and drawings

based on these conversations.

Meeting 3: Interviews were conducted between participants about their experiences in U.S. schools, at home, in their neighborhoods, and in Mexico (see Appendix for Peer Interview questions). Each participant took turns audiotaping themselves as both interviewer and respondent.

Participant	Age	Place of birth	Years in the U.S.	Place of residence	Relationship	Meetings attended
David	14	Mexico	10	Manhattan	Karina's brother	8
Karina	12	Mexico	10	Manhattan	David's sister	7
Marcos	9	U.S.	9	Bronx	Margarita's brother; Ariel's cousin	7
Margarita	6	U.S.	6	Bronx	Marcos' sister; Ariel's cousin	8
Ariel	5	U.S.	5	Bronx	Marcos' and Margarita's cousin	8

Table 2. Children's demographic information

Meeting 4: Participants were asked to brainstorm and write advice for new Mexican immigrant adults and children. Some of them completed drawings they felt could be included in the booklet. The group present during this meeting co-authored a piece of fiction about a typical afternoon in the lives of a Mexican brother and sister living in New York City.

Meeting 5: Participants produced more drawings, and added to the advice columns from previous texts. They also discussed spontaneously their personal experiences of political manifestations.

Meeting 6: The youngest children who were not yet literate were asked to make illustrations about themselves; the rest of the participants were asked to write a letter describing themselves to the children in Mexico who would read the booklet. The texts compiled for the booklet were reviewed and edited by the group. Our discussions on this day were audiotaped.

Meeting 7: Participants were audiotaped as they discussed their experiences of life in Mexico before migrating to the U.S., and produced illustrations based on their narrations.

Meeting 8: Participants audiotaped interviews with each other about their own and others' beliefs about immigrants. The questions they were asked included: *(1) What do other people think about immigrants?* and *(2) What do you think about immigrants?* They also produced more illustrations on their own.

Meeting 9: The children and teenagers present at this meeting were audiotaped as they reviewed and edited texts to be included in the booklet. They also made decisions about the booklet's lay-out and sequence of texts and illustrations. Some participants were questioned further about the possibilities of future programs or projects that the Organization could implement for children and youth who were already living in New York and who were members of the Organization.

Closing meeting: The final session of the workshop was dedicated to reflecting on the process of compiling a booklet for other children and youth, and to devising a title that the group collectively decided would be *New York, Nueva York para niños y familias mexicanas* [New York, Nueva York for Mexican children and families].

Table 3 summarizes the number of participants present per meeting, the number of

sets of field notes per meeting (depending on whether Jorge Solís was present to also take notes with me), and notation of meetings that were audio-recorded using concurrent tapes.

Throughout our meetings, participants were constantly asked to evaluate the importance and reasons for writing the stories they included, and to discuss what else should be included in the booklet. This time also provided me with an opportunity to ask the group clarifying questions based on the kind of written texts and graphic illustrations that emerged. Over the course of our ten meetings, the core group developed a shared orientation toward a common goal; they needed to be reminded of the booklet's purpose with less frequency and could explain to others what they were doing.

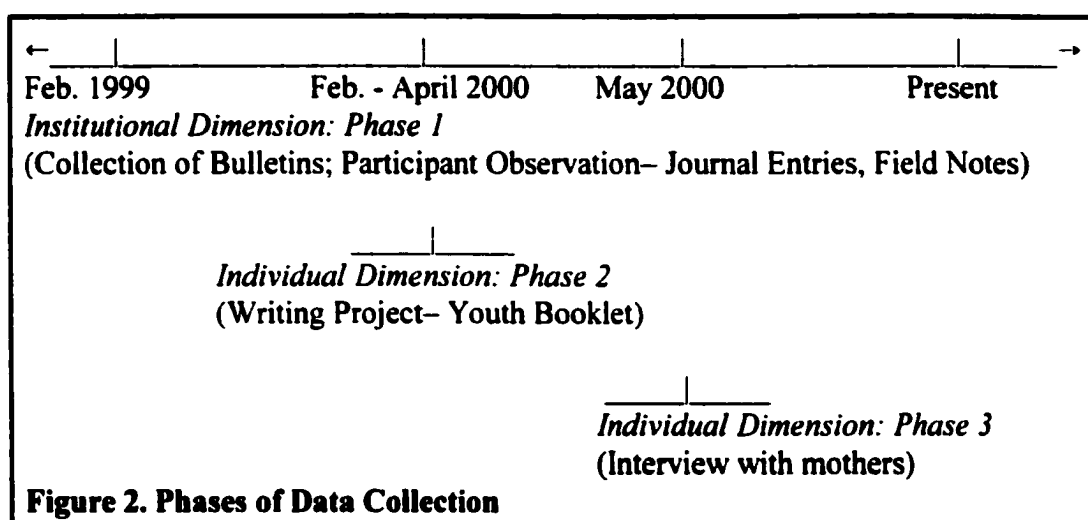
Meeting	# of Participants	Sets of Field Notes: 1 or 2	# of 60-90 minute audio tapes
1	3	1	n/a
2	2	2	n/a
3	6	2	4
4	6	2	n/a
5	3	2	n/a
6	5	2	3
7	5	2	2
8	5	1	4
9	4	2	2
10	5	2	2

Table 3. Total number of participant and field recordings per meeting

Composing the children's booklet was an activity that served to include the specific, moment-to-moment details of identity formation that would add another dimension to the

macro-level detail about the Organization. This activity gave the children an opportunity to respond to each other's texts and drawings, and served as a way for them to elicit directly more ideas and information from each other. This allowed for an analytic comparison of how the positions of identity produced by children and youth coincided or differed from the positions of the Organization. Moreover, the availability of children and youth-produced texts and illustrations not elicited by me produced knowledge I could not have evoked on my own, or through ethnographic observation alone. Therefore, participatory action by children and youth in this research was a central method through which I obtained detailed information about processes of identity formation.

Phase III-Individual texts of identity across mothers of focal children: In addition to the booklet project, I also conducted one in-depth, open-ended focus group interview with the mothers of my five primary participants. (For a time line of the major phases of data collection, see Figure 2.) This took place after the children's booklet was completed, and was audiotaped using four concurrent tapes to record three hours of discussion. Using the children's booklet as a prompt, I elicited three mothers' opinions about their children's work, as well as their comments about some of the topics that emerged in the booklet such as Mexican children's experiences in school.



The booklet also served to elicit their “crossing over” stories in which the mothers narrated their individual and families’ histories of migration, as well as their expectations about life in New York or in Mexico. This data served to specify the different migratory patterns these families had undergone. For instance, families may migrate in stages or as a family unit. Others come together as a result of independent migration by two people who form a family in the U.S. (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). This was important since my belief was that illegality develops as an identity before people migrate through their planning activities in Mexico. Only Karina and David’s family migrated in stages: they crossed the border with their mother to reunite with their father who was already living in New York. The other two mothers migrated with their husbands and had children while already in the United States; both of their husbands had already lived in New York for a period of time. Before coming to the U.S., all three participants in this phase of the research had migrated from their hometowns in Puebla to a suburb of Mexico City as single women.

The women who participated were also asked about their life experiences in New

York, their involvement in *la Organización Guadalupeana*, and about their own expectations for themselves and their families. Two of them (Mercedes and Lucía) were unemployed at the time which meant that their families' household income was reduced to their husbands' wages. The other participant (Rosa) was employed in domestic work. See Table 4 for a summary of the mothers' demographic information. One difficulty in determining the kinds of employment Mexican immigrants hold is that their jobs are often temporary, and thus vary a great deal within the service sector.

The purpose of the interviews was to elicit the mothers' interpretation of their own and their children's place in society, as well as to determine whether their personal goals differed from those of the Organization (see Appendix for Focus Group interview questions).

Name	Years in U.S.	Place of Origin	Occupation	Children (who were research participants)
Rosa	10	Chiautla de Tapia, Puebla	Domestic service	David, Karina
Mercedes	11	Acatlán, Puebla	None	Ariel
Lucía	12	Acatlán, Puebla	None	Marcos, Margarita

Table 4. Mothers' demographic information

Both Rosa and Mercedes had a youngest daughter, a 6-year-old and a 4-year-old, respectively, who did not participate in the research. Interviewing the children's mothers was based on the idea that the family is another institution that children and teenagers are exposed to, and through which they also derive tools for the formation of their identities.

Understanding identity through discourse analysis

Much of the data recorded in field notes and journal entries has served as descriptive information; oral and written texts were analyzed to see whether and how illegality emerged. Although both the individual and the Organization's social positions co-exist, my purpose was to focus on illegality as an identity alongside other identities as they were produced in the data. Rather than divide institutional from individual data, I chose to have the data remain integrated in the analysis chapters as my theoretical framework would suggest. The following sections discuss the discourse analyses that accompanied the ethnographic data.

I should first note that texts were derived in three modalities: oral, written, and graphic (illustrations). Ong (1988) discusses how orality is dynamic in nature since its meaning is constrained by the immediate context, whereas literacy has a static quality as it encourages alienation and personal detachment. According to Bakhtin (1986), this dichotomy cannot hold since writing can be thought of as a response to previous oral or written discourse. Texts produced by the institution often display an oral quality (e.g., in tone, in vocabulary), and are dynamic in the sense that they produce certain discourses that speak to others. Writing, in this context, also functions to build community based on similarities (e.g., political views, religion, social class, Spanish language). Nevertheless, the artifacts of the institution (e.g., booklets) are fairly stable products that represent the negotiated, or shared identity and culture of the Organization. On the other hand, speech is a dynamic, interpersonal process that can potentially lead to more pronounced variations within the Organization and between participants. As we will see later, the focus group interview with the focal children's mothers exemplified this well. The children's booklet project, unlike

one-on-one interviews, also provided a special context in which participants' ideas, cultural knowledge, and identities were enacted rather than reported.

Since the individual is understood in relation to others, it is worth reiterating that processes of identity formation also have social, interpersonal origins. For this reason, the analysis of written texts produced by the Organization, children and youth, as well as discussions audiotaped during the second and third phases of data collection are reported in the context of their interlocutors and audiences. The following sections discuss in more detail the discourse methods by which all texts and transcripts were analyzed in terms of identity formation, and on what bases they were compared and contrasted across participants, and between the Organization and its individual members.

Thematic Analysis

The different streams of data were analyzed for recurring **themes** having to do with one's social position and self-understanding to understand the common ground that unifies the participants of the Organization. For example, the Organization's bulletins frequently convey both explicit and implicit themes of resistance or injustice. For example, one article is titled "*Cuánto nos roba el patrón*/How much our employer steals from us." The community is positioned as a collective victim of injustice as seen by the pronoun use in the title. In the article itself, there is a tabulation of what workers' salaries should be according to hours worked and minimum wage pay. In it, drawings of characters explain to other people how the table works. One such character has a man standing over him wearing dark glasses and a suit, smiling as he covers the worker's mouth to keep him from speaking. Since

undocumented immigrants often work for less than the minimum wage, the article serves as a means of raising awareness and provoking collective action against being silenced and treated unfairly by employers because of one's undocumented status. See table 5 for examples of themes that emerged across the data. This textual example also illustrates other analyses conducted across the data.

Content Analysis

All texts and transcripts were analyzed for three types of content in order to obtain a general sense of both commonality and diversity across participants that could reveal alternative developmental outcomes. For example, both **uniformity** and **variation** between individual participants, between participants and the Organization, and between mothers and children served as analytic content and methodological counter-arguments.

Examples of common themes across the data:
• Injustice • Resistance • Solidarity • Difference • Accomplishment • Safety • Legitimacy • Subversion

Table 5. Themes

Data were also analyzed for references to the specific moments where **cultural knowledge** about being Mexican and living illegally was produced, assumed, or shared. This also helped to recognize whether there were commonalities across participants, and of what

they consisted. Goodnow (1990) states that relations of power, certain kinds of knowledge, and cultural values are embedded in "modeled messages," or implicit messages people draw from the routine arrangements of time, space, and activity. My observations of the *Organización Guadalupeana* included noting how knowledge about being undocumented is produced. For example, the central office contains a common room where general meetings are held. In this common space, the walls are often decorated with different objects including portraits of Mexican revolutionaries, photographs of members of the Organization during the yearly arts festival in which they perform folkloric dances in traditional attire, and photo galleries portraying other major events. Hanging in the center of one wall in this room is an impressive acrylic on wood by a Mexican artist. The painting depicts a juxtaposing of names of colonizers on one side and indigenous names on the other mediated by a crucified Christ figure at the center. Underneath is a Mexican boy, making a muscle where an image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* is tattooed on his bicep. Such artifacts communicate a message about whom the community is; they signal such themes as religious faith, struggle, oppression, as well as strength, accomplishment, and cultural beauty. In this way, the identity of the Organization need not read "undocumented" explicitly; it is instead one implicit meaning found in the coordination of its material, visual arrangements. In fact, the front of the building does not carry a large, identifying sign either; instead, the name of the Organization is printed on an almost imperceptible note at the front door. On the other hand, one of the front windows has a noticeable stamp of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* signaling membership only to those who would be knowledgeable of its meaning, and of the services of the Organization.

Changes to migrants' status both in the U.S. and in Mexico often conflict with each other. While some may be considered illegitimate members of U.S. society, they can also be positioned simultaneously as benefactors of Mexico's economy and culture. Their children also carry certain weight since they are more likely than their parents to be formally educated or to speak English fluently, both of which are highly valued in Mexico. For this reason, the third content for which data were analyzed consisted of expressions of **conflict**, **counter-arguments**, or **common misconceptions** that pointed to the contradictory social positions Mexican immigrants and children come to occupy. In the process of conducting content analyses, sub-topics were identified especially across written texts.

Graphic illustrations

As the examples above illustrate, graphic illustrations or drawings can add to the message of a text, or stand as a cultural means of expression. Therefore, it was important to note, wherever relevant, how the illustrations in the Organization's bulletins or children's booklet contributed to creating a common text of identity.

Discourse strategies

The discourses of the Organization and individual research participants were important to analyze in terms of what each could do through language; that is, discourse strategies were identified to learn how individuals and institutions are positioned by themselves and others in actual language use through forms of **address**, **audience**, and other means. Therefore, identity was also operationalized as social positioning through discourse

strategies. For example, since the core group of children and adolescents who participated in the research conversed with each other primarily in English, instances of **code-switching** (Zentella, 1997a) were studied as moments that pointed to shifts in one's social position according to the topic of conversation, addressee, and purpose of the switch. The choice of language can implicitly carry certain meanings. For example, Mexican children who prefer English are probably more established and U.S.-born, *legal* members of U.S. society. Each of the subsequent chapters discusses the discourse strategies analyzed across both institutional and individual dimensions.

Indexicality

Texts were also analyzed for **indexicality**, or pragmatic markers of identity that point to how social positions are produced. Some have argued that personal pronouns index positions of power and solidarity between interlocutors (Blas-Arroyo, 1994; Brown & Gilman, 1960; Peters & Appel, 1996). Specifically, I searched for typical pragmatic features of one's social position as indexed by personal pronouns [e.g., I, you, he, she, they/*yo, tú, él, ella, ellos*] and other indexes of spatio-temporal location [e.g., now, then, before, here, there, later/*ahora, entonces, antes, aquí, allá, después*] (Levinson, 1983) as the most direct means to detect social positioning in language. For example, many articles in the Organization's monthly bulletins begin in the first person singular, *yo*, yet slip into the first person plural, *nosotros*, positioning the author as an individual representative of the community as a whole. Also, the author often addresses the audience (other members of the Organization or other Mexicans) in the familiar, second person singular, *tú* as a potential marker of solidarity.

Thus, the data were analyzed for reference to one's social position as defined by the construction of an other (see examples in Table 6). In this way, contrasts in social relationships and positions of identity were pinpointed through indexicals (Ochs, 1990) in each subsequent chapter discussing the results.

Social structures

Data were also analyzed to see whether and how traditional social structures of identity such as race, class, language, gender, or religion were introduced and used by participants to capture the broader, societal history of Mexicans in New York. The purpose was to also determine whether legal status, as an available social structure of identity, operates in conjunction with, or as an alternative to, other social structures in the psychological formation of Mexican immigrants and children.

Triangulation of discourses and activities for sociohistorical analysis

The subsequent chapters include the results of triangulation methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) that examined the entirety of these discourse analyses with the ethnographic data collected. The remaining chapters are divided according to the major topics (Language, Citizenship, Religiosity, Violence) that arose across the data, and that pointed to the social structures and resources that Mexicans in *la Organización Guadalupeana* used to adopt a social position through which they could identify themselves and others, and use this identity to orient their thoughts and actions. (See Appendix for a matrix of data analyses by major topics and sources of data.) Actually, each major topic is thus discussed as a tool of the

Organization in the formation of identity, how it functions as such, and how it differs across participants.

Examples of subject positions identified across the data:	
• U.S.-born/ Mex-born • legal/undocumented • older/younger generation • child/parent • peer/non-peer • older/younger sibling • sibling/non-sibling • boy/girl • insider/outsider • informed/uninformed	• observer/non-observer • Mexican/Other ethnicity • Spanish-speaker/English-speaker • cultural supporters/assimilationists • bilingual/monolingual • victim/non-victim • organization member/non-member • U.S. resident/Mexican resident • experienced/inexperienced • authority/subordinate

Table 6. Social positions

It is important now to recall that the Organization was conceptualized as a psychological tool because the analyses served to explore this point further. Taking the four major topics identified above as the embedded tools of the Organization as a starting point in my sociohistorical analysis of illegality as an identity, each of the four results chapters examine how the Organization's institutional position vis-à-vis society was adopted or transformed by individual members in their written texts published in the monthly bulletin or in conversations and activities of the Organization, including the focus group interview. This was done to address the question of how the Organization functions as a tool for the development of an undocumented identity. Then, these results were juxtaposed to the activities and discourses of the children involved in the research. In this sense, there were several units of analysis, or types of activity, that captured the complexity of illegality as an

identity. (See Appendix for matrix of analyses by sources of data).

Data triangulation methods were used to corroborate findings, but also to detect individual variability by juxtaposing what people say or report about their identities with what they actually do or how they enact identity. By comparing and contrasting individuals' conversations and writing, I was also able to address the question of whether children and adults share similar notions of illegality, and whether their identities serve the same psychological functions. For a review of the research questions and methods, see table 7 below.

Research Questions

1. How does an illegal/undocumented identity emerge for Mexican immigrants? Is it shared by their children? What function(s) does it serve them? Is their understanding of citizenship involved in this formation of identity?
2. Does grassroots organizing function as a tool for the development of an undocumented identity? Through what tools, discourses and cultural activities?
3. What are some other pre-existing structural and institutional conditions that undocumented Mexican immigrants use to identify themselves? How are these conditions used as resources to position oneself and others?

Data Collection Procedures

Participant observation
Collection of monthly bulletins
Children's Workshop
Focus group interview

Analyses

Data triangulation (across 4 grounded topics: language; citizenship; religiosity; violence)
Discourse analyses (including analysis of themes, content, indexicals, graphic illustrations, discourse strategies, and social structures)

Table 7. Research methodology

The results chapters, hence, begin with my analysis of language and literacy practices and then focus on major content I derived bottom-up, across the data. Much of the content that was particularly relevant to the research had to do with notions of illegality, a condition juxtaposed to citizenship. Another chapter focuses on structures of identity such as religion, race, class, and gender in their intersections with illegality. The last results chapter was added after realizing that Mexican immigrants, children and youth are exposed to violence that plays a role in their identities; the chapter analyzes how illegality can be conceptualized as a social violence with implications for emerging personal identities and actions.

Therefore, all of the data were transcribed and catalogued under the following major topics that served to divide the results into four chapters: language/literacy; citizenship; religiosity; and violence. These topics are discussed from both societal and individual perspectives that were present in the data and that sometimes conflicted with each other. As we will see, the data derived from the children's booklet project were the most revealing of contradictory positions and counter-arguments to both society and the Organization's major discourses of identity.

PART III:
RESULTS

CHAPTER 5

Processes of transformation: Language, literacy, and education⁵

In its informational material, *la Organización Guadalupeana* describes itself as a service-granting network of immigrants who educate themselves and other immigrants about their human and legal rights. Thus, the Organization imparts a particular kind of education whose goal is to raise the consciousness of immigrants, especially those who are undocumented, so that they can learn about their rights in the city and, consequently, learn to defend themselves collectively and individually when they are treated unfairly. Much of this educating takes place in the activities of the Organization that I described in Chapter 3. That is, by way of public manifestations and cultural, political, and religious events, Mexican immigrants of the *Organización Guadalupeana* manage to reach others in the city with information that teaches them that even undocumented immigrants have legal rights that can be enforced; that one has human rights that ought to be respected; that one has the right to put pressure on governments, employers and others to obey the law; and that laws are contradictory and favor the interests of those in power.

Becoming literate: The education and consciousness of Mexican immigrants

Such an education has an impact on Mexican immigrants who arrive in the United

5

Earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the 2nd meeting of the Qualitative Methods in Psychology Conference, New York, NY, March, 2000; the 81st meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 2000; the 31st meeting of the Jean Piaget Society, Berkeley, CA, June 2001.

States. Generally speaking, many of them have some formal schooling when they first arrive. Compared to the entire population the Organization reaches each year, a small number speak only an indigenous language. Many come from rural towns, never having lived in a large city. Although some community involvement, especially by indigenous Mexicans in their homeland, has been documented elsewhere (Davis, 2000), most immigrants involved in the *Organización Guadalupeana* or who seek its services know little about community-based organizing, especially at the grassroots level. Yet, having faced class discrimination and barriers to upward mobility in Mexico where its long-standing authoritarian government had covered as a democracy in name only, many Mexican immigrants see their migration experience as an escape from these conditions. Few are prepared for the social barriers and personal hardships they face after arriving in the U.S., and rely on virtually no resources, personal nor institutional, to help them understand, confront, and surpass them. Thus, the *Organización Guadalupeana* is an institution educating Mexican immigrants about these conditions and about methods of organizing themselves that are democratic in ways that the governments of both countries in which they have resided fail to put into practice.

Fine et al. (2000) have theorized the ability of special community-based and religious groups to create “free spaces” of organization where voluntary memberships between generally disconnected populations defined by class, gender, or race and ethnicity provide each other with an education beyond that found in school. In the *Organización Guadalupeana*, members of the same nationality vary across age, gender, place of origin, immigration status, social class, and level of education. In spite of such differences that might otherwise divide them, members of the Organization have constructed together an unconventional kind of

formalized schooling where Mexican immigrants work voluntarily and institutionally to educate themselves and others by providing a safe space where information, as well as outlets of expression, can be used to circumvent or counter socially-imposed constraints and predominant discourses.

In this chapter I will discuss how an education about illegality is imparted, especially through language and literacy activities found in the Organization and in some of the families that belong to it. I argue that the language and literacy activities I will discuss are processes that lead to transformations of consciousness by engaging people in reflection that fosters critical thinking about one's social position. The Organization's language and literacy impart an education that connects one's knowledge with one's self-awareness. This can, in turn, be used to define and defend oneself. I argue that consciousness-raising comes about as a result of such language and literacy activities in the context of the Organization.

Reading and writing oneself in the world

One of the ways the *Organización Guadalupeana* educates Mexican immigrants is through the monthly publication of its informational bulletin written in Spanish by members and staff. An editorial note in the front of each bulletin states that anyone who is interested in reaching the Mexican population in New York can write and forward a piece to the Organization for inclusion in the bulletin. Usually, a staff member is responsible for making editorial changes to any articles submitted. Dissemination of this bulletin began soon after the Organization was founded. Taking low levels of Spanish literacy into account, the bulletin is generally written in a familiar tone and contains a number of graphic illustrations

and cartoons that make reading less alienating.

A content analysis of 16 issues published over the course of two years between December 1998 and December 2000 served to identify eight different writing genres, as well as recurrent topics and themes whose commonalities produced an institutional discourse of identity that defined the Organization and its population. The sixteen issues analyzed ranged from 17 to 47 pages each and consisted of a total of 270 articles. About 33% of the original articles were authored by a member of the community or a staff person; a total of 46 were male and 42 were female authors.

WRITING GENRE	TOTAL NUMBER	PERCENTAGE OF ARTICLES
Editorials	16	5.9
Postings	57	21.1
Information Pieces	40	14.8
Memorias	13	4.8
Excerpts	63	23.3
Literary/Artistic Texts	17	6.2
Expository Writing	55	20.4
Letters	9	3.3

Table 8. Monthly bulletin writing genres

Articles were often interspersed with cartoons illustrating some aspect of the message conveyed in them, and some included charts, graphs, or maps. Table 8 above lists the writing genres that appeared over the 16 issues produced during this time period. From the table we can see that Excerpts, Postings, and Expository texts were the most frequent genres found

in the bulletins. Some Expository texts and Information pieces were often laid out in the format of a comic strip. The first-page Editorial section was the only genre that appeared in all 16 issues. Each genre was defined in the following manner:

Editorials: summary of the contents and events reported in each bulletin, along with a message from the Executive Director to members of the Organization.

Postings: listings of events about to take place; calls for participation in the Organization's upcoming events; listings of event or competition participants and winners; listings of social service agencies or schools; members' birthdays; sponsoring business advertisements.

Information Pieces: explicit "how-to" instruction usually written by staff people in narrative form on a variety of topics (e.g., civil marriage prerequisites; detection of early warning signals of depression, cocaine addiction, etc.); statistical or narrative reports and compilations; narrated referrals to social service agencies or schools.

Memorias: listings of the Organization's past events under this heading; narratives and reflections of one's participation in the Organization's past events.

Excerpts: newspaper clippings and book excerpts citing primary sources; flyers produced outside of the Organization.

Literary or Artistic Texts: original poetry; fables; jokes/riddles; *calaveras* (a literary genre popular in Mexico during Day of the Dead celebrations); odes; cartoons.

Expository Writing: persuasive textual presentation and engagement of a variety of topics.

Letters: letters to and from place of origin in Mexico and New York; letters from staff

persons to members of the Organization; letters from members to other Mexicans in New York.

The collectivity of genres, in spite of being produced by diverse authors, nevertheless included recurrent topics and themes that presented simultaneously an institutional discourse of identity, as well as a range of social positions emerging from within the population (e.g., member/non-member; staff/member; adult/child). This will be illustrated further throughout this chapter. However, before discussing how the bulletins function to produce identities, I included below a table listing the recurrent topics and themes identified in the articles over the course of two years. This is not an exhaustive list. Topics and themes were often used in some combination within texts. Topics were identified by reviewing each article and title, and asking the sub-question “What is this about?,” while themes were identified by asking “What are the messages being conveyed through this topic?”

CONTENT TOPICS	THEMES
Immigration	Injustice
Human/Legal Rights	Solidarity
Education	Individuality
Health	Resistance
Violence	Progress
Mexican Folklore/Traditions	Success
Religion/Spirituality	Transformation
Sports	Struggle/Fight
Events in Mexico	Loss
Community Activity	Hope

Table 9. Monthly bulletin selected content topics and themes

Consider the following excerpt from an expository piece that illustrates a typical

Mexican immigrant story, as well as the intervening role of the Organization. It was published in the April 2000 issue of the monthly bulletin and was written by a male member. The piece is entitled *En la lucha por nuestra dignidad* ["In the struggle for our dignity"]:

La pobreza nos obliga a emigrar a este país con la ilusión de ganar buen dinero y sacar de la quiebra a nuestra familia en nuestro querido México. Y aventuramos nuestra vida al cruzar la frontera. Desde allí, en la línea fronteriza, empieza nuestro sufrimiento al no ser tan fácil cruzar... Nuestra ilusión es pagar pronto el dinero que trajimos, que muchas de las veces es prestado, y a un crédito muy alto. Eso es lo que nos obliga a que trabajemos en el primer trabajo que encontramos, sin importar las horas que sean, ni el salario muy bajo, ni cómo sea tratado [uno]... En algunas ocasiones todo esto tiene que ser demandado a la policía, o [hay que] reportarlo a la Organización Guadalupeña para que desde nuestra oficina se les pueda ayudar... No tenga miedo de denunciar todas estas violaciones. Porque aun siendo indocumentados tenemos derechos, porque somos humanos, no somos animales para que seamos tratados de esa manera tan injusta por esos hijos de la arrogancia y el dinero... Si usted es uno de esos trabajadores denuncie esas atrocidades. Que la Organización Guadalupeña está para ayudarnos. Nos enseña cómo defendernos de estos abusos. Recuerde no estamos solos. La Organización Guadalupeña está para ayudarnos.

Poverty obligates us to emigrate to this country with the hope of earning good money

and taking our family out of crisis in our beloved Mexico. And we risk our life when we cross the border. From there, on the border, our suffering begins as it is not so easy to cross...Our hope is to soon pay off the money we brought that is often loaned at a high credit rate. That is what obligates us to work at the first job we find, without caring about the hours, nor the low salary, nor how one will be treated...On some occasions, all of this [labor abuses and physical mistreatment] has to be reported to the police or to the *Organización Guadalupeana* so that help will come from our office. Do not be afraid of denouncing all of these violations. Because even as undocumented immigrants we have rights, because we are human, not animals to be treated in such an unfair manner by those children of arrogance and money...If you are one of those workers, denounce those atrocities. *La Organización Guadalupeana* is there to help us. It teaches us how to defend ourselves from those abuses. Remember that we are not alone. *La Organización Guadalupeana* is there to help us.

In this text, the topic is immigration-related and conveys the themes of economic survival, struggle, solidarity, and resistance to exploitation. This author assumes that poor economic conditions are what propel Mexicans to emigrate and find work, however arduous it may be. An analysis of indexicals demonstrates that many of his sentences use the first person plural verb form (*aventuramos; trabajamos; somos; tenemos*), plural possessive pronouns (*nuestro*), and plural self-reflexive verbs (*nos obliga; nos enseña*). He uses these commonalities, as well as assumptions about shared affective stances (*querido*/beloved Mexico) to address other undocumented Mexican workers and position himself as one of

them. The author also uses the second person formal imperative (*denuncie, recuerde*), generally used to communicate respect for a stranger, to persuade other Mexican immigrant workers like him to report human and labor rights' violations. He also invokes trust in the Organization when he assures the reader repeatedly that it "is there to help us."

While my focus is on how the *Organización Guadalupeana* identifies itself according to illegality, the breakdown of content into genres and topics should serve as an indication of how immigration issues fall within a broad range of institutional interests. I argue that the monthly bulletins produce an institutional discourse of identity through specific discourse strategies that function to build a sense of community and cohesiveness within the Mexican population in New York. They engage the readers, as illustrated in the example above, in a collective history and language through which information is dispersed, activities are announced, and common human experience is acknowledged. Some key discourse strategies identified across articles in all of the bulletins collected are outlined below:

Addressing common needs—

- informing and educating readers about their rights, upcoming events, or actions taken by the Organization
- advising readers about actions they can or should take
- raising consciousness about social issues, decisions, policies that impact Mexican immigrants' lives
- offering arguments that counter predominant discourses about undocumented immigrants

Invoking a common history–

- referring to a common cultural background
- using a common, familiar language
- writing for an audience of which authors are a part
- referring to Catholic values and teachings to provide moral and spiritual guidance

Documenting private lives in a semi-public manner–

- voicing the concerns, needs, and practices of an otherwise silenced population
- publishing solutions to unaddressed problems

Thus, by using the discourse strategies of appealing to a common language, cultural values, experiences, and interests, Mexican immigrants are educated about how they can collectively work together to resolve common problems. Through its monthly bulletins as a tool for expression and self-reflection, the *Organización Guadalupeana* raises awareness. As we will see below, this can also lead to practical actions, and personal, psychological transformations. Rather than merely transmitting information, the bulletins afford Mexican immigrants a subjectivity that has been suppressed. Through this collective subjectivity they seek solutions to real problems by learning to question societal assumptions about them and whether they are entitled to certain rights and fair treatment. Freire (1996) writes that

“problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating

intellectualism; it also enables people to overcome their false perception of reality.

The world—no longer something to be described with deceptive words—becomes the object of that transforming action by men and women which results in their humanization” (p.67).

Thus, this special literacy process in which Mexican immigrants teach and learn from each other by reading and writing about their shared history, experiences, and problems functions as a mediational tool between the world and their consciousness. Vygotsky (1986) states that writing presupposes conscious activity as it requires abstraction from the immediate situation and from “deliberate analytical action” (p.182). The Mexican immigrants who write for the monthly bulletins find a place for themselves as part of a group in the U.S. that shares a common history. As historical subjects they also find the means to “humanize” themselves as speaking and writing subjects. Writing about the experiences and concerns that can bind them as a community allows members to spell out the situation and conditions of undocumented immigrants in social and economic terms, rather than in a discourse where illegality is inherent to the individual. They become authors of their own history who can learn to report abuses, make demands, and defend and define themselves within a broader framework of social conditions. They learn to see themselves as active agents defined according to their own terms. Literacy is an action that becomes a tool for reflection for those who write and read the bulletin. This is an important step toward consciousness-raising. The next sections will discuss how both the Organization’s oral language and literacy practices have fomented such transformations of consciousness from the perspective of its individual members.

Becoming activists: Learning to speak-Learning to defend

The following was stated by one of the women I interviewed:

"Pero lo que sí quiero [es] decirte una cosa para terminar...que la Asociación nos ha ayudado mucho [a] desenvolvernó. Nos ha dado una cosa que--, darnos cuenta y quitarnos esas venditas que teníamos en los ojos al...decir, pues porque yo soy ilegal o porque, o porque estoy en un país que--, yo no tengo derechos. Nos ha quitado esa venda de los ojos y [nos ha hecho entender] que en realidad nosotros como seres humanos valemos mucho...[Aunque] no tengamos documentos, pero valemos mucho para nosotros mismos. Valemos mucho...Creo que ha valido la pena hacer el trabajo [de la Organización] así, y que nadie lo va a ver. Nadie lo va a valorar, sólo el que lo está viviendo."

"But what I do want is to tell you one thing before we end...The Organization has helped us a lot to express ourselves. It has given us something--, made us realize by taking away the blindfold we had on our eyes when we would say that, because I'm illegal or because I'm in a country that--I don't have any rights. It's taken away that blindfold from our eyes and made us realize that as human beings we're worth a lot...We may not have documents, but we are worth a lot to ourselves. We're worth a lot. I think it's been worthwhile to do the work [of the Organization] this way. Even though nobody's going to see it. Nobody's going to appreciate it. Only he who is living it." [See Appendix for transcription conventions.]

This testimony was given by Mercedes, one of the mothers I interviewed, toward the end of our meeting. I had been asking about how each of them had become part of *la Organización Guadalupeana*. In their narratives, they agreed that the Organization had functioned as an intervention in their lives. By stepping in and “taking away the blindfold,” as the speaker above repeats metaphorically, the Organization allows one to see and realize things for oneself. Specifically, one gains the ability to acknowledge that one’s immigration status does not presuppose the lack or abuse of one’s rights. Through this raising of awareness, the women I interviewed also claimed to have learned to value themselves by realizing that their community work is important to others like them. Their sense of self-worth was strengthened as a result of their participation in the Organization. As active agents, my participants claimed to have undergone psychological transformations that allowed them to act on the world in new ways. We will see from their conversations that the women constantly positioned themselves by making contrasts between the ways they used to behave and think before becoming participants in the Organization. Specifically in their speech, this was indicated through their use of temporal indexical markers such as *before*, *after*, *later*, and *now* to position themselves in new ways.

Interestingly, a content analysis revealed that the women were all initially hesitant about joining the Organization. For instance, Rosa narrated how her hesitation was assuaged by the companionship of her priest when she participated in a community meeting for the first time. She had already been searching for a way to incorporate Mexican culture into her church when she fell upon the Organization:

***ROS:** *Yo llegué solita. Yo no había escuchado hablar de la Organización, sino que andábamos buscando un ballet [folklórico] porque en nuestra parroquia siempre ponían bailes puertorriqueños y yo...quería mi cultura, algo así. Yo quería mi cultura. Yo no quería ya que pusieran bailes puertorriqueños. Andábamos buscando un ballet y pensábamos que aquí en la iglesia nos podían ayudar. Y después nos mandaron para acá [a la oficina], que quizá acá nos podían ayudar. Y después, este, A-- [miembro del personal] nos dice, "Bueno, nosotros conocemos pero, ¿por qué no vienen?" Y ya nos empezó a hablar de la Organización, verdad, y nosotros nos quedamos así, bueno, "Danos el teléfono y todo y quizás llamamos," ¿no? Y después me dice [mi marido], y "¿Qué te parece, vamos?" Y le digo "Ay yo no sé," y después dice "Bueno vamos un día," ¿no? Y vinimos otra vez como por más información...Después fuimos con el padre y le platiqué al padre, ¿verdad? "Padre, fíjese que ésto y ésto." Me dice "Sí, ...sería bueno integrarnos a esa organización, que no se qué," y le digo, "Ay padre pues no sé. Si usted va con nosotros yo voy a la reunión." Y a aquella reunión a [la] que yo vine la primera vez aquí, vino mi sacerdote conmigo.*

I arrived alone. I had never heard of the Organization, but we had been looking for a folkloric ballet group because in our parish they would always put on Puerto Rican dances and I...wanted my culture, something like that. I wanted my culture. I didn't want them to put on Puerto Rican dances anymore. We were looking for a ballet and we thought that here in the church [nearby] they could help us. And then they sent us

over here because maybe here they could help us. And then, um, A-- [a staff person] tells us, "Well, we know some but, why don't you come?" And then she started talking about the Organization, right, and we were like ok, "Give us your phone number and all and maybe we'll call," right? And then he [Rosa's husband] asks me, "What do you think, should we go?" And I tell him, "Oh, I don't know," and then he says, "Well, let's go one day," right? And we came another time for more information, right, and then, later we went to the priest and I told him about it, right? "Father, listen to this and that." He tells me, "Yes...it would be good for us to join that organization," what-not, and I tell him, "Oh Father, I don't know. If you go with us, I'll go to that meeting." And my priest came with me to that meeting I attended the first time.

In contrast to Rosa's entry, Mercedes and Lucía were invited by their niece and brother-in-law, already members of the Organization, to participate. Generally, members have found their way into the Organization as a result of various cultural and personal needs or interests. Some arrive independently after hearing of the Organization in the media and desiring to somehow participate; some become members after seeking services, and others after being informed by co-workers, neighbors, relatives, or priests, as my participants illustrate. In the next excerpt, Mercedes and Lucía described their initial hesitance and consequent participation in the Organization, as well as the personal transformations that ensued:

**LUC: mi cuñado me decía "¿Por qué no van? Ahí sí iba mi sobrina." Pero no, no, no.*

"Usted es muy aburrido. Y ¿qué cosa vamos a hablar? Si ni nos ayudamos los mexicanos"... Y yo le llamaba a saludarle y [él] nos invitaba. No recuerdo cómo fue un día que nos decidimos a venir a informarnos [My brother-in-law used to tell me, "Why don't you go? My niece used to go there." But, no, no, no. "You're very boring. And what are we going to say? Mexicans don't even help each other"...And I would call him to say hello and he would invite us. I don't remember how we decided one day to check it out]

**MER: ajá pero no nos gustaba. A mí no...Cuando yo llegaba--, "Ese señor, no me gusta cómo habla," le digo. "No me cae bien" [Yeah, but we didn't like it. I didn't...When I would come--, "That man (the Executive Director), I don't like the way he speaks," I tell her. "I don't like him"]*

**LUC: no le caía. [She didn't like him]*

**MER: éso después se lo dije al hermano [risas]... [Later I told him that] [laughter]*

**LUC: y él nos ha ayudado mucho en sus reuniones a, por ejemplo, a comunicarnos contigo. Por ejemplo tú eres una profesional, o sea ya te hablamos de tú; o aunque...nuestro inglés...o nuestro español [sea], pues mal, ¿no? Porque no tenemos esa educación tanto como tú. O por ejemplo con los sacerdotes, que siempre los "sacerdotes," los "padrecitos," todo era el respeto para ellos. Ahora no. Porque nos ponemos al tú por tú [And he helped us a lot in his meetings to, for example, to be able to communicate with you. For example, you're a professional, that is, now we talk to you (in the familiar) even though our English or our Spanish may be bad, right? Because we don't have as much education as you. Or for example, with the priests,*

always the “priests”, the “padrecitos,” all respect went to them. Not anymore. Because we place ourselves as equals].

***MER:** *ahora no. Ahora nosotros hablamos. Ahora a mí me dicen que yo soy ruda. Y yo le digo, “Ay padre, usted es un santo [risas]. O sea yo [antes] no me atrevía a decir eso...Y yo también, gracias al hermano ... en sus reuniones nos pregunta* [Not now. Now we speak. Now they tell me that I’m rude. And I tell him, Oh Father, you’re a saint [sarcastically]. I didn’t dare say that [before]. And me too, thanks to [the Executive Director]...in his meetings he asks us

***LUC:** *nos hace hablar, nos hace leer...Que ya habíamos olvidado la lectura...*[He makes us speak, he makes us read...We had already forgotten about reading...]

***MER:** *sí, entonces todo eso me fue gustando* [Yeah, so then I started to like all that].

Clearly, an important characteristic of the *Organización Guadalupeña* has been to invite participation from the ground up, and this participation is found, among other means, within its language and literacy activities. As these women state, the Executive Director has been a central figure in implementing this working style in which members participate actively by voicing their ideas and learning to communicate with others as equally valid interlocutors in spite of differences in level of education or position in hierarchical relationships. The examples below reveal that through these experiences, the women extended this new skill from the Organization to other areas of their lives. They went from being incapable or uninterested in speaking, to finding their voice without feeling embarrassed or degraded over potential flaws in their speech. They also came to believe that

some people were genuinely interested in helping their community, and were drawn to organized collective work as co-participants. In the following dialogue, we see how all three women's discourse strategies served to co-construct a narrative about how they gained self-confidence in the process of learning to speak as members of the Organization:

***MER:** *antes yo pensaba que si hablaba una palabra se iban a reir de mí porque [me] decía, quizás 'ta mal dicho, quizás no lo digo, no lo debo decir; quizás si le digo esto se van a reir de mí; quizás si yo le digo al padre ésto me va a decir que no. Siempre cosas que* [Before I used to think that if I spoke a word, they would laugh at me because I would say "maybe I didn't say it correctly. Maybe I won't say it, I shouldn't say it. Maybe if I say this, they'll laugh at me. Maybe if I say this to the priest, he'll say no." Always things that]

***LUC:** *negativas* [Negative things]

***MER:** *en verdad no estábamos seguras de nosotras mismas. Pues ahora poco a poco con todo esto* [Really we weren't sure of ourselves. Well now, little by little, with all this]

***ROS:** *aprendimos a perder el miedo* [We learned to lose our fear].

By using the discourse strategy of completing each other's sentences, the women assumed a common explanation for their personal transformation from non-speakers and non-members to speakers and active participants of the Organization. The transformation entailed learning to put their fears and doubts aside in favor of feelings of self-worth and self-confidence. Although Mercedes began by describing her own doubts, she concluded her

thoughts by extending her self-evaluation to the other women. Rosa then acknowledged this collective positioning in her assessment, “We learned to lose our fear.” Aside from building a common narrative through one key discourse strategy (sentence completion), they did this also by using certain indexicals as first person plural verb forms (*estabámos, aprendimos*).

From the content of their experiences as members of the Organization, this process of learning to speak was described as a first step in coming to learn to defend oneself and one’s community. When the women spoke of defending or “speaking up” for themselves, their aggressors ranged from employers and priests to other parishioners, other Mexican immigrants, including members and non-members of the Organization, and even other family members. Below are some examples of moments in which the women invoked the theme of injustice, claiming to have used their voices to position themselves defensively. In the following narrative, Mercedes describes how she learned to defend herself to the extent that she could remain unaffected even by certain authorities like priests:

***MER:** *al llegar, en alguna ocasión también a mí un padre me hizo llorar. Me sentí muy mal. No me pude defender. Apenas aprendí yo también a defenderme y [esa vez] no me contuve. Me hizo llorar. Pero ahora ya no. Ahora ya no. Siento que ya no.* [When I arrived, on some occasion a priest also made me cry. I felt really bad. I couldn’t defend myself. I, too, just learned to defend myself and that time I couldn’t hold back. He made me cry. But not anymore. Not anymore. I think not anymore.]

At another moment during the group interview, Rosa narrated an occasion when

another Mexican immigrant from her parish who claimed to have been educated as a lawyer in Mexico attempted to demean Rosa as a result of her working class status in the U.S.:

***ROS:** *alguna vez se atrevió a decirme, "Oh se me olvidó que usted es gata." Porque yo trabajo de limpieza. Al principio yo me avergonzaba, porque yo nunca lo hice en mi país, ¿verdad? Pero un día una señora me dijo, "No hija, no te avergüences porque es un trabajo honrado." Y...me dijo, "Oh perdón, se me olvidaba que usted es gata." Y yo le digo "Sí. Yo soy gata." Le digo "Yo soy gata pero créame que no me avergüenzo porque me gano mi dinero honradamente. Pero tampoco presumo de ser abogado y estoy metido en un cuchifrito"...Y yo digo, 'pérate, yo sí, sí soy gata pero no presumo de ser abogado, de ser esto y ser lo otro, y ¿qué soy aquí?! Así mismo se lo dije. Y se quedó rojo, rojo, rojo, rojo. No supo qué contestarme. [One time he dared say to me, "Oh I forgot you're a maid." Because I work in housecleaning. At first I used to be ashamed because I had never done it in my country, right? But one day, a woman told me, "No, dear, don't be ashamed because it's an honorable job." And...he told me, "Oh, sorry, I forgot that you're a maid." And I told him, "Yeah, I'm a maid. I tell him, "I'm a maid but believe me I'm not ashamed of it because I earn my money honorably. But I don't presume to be a lawyer either when I'm stuck in a *cuchifrito* (Dominican or Puerto Rican fried snack luncheonette)"...And I say, wait a minute, yes, yes I am a maid but I don't presume to be a lawyer and this or that, and what am I here?! I told him just like that. And he turned red, red, red, red. He didn't know what to say.]*

We see from the content of her narration of this event that Mexican immigrants can resort to status distinctions in power plays and can identify oneself according to social structures as socioeconomic class, indicated here by occupation in Mexico. This illustrates how one individual's history intersects with Mexican and U.S. societal history. Here, Rosa defended herself by reminding her verbal aggressor, quite forcefully, that such status distinctions no longer matter in the U.S. where they probably share both lower working class and illegal immigration status. In the context of her argument, Rosa's imagined question "What am I here?!" implies that however she and her interlocutor were once defined *there*, in Mexico, no longer makes a difference. The women I interviewed repeatedly justified their participation in such verbal conflicts as a means to defend themselves when they felt disrespected.

At yet another moment, Mercedes described the ability to speak and defend oneself as a characteristic that distinguishes members of the Organization from others, even those who count on legal status and would not place themselves at risk by speaking up for someone else: "*Eso es lo que tenemos nosotros. Aquí en América que todos tienen papeles (muchos sin papeles), pero no dicen ni pio por nadie. Ni por ellos mismos.*" [That's what we have. Here in America where everyone has papers, (many don't have papers) but they don't say anything for anybody. Not even for themselves].

Aside from learning to speak to defend themselves, the women also described this process as one that was no longer curtailed by their lack of fluency in English. In addition to their participation in the Organization as active participants and speakers/defenders of themselves and their community, another tool women obtained to "defend" themselves both

literally and figuratively was learning English. That is, we have seen that when the women spoke explicitly of defending themselves or their communities, they used the verb “to speak/*hablar*.” Interestingly, they often used the word *defenderse* (to defend oneself) conversely when they talked about learning to speak English. Such uses of *defenderse* have also been documented in Zentella’s (1997a) research on Puerto Rican Spanish speakers in New York. In Spanish, second language learners can use the expression *defenderse* to mean that one has learned just enough of the language to get by. In the following example, Rosa discussed how her lack of fluency in English was not a barrier to her helping someone else in need (another Spanish, non-English speaker), while Lucía followed with her own commentary about how she can now act independently and even welcomes situations where she does not have to rely on an English speaker, or a Spanish speaker claiming not to know English, for help:

***ROS:** *A mí no me pesa, si yo sé--, si yo veo que alguien está en apuros y yo veo que no entiende, mira yo me acerco aunque sea con mi inglés mal hablado. Te lo juro que yo le ayudo porque yo pasé por esa experiencia...yo le pedi ayuda a una persona y me dijo “I don’t speak Spanish.”* [It doesn’t bother me, if I know--, if I see that someone needs help and I see that they don’t understand, look, I’ll come by even if only with my broken English. I swear that I’ll help them because I went through that experience when I asked someone for help and they told me, “I don’t speak Spanish.”]

***LUC:** *si así te contestaban. Ahora quisiera que me contesten. Ahora hasta mi doctora es*

americana y habla bien el español. Y yo pedía antes favores. Ahora no. Ahora yo pues ahí trato de defenderme un poquito. [Yeah, that's how they would answer you. Now I wish they would say that to me. Now even my doctor is American and she speaks Spanish well. Before I used to ask for favors. Not now. Now I try to defend myself a little bit (in English)].

These women relied on several tools that served to transform their consciousness. The freedom to speak for themselves and be heard was provided in the safe environment of the Organization. Also, learning a new language along with the opportunity to speak or write for practical actions such as defending oneself, exposing one's reality, educating others, and defining oneself as legitimate members of a community in New York were tools for their psychological development. The notion that they were not only helping themselves, but helping others afforded these women a sense of purpose that gave meaning to their activities. When questioned about whether the monthly bulletin played a role in their ability to defend themselves or to reach a heightened level of consciousness, the women agreed that it had been an important aid to them. Moreover, Mercedes highlighted the practical relevance of writing for others: "*Me tocó a mí escribir...y me imagino yo que sí, muchas personas se pudieron haber enterado [de] cuál era el sistema de nosotros que estábamos pasando por aquel entonces.*" [I got to write once...and I imagine that many people could have learned what the system we were going through at that time was like].

In addition, the group interview I conducted with the three women also served as an opportunity to think about, re-create, and voice their reflections about their own personal

trajectories. They spoke to each other and to me with great ease even though we did not know each other well, and they even joked about my own position as a researcher who had managed to draw a great deal of information from them without asking too many questions. They also commented on what they believed were “good questions,” such as when I asked about how they had become participants in the Organization, because such questions caused them to think about situations and events they no longer thought about, but that had had some significant impact on their lives. By the end of the interview, the women were grateful for this opportunity and claimed that the interview had served as therapy for them. They used the occasion to voice concerns and to approach each other with similar experiences; at some moments, they also offered and welcomed each other’s unsolicited advice. In a way, the group interview enacted a smaller version of the kinds of speaking activities (e.g., voicing concerns and common problems or thinking together about solutions) that they described and that take place in working groups of the Organization for more immediate goals. Their common knowledge was formulated interpersonally during the interview and reinvoked many of the themes of injustice, resistance, solidarity, and transformation previously identified in the booklets.

The women brought significant changes to their self-esteem and self-confidence by engaging in a range of activities of the Organization. In addition, their new sense of empowerment was carried into other situations of their lives outside of the Organization. As they described them, these changes were part of a process that did not take place overnight, but rather, the result of their participation in a number of activities fomented institutionally by the Organization. It should be no surprise that Lucía, Rosa, and Mercedes each were

involved in founding a member community-based group of the Organization and that they were elected to leadership positions in their respective neighborhoods. Their personal transformation into communicators and activists points to the psychological importance of the speaking and writing tools provided by the Organization. Under a common framework where goals are shared, these cultural activities become psychological tools, significant in the women's personal development. In the next section, I discuss whether and how language and literacy tools were also used by their children to position themselves in particular ways, and more generally, how they were used in their own psychological development.

Using bilingual (il)literacy to compose the children's booklet

The writing workshop I designed for the second phase of the dissertation research was intended for children with at least rudimentary literacy skills who could write and illustrate texts for a booklet about their experiences as Mexican children living in New York City. The practical relevance of the workshop mirrored the sense of community service displayed in the Organization's activities because it was a situation where the children could write texts that would prepare future immigrant children and families to life in the city. However, the children who consistently participated in this project included two young girls, Ariel and Margarita, who were five and six years old and had not yet learned to write apart from a ritualistic spelling of the alphabet, their names, and some words. This posed a problem since many of the activities I had planned assumed not only a more developed literacy level, but also a conceptual understanding of certain vocabulary such as "immigrants," or "country," as well as a comparative conceptual framework between Mexico

and the United States. Therefore, as a group we had to make use of whatever language and literacy skills the children did count on, and the two youngest girls in the group of participants were asked primarily to produce illustrations that had to do with their daily activities, and that were somehow connected to the rest of the group's activities during each meeting. This section reviews the language and literacy skills that my participants brought to the workshop in which speaking and writing activities served as sites for their development. First, however, I will summarize the writing genres, and selected topics and themes identified in the children's final version of the booklet.

From the questions and writing activities I structured for the group, it follows that most of the texts produced by the children displayed content topics elicited by me, including all aspects of life in New York City such as places, people, and schools, as well as contrasting characteristics between New York and Mexico. Language also emerged as an explicit topic in some of the children's texts. Recurrent themes included challenge and danger, as well as ethnic/racial diversity and injustice as aspects of life in the city.

Other researchers have demonstrated that children are capable of expressing knowledge of complex social relationships in written fiction, and that their own understanding is a culturally-situated activity (Daiute, 2000; Dyson, 1997). In this study, writing genres based on the children's original texts prior to revisions consisted of advice columns and personal letters. The booklet also included expository texts I compiled from audiotapes of group discussions. All of these texts were produced through direct elicitation. One expository text, a comic strip, and a piece of fiction were produced by the children spontaneously. Their illustrations allowed the most freedom of expression by the children

as they were entirely unstructured by me except under the instruction that they had to be relevant to the general goals of the booklet project. I will discuss the children's illustrations as texts of identity later.

WRITING GENRE		TOPICS	THEMES
Expository	# of texts (Author)	Places in the city People in the city Schools Places in Mexico People in Mexico	Diversity Challenge Danger Injustice
Spontaneous	1 (David)		
Compiled	7 (Full group)		
Advice Columns	# of texts		
Single author	1 (Karina)		
Co-authored	1 (David and Jorge)		
Compiled	1 (Marcos, Margarita, Ariel)		
Letters	# of texts		
Single author	3 (Karina, Jorge, Marcos)		
Compiled	1 (David)		
Artistic Texts	# of texts		
Comic Strip Fiction	1 (Karina) 1 (Full group)		

Table 10. Children's booklet writing genres, topics, and themes

Much of the oral, written, and graphic content I elicited as part of the writing workshop was designed to draw on children's cultural knowledge about the Mexican population in New York, and to understand the extent to which they participated in, and identified with, this population. Illegality as a topic became most explicit in certain sections of the final version of the booklet. Knowledge about illegal immigration emerged in

discussions about Mexican migration to New York, and about popular beliefs about Mexicans in the United States. Illegality also became an issue in children's advice for adult Mexican immigrants, rather than for Mexican children and teenagers. Illegality was even illustrated in a maze David and Karina produced. This will be discussed at length in the next chapter. Content related to the children's cultural knowledge about Mexicans in New York will be discussed in this section as it was materialized in the language and literacy practices of the writing workshop.

All of the children who participated in the project were bilingual to varying degrees, although its five core participants were English-dominant. For example, when we first met, Marcos, who was nine years old, claimed he could not write in Spanish at all, and often checked his spelling with me when he wrote texts in English. He also stated repeatedly that he could not speak Spanish well and preferred to speak English. By the end of the project, however, he did begin to learn to decode texts in Spanish even though he never attempted to write in it. Marcos once asked me how I had learned to read Spanish. After explaining that when I was a girl, I tried sounding out letters in Spanish print just as I had been learning to do in English, Marcos began to apply this same strategy during our meetings. This development was confirmed by his mother who noticed that he had learned more Spanish during the time that he came to the writing workshop. In the process, I learned that they had identified me as their teacher:

**LUC: más o menos le sabe leer porque dice "Yo no sé qué dice ahí" [he can read more or less because he says "I don't know what it says here"]*

*JOC: *¡ay sí! Yo me di cuenta también* [I noticed that too]

*LUC: *sí*

*JOC: *cuando empezó me decía "Yo no sé leer ni escribir"* [when he started he used to say
"I don't know how to read or write]

*LUC: *es lo que me dijo* [that's what he told me]

*JOC: *después tenía curiosidad y empezaba* [then he was interested and started]

*LUC: *sí, es lo que me--, dice, "Mami, yo aprendí con ella," y más o menos se agarra a leer y hasta el papá se sorprende. "¿Y ahora tú?," dice "¿Quién te enseñó a...leer español?" Eh, "La maestra que tenemos en la Organización," dice. "Mi maestra. Ella nos enseñó." Dice, "Yo sé poquito."* [Yes, that's what he tells me. He says "Mami, I learned from her," and he starts reading more or less and even his father is surprised. "What's up with you?," he says, "Who taught you to read Spanish?" Eh, "The teacher we have in the Organization," he says. "My teacher. She taught us." He says, "I know a little bit"].

No doubt, his contact with other Mexican children who were raised in New York and who had developed language skills in both English and Spanish was a source of inspiration for Marcos even though English usage dominated all of our sessions. In spite of his own hesitation about the quality of his Spanish, Marcos displayed throughout the course of our project a range of oral Spanish usage, including the ability to re-tell jokes he had heard on a Spanish-language television comedy program. Marcos, Margarita, and Ariel also each displayed their developing metalinguistic bilingual awareness in their phonetic language

play. For example, they would remark at differences in the pronunciation of cognates in English and Spanish, or sometimes deliberately roll their R's even though they were speaking in English and would normally not do so. Consider the following examples:

***MCS:** [playing with a cousin] ; *Véte* [Go on], N—! Rrrrun [rolling R's] for your life!

***MAR:** I need to go to the bath-rrrroom [rolling R]!

Only the two eldest participants, David and Karina, who were 14 and 12 years old, were also biliterate. They demonstrated repeatedly their reading and writing skills in Spanish. This, however, did not imply that they were always willing to write in Spanish. On occasion, Karina would ask me to translate her texts because it was easier to write in English where her grammatical skills were more polished. When we edited past texts in the group, she did enjoy reading aloud in Spanish and often volunteered to read for the group. On the other hand, it was difficult to persuade David into writing texts in either language even though he generally had much to say and dominated much of the floor orally. A text he did manage to complete in Spanish depicted the ethnic diversity of New York City and its environs, within which he positioned himself as Mexican through his repetition of certain indexicals such as the first person plural verb *estamos*. In this text, David also wavered between the use of plural and singular second person verb forms (“when you come” [*vengan*]; “you are going” [*vas*]), as well as formal (*usted*) and informal forms of address [(*tú*) *vas*]. This may have had to do with the ambiguity of his text’s audience: adults or children. David’s text was entitled

Nueva York. In it, he alludes to the societal history of Mexicans in New York:

Cuando vengan a Nueva York va a haber mucha gente diferente. Vas a ver muchas razas diferentes. Va a haber mucha gente que se ve diferente a usted. Usualmente todas las razas se separan con otra gente de su propia raza. Por ejemplo los chinos tienen el barrio chino. La mayoría de los chinos viven allí. Se sienten más cómodos así porque venden cosas allí que tienen en su país. Pero los Mexicanos estamos por dondequiera. Estamos en Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, Staten Island, Long Island, y Nueva Jersey. Hay Italianos, Africanos, Puertorriqueños, Ecuatorianos, Dominicanos y muchos más.

When you come to New York, there are going to be different kinds of people. You're going to see many different races. There are going to be a lot of people who look different from you. Usually, all races separate themselves with other people of their same race. For example, the Chinese have Chinatown. The majority of the Chinese in the city live there. They feel more comfortable that way because they sell things there that they have in their country. But Mexicans, we're everywhere. We're in Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Staten Island, Long Island, and New Jersey. There are Italians, Africans [Blacks?], Puerto Ricans, Ecuadorians, and many more.

Often, however, David would not write in either Spanish or English. During one meeting, when I had asked the children to either write about or interview each other about what other people thought about immigrants, and what they themselves thought about immigrants, David was particularly inactive. He stated that he did not want to interview

anyone or be interviewed by anyone, yet was not writing anything either. Since I had allowed him to speak into a tape recorder instead of writing about his ideas during other meetings, this time I also offered a choice about how he wanted to complete the prescribed task:

***JOC: you wanna write it or do you want me to interview you?**

***DAV: I don't know**

***JOC: you don't know?! Choose one way XXX**

***DAV: all this pressure [holding his head]**

***JOC: all this pressure!...You want me to ask you or are you gonna think about it and write about it? [pause] Big decision.**

***DAV: I think I'll think about it**

***JOC: and then?**

***DAV: and then I think I'll write about it**

***JOC: [laughs] okay.**

This forced choice did not fare well that day. By the time our group meeting was nearly over, David had barely written a few words amounting to "I think that people who are citizens think that they are better than immigrants" and "I think that immigrants are just as equal as non-immigrants." In my attempt to understand how, why, or on what basis he had made these statements, I continued to question David:

***JOC: okay I have to ask you something**

***DAV: more?!**

***JOC: [laughs] yes!**

***DAV: those are my own words**

***JOC: I know! That's great. I want more words from you.**

At this point, David simply added a phrase to his first statement: "They [citizens] think they have more rights. By the end of the session, I had antagonized David enough that he started to actively resist the writing task I had planned. His annoyance was embodied in his writing; when I asked what he based his statements on, he first questioned me:

***DAV: I have to tell everything?**

***JOC: yes! Spell it all out**

***DAV: I can't. I'm running out of room**

***JOC: use the back, or dictate it [into the tape recorder].**

Then David wrote and underlined "EXPERIENCE, SCHOOL + STREETS" in block letters, and in a much larger print than what he had been using. After repeating another similar exchange, David finally printed "FIN" [THE END]. Making explicit his annoyance with the task, I asked:

***JOC: You don't like writing. Why not?**

***DAV: huh?**

***JOC: why don't you like to write?**

***DAV: I don't know**

***JOC: you don't know?**

***DAV: I've always been lazy**

***JOC: I don't think it has to do with being lazy.**

Farr's (1993) distinction between oral and essayist forms of discourse may explain why David's emphasis on oral skills, a characteristic of non-traditional populations, were not easily translatable into the essayist form of logical argumentation that I was demanding from him. Lee (2000) illustrates how the oral discourse genres of African American communities can become cultural tools when they are used to scaffold students into the written genres valued academically. Perhaps the task, as well as our exchanges, resembled those David was experiencing in school. He had stated other times that he hated school when he could not remember certain vocabulary he was supposed to learn, or when he had difficulty with his English spelling. Over the course of our meetings, however, David had voiced a desire to learn when he stated that he had read his entire vocabulary book. He even made attempts during our meetings to use new lexicon. Another time, when I had mistakenly shamed Jorge for misspelling a simple word when it was actually David's error, David proudly announced during our next meeting that he had begun studying Webster's dictionary. All of this was contradictory evidence of his willingness to improve his literacy skills.

In our meetings, he was more willing to read texts aloud rather than write them in Spanish when the group edited texts for the final version of the booklet. Whenever both

David and Karina did write texts in Spanish, they also checked their spelling in Spanish with me. There was some indication that David used a computer on his own time to write in Spanish; after reading a text I had typed on the computer and that we were editing on one occasion, he informed me about the Windows-based keyboard commands one can use to insert accented characters in Spanish texts:

*DAV: Oh you don't know how to put the "ñ"?

*JOC: I just didn't have time [to insert characters]

*DAV: cause it's ALT 164

*JOC: but that's on Word, right?

*DAV: nah

*JOC: on anyone [any computer program]?

*DAV: yeah, 'cause if you put the word pad--, the word pad or the note pad [key pad], whatever, you put ALT 164. It comes out

*JOC: oh okay, I'll try it

*DAV: so you can write um, like on the Internet, if you're gonna write e-mail, it also works there too

*JOC: really? Oh, I'm gonna try it

*DAV: off of Windows though.

Thus, in spite of unexpected diversity, difficulties, and even resistance to writing, the ethnographic content of the booklet project revealed that children did demonstrate knowledge

and interest in practicing or improving both their English and Spanish language and literacy skills. The workshop served as a space for the display and refinement of these skills, and for the sharing of participants' bilingual knowledge from which each of the children (and I) could learn.

Revising and editing texts through bilingual/bicultural knowledge

Revising and editing texts provided the group with a special forum for the display of their language and literacy skills, as well as for the cultural knowledge encoded in these activities. In addition, such literacy practices allowed the children to defy and correct me and each other. Karina, for instance, sometimes questioned my own spelling of vocabulary or use of grammar in Spanish when I culled the children's comments from the tapes into a written text to include in the booklet. Her questioning of my Spanish usage afforded her (and, by extension, all of the other children present) with an opportunity for explicit English instruction and discussion about Spanish written grammar. Also, since David and Karina were the eldest and counted on more developed bilingual skills of their own, they were of central importance in revising and editing texts in Spanish. Such revisions were made in group conversations, and emerged from suggestions made by the children themselves. Other times, I asked whether we should include differences of opinion or adapt new perspectives to the information already in the original texts.

A content analysis revealed that revising was an activity that allowed the group to display cultural knowledge and to develop culturally-shared meanings. In the following exchange, for example, the group collectively revised a text I had compiled from children's

responses to a peer interview. The section they revised in this example included responses to a question about how Mexican immigrants come to New York (see Appendix for a complete list of peer interview questions). The text I drafted was a transcription of the group's responses, ranging from flying in on an airplane to crossing the border illegally. One of the youngest girls, Ariel, whom I had interviewed myself and who had difficulty responding to this question, finally replied that people walk here. In this excerpt, the older children and I discussed whether this information was accurate:

*KAR: [reading aloud] *otras personas llegan caminando* [other people get here walking][pause]. *Cruzan la frontera y es un viaje dificil* [They cross the border and it is a difficult journey]

*DAV: aw, I thought you meant walking

*KAR: I don't think they walk. I think they run across

*JOC: should we change it?...

*JOR: ...they run?

*DAV: yeah

*JOR: you mean they're being chased or what?

*DAV: yeah, most of the time

*KAR: yeah! Because the, the, the--, the American guards, they--, they be chasin' them!

[Reading] *Cruzan la frontera y es un viaje MUY dificil* [They cross the border and it is a VERY difficult journey].

Upon Karina's objection that some people run, rather than walk across the border, and Jorge's elicitation of some elaboration of this point, Karina further evaluated illegal migration as a "very difficult journey." Thus, revising texts aloud served as opportunities to determine what knowledge about illegal immigration was shared. By the end of the ten meetings, it was clear that David and Karina shared perspectives about illegality that were closest to that advocated by the Organization. Marcos, Margarita, and Ariel, on the other hand, shared less of the older children's knowledge, although they were exposed to our conversations about it, as well as their families' involvement in the Organization's political manifestations. In fact, they were more familiar with the Organization's public activities than Jorge was, and at times even more than I was. Although the meaning of particular words was still to be developed by the youngest children, these events were often coded in Spanish. For example, Margarita, Marcos, and Ariel once recounted a time when they accompanied their mothers to Washington, D.C. for a march for General Amnesty; narrating their participation in the event in English, all three children used the word *amnistía* when I questioned them about what the purpose of the march had been.

Final revisions to the booklet were made collectively in our group discussions over the ten meetings and generally emerged as two kinds, either as changes to content or to writing style. Content revisions resulted in commonly agreed upon final texts. In the following example, the children were revising another compiled text of responses to a peer interview question about where one can meet other Mexicans in the city:

***KAR:** [reading] *En Nueva York hay mexicanos de [en] toda la ciudad. Muchos vienen de*

Brooklyn [In New York there are Mexicans all around the city. Many come from Brooklyn]

*JOC: [correcting] *viven* [live]

*KAR: oh *viven*, yeah

*JOC: that's what I had, yeah

*KAR: [reading] *viven en Brooklyn. Algunos están en pandillas. Algunos también en* [live in Brooklyn. Some are in gangs. Some of them also in] *pesca-, pe-, ya-, oh, pascaderías*, whatever

*JOC: [correcting] *trabajan en pescaderías* [work in fish markets]

*KAR: *ajá* [right]. What are those?

*JOC: fish markets. That's what somebody said

*KAR: oh

*DAV: you should know, Karina

*KAR: I thought they usually worked in bakeries

*DAV: passed by the South Street Seaport mad times

*JOC: oh

*KAR: I thought they worked in bakeries

*DAV: pizzerias

*JOC: add all those, then

*JOR: bakeries and pizzerias

*JOC: *panaderías y pizzerías*

*KAR: I don't know how to spell. I'm just gonna put bread.

Stylistic editorial changes, on the other hand, were ordinarily offered by Karina, as in the following example:

*KAR: [reads aloud] *la ciudad! La ciudad es grande* [The city is big]. What's that word?

*JOC: *ruidosa* [noisy]

*KAR: [reads aloud] *ruidosa, sucia y hay muchos carros y mucho tráfico* [noisy, dirty, and there are a lot of cars and a lot of traffic]. Too much y's

*JOC: should we break it up?

*KAR: so, *la ciudad es grande* [the city is big], um, *ruidosa, sucia* [noisy, dirty]. *Hay muchos carros y mucho tráfico* [There are a lot of cars and a lot of traffic].

*JOC: ok

*KAR: or something like that.

On occasion, however, David also suggested editorial changes. In the following example, David read a paragraph I had written myself as an introduction to the children's booklet:

*DAV: [reading aloud] *Este libreto lo hizo un grupo de niños y jóvenes entre 5 y 17 años de edad... Nuestro propósito fue hacer un folleto sobre nuestras experiencias como niños mexicanos que viven en Nueva York y dárselo a otros niños y jóvenes y a sus familias que están en México y que piensan venir a vivir aquí en Nueva York.* [This booklet was made by a group of children and youth between 5 and 17 years of age...Our purpose was to make a booklet about our experiences as Mexican children

who live in New York and give it to other children and youth and their families who are in Mexico and who are thinking of coming to live here in New York]. That's a long sentence

*JOC: it's a long sentence. Should we cut it up?

*DAV: no. Words--, where XXX starts?

*JOC: [laughs] you can't even find it [the beginning of the sentence]! I have a terrible habit of making very, very long sentences

*DAV: me too!

*JOC: yeah?

*DAV: yeah, I cut every paper I write

*JOC: so you understand me

*DAV: I fail every paper I write!

While my assumption about our purpose for editing texts was to make the content clear for a potential reader, David also invoked another concern of his own which had to do with the fact that one's writing is evaluated by some audiences, such as teachers who can fail him. Editing and revising texts were discourse strategies that served as opportunities to not only expose shared cultural knowledge about Mexican immigration and, more generally, about life in the city, but also to voice a range of knowledge and concerns about the social construction of the writing process itself. As I mentioned already, revising texts provided the children with each other's knowledge and values from which they could learn. The next example illustrates how the theme of injustice emerged during a typical review session where

different kinds of revising and editing took place all at once:

***KAR:** [reading] *pero en México también hay gente mala, como la policía que le hace cosas malas a la gente* [but in Mexico there are also bad people, like the police who do bad things to people]

***MCS:** [writing something on his own] how you spell yeah?

***DAV:** *y el PRI* [and the Institutional Revolutionary Party]

***JOC:** *¡y el PRI!* Add that [laughter]

***JOR:** add those, edit

***MCS:** how you spell yeah?

***JOC:** yeah?

***MCS:** yeah

***JOC:** y-e-a-h.

In addition, the children were not only positioned by me and by each other as co-producers and co-editors of the booklet, but also as co-translators. For example, this came through in a humorous exchange in which David confused a Spanish translation of a word for an English synonym in a text he had written. At the same time, the meaning of the text, a piece of advice for female Mexican immigrants in the city, was negotiated between him and Karina.

***DAV:** [reads aloud] *No vendas tu cuerpo en un cabaret* [Original text: Don't sell your body

in a strip club]...

*JOC: I wasn't sure how to translate that. How would you translate that?

*DAV: what?

*JOC: strip club

*DAV: ¿*cabaret*? [pause] Or ho club

*JOC: [laughs] in Spanish!

*JOR: oh!

*JOC: how would you translate that? [laughter] Thank you for all the synonyms. Ho club!...Karina [returning to the room], how would you call a strip club in Spanish?

*KAR: huh?

*JOC: strip club in Spanish?...

*KAR: um, *club de prostitutas* [prostitute club]

*DAV: no!!

*JOR: whoa!

*DAV: not all of them sleep with the clients! Not all o'them!

The booklet project's elicitation of bilingual and bicultural knowledge positioned the children as cultural brokers who could use their diverse knowledge and skills to mediate or "translate" the expectations of future migrants into their consequent integration into life in New York City based on the children's own experiences. More immediately, the children's speech in our discussions also positioned them within a youth generation whose "translation" was sometimes also needed by me, and that only another bicultural/bidialectal youth (Jorge)

could provide:

***DAV: you meet mad people here [in the Organization's office]**

***JOC: huh?**

***DAV: you meet mad people here**

***JOR: [translating] like a lot of people**

***JOC: oh, yeah!**

All of the children also employed Puerto Rican English (Zentella, 1997a), a dialect spoken by second-generation working-class Latinos, including, but not limited to, Puerto Ricans in New York. Its features include a number of distinctive phonetic and syntactic characteristics influenced by Spanish, and others imported from African American Vernacular English, such as the deletion of the copula verb (to be) and the use of invariant "be." The children's use of this dialect likely had to do with their extended and close contact with other Latinos and African Americans in their schools and neighborhoods. In the following disconnected examples, some children each individually demonstrated invariant "be" or no use of the conjugated "to be" verb (zero copula) in their speech:

***DAV: me and my friends mess around like that. We [zero copula] dumb like that. We [zero copula] in detention like every other day.**

***KAR: they be [invariant] sellin' drugs all up in there!**

***MCS: ...they come in here and they be [invariant] like~, they go, [chanting] “Come and get me!”**

The linguistic development and use of a generalized New York Latino dialect among Mexican youth in the city needs to be investigated further. Most of the features of this dialect that I heard in the children’s speech were not transcribed. However, more systematic research carries implications about how sub-groups of Mexicans such as the growing second generation may be identified linguistically in pan-ethnic terms by other New Yorkers. The children’s ability to use AAVE is probably another cultural tool that allows them to participate and interact in the city more fully. It also points to another intersection of their personal and societal histories as Mexican children living in New York City. Their linguistic development would not apply to Mexican children in the U.S. Southwest. Moreover, the undocumented children’s New York-sounding English may allow them to pass for legal citizens, while their Mexican-sounding Spanish will allow them to maintain a Mexican national (and perhaps undocumented) identity. In their case, being fully bilingual means greater access to multiple cultural identities and practices.

As one can see from this discussion, a study of Mexican children’s language and literacy skills is far from exhaustive. However, this research does illustrate important language processes of development and discourse strategies in the midst of a wide range of bilingual skills and bicultural knowledge. In the on-going production of multiple texts, the group composed a total of eight original written texts over the course of ten meetings, two of which were written collectively. These texts were complemented with seven compiled and

transcribed texts based on peer interviews and group conversations. The booklet project also elicited more than 30 drawings of which 20 were selected by the group for the final version of the booklet (refer back to Table 10).

Cultural knowledge and identity through graphic illustration

In my content analysis of their texts and graphic illustrations, the children did not define themselves in terms of immigration status (being legal/undocumented), although the older children generally did align themselves overtly in favor of undocumented Mexican immigrants. Instead, the children generally used other characteristics to identify themselves or others. For example, Karina produced a comic strip in which a Mexican girl was harassed by another student as a non-English speaker. In this situation, the social structure of language status became an identifying tool (see Appendix for Karina's comic strip); the Mexican girl is identified as a non-English speaker as well as a person searching for a means of defense. Interestingly, her defense comes from the intervention of a bilingual teacher, an adult authority figure who can mediate between an English-speaking oppressor and a Spanish-speaking oppressed character to redraw relations of power between the two girls. Similarly to the mothers' earlier discussion, Karina portrayed the learning of English as a necessary means of defense for Mexican immigrant children.

In other illustrations, Karina and the younger children identified themselves relationally by including members of their family in their drawings. Indirectly, all of the children also identified themselves as inhabitants of New York, often depicting quotidian characteristics of the city such as subways, yellow taxis, and tall buildings with many

windows, or places they frequented such as their school or church. When I asked the children to write personal letters describing themselves to our booklet's potential readers, they also described themselves according to place of residence (New York City), age, and physical characteristics such as hair color. Consider Karina's letter below, in which she also warned readers about misconceptions about New York City. Such warnings were also deemed important in texts of the Organization's bulletins, and by the mothers I interviewed later as we will see in more detail in the next chapter.

Hi! I live in New York City. I have chocolate brown hair. I am twelve years old. I was born in January, 1988. Here in New York there's a lot of pollution and cars and buildings. It's not like in the movies all nice and goody-goody. It's practically the same as Mexico. Karina

When I asked Margarita and Ariel to draw illustrations about themselves instead of writing letters, Margarita drew herself standing next to her parish which she identified by name in her illustration (see Appendix). This is the same parish that her family frequents and that serves as a neighborhood locale of the *Organización Guadalupeana*. Ariel, on the other hand, identified herself according to something she liked: a chocolate ice cream standing outdoors next to her house and her sister (see Appendix). Thus, the children's illustrations also served as tools for the production of graphic texts of identity, although not necessarily in terms of illegality or immigration status.

Social positioning in children's discourse strategies

The children and teenagers used several discourse strategies to immediately identify themselves and each other according to various criteria as they emerged during the course of the booklet project. For instance, children used direct questioning to identify others. On one occasion, Karina identified me as a “grown up,” but my status as a doctoral student left room for more “growing up” into a professional of some sort about which she questioned me:

***KAR:** what are you--, what do you want to be when you grow up? More.

Karina's false start “what are you,” and her afterthought “more” indicated her attempts to make sense of whom I was. After replying that I was in the process of becoming a “psychologist who does research,” Karina proceeded to question the actual work that this would entail.

I also used the strategy of direct questioning to identify children according to their relationship to each other as in the next example when I confirmed whether Margarita was Marcos' younger sister:

***JOC:** She's your little sister?

***MCS:** yeah

***MAR:** I'm in first grade. I'm not a little girl

***JOC:** you're a big girl. A big first-grader.

Overhearing my question and interpreting my identification of her as “little” according to physical size, Margarita re-positioned herself along this new criterion as a “big” girl who was already in the first grade. Similarly, in another exchange, David and Ariel argued about Ariel’s self-identification as a “big” girl.

***DAV: hey little girl! Hey little Ariel! Little Ariel**

***ARI: I’m not little Ariel**

***DAV: you’re not?**

***ARI: I’m not little!**

***DAV: you’re not little?**

***ARI: I’m big!**

***JOC: she’s a big girl**

***DAV: you’re not big!**

At other moments, the children identified each other through name-calling in competitive play, usually between siblings:

***DAV: [reading Karina’s text] I live in New York City. That’s what I put!**

***JOC: that’s what everybody put**

***DAV: you’re a biter [a copycat]**

***KAR: no I’m not!! I started writing before you! You’re a biter**

***DAV: I write faster**

***KAR: so? But I said it before you**

***DAV: what is this? Jerry Springer? [laughter]**

Power plays did not only occur between siblings, but also distinguished between younger and older cohorts within the group. In the next example, Jorge, David, and I were teasing Marcos who was writing a birthday card for his teacher. After he became silent, I attempted to turn the teasing in Jorge's direction:

***JOR: dear teacher. I like you very much [in a mocking tone]**

***MCS: what does that say there? [defensively]**

***DAV: I'm writing you this card to suck up [laughter]**

***JOC: cause I want a really good grade**

***DAV: I wanna be the teacher's pet**

***JOR: I have a schoolboy's crush on you**

***JOC: that's your problem [everyone laughs]. You like your teacher.**

On occasion, the younger children were successful at turning power plays onto the older children without anyone's direct intervention. For instance, in the next example David was giving orders to Marcos who first resisted being positioned as a subordinate, but then complied with David's request. However, he did also manage to tease David's power position by invoking the authority of the Executive Director:

***DAV: go make a copy of that**

***MCS: me?!**

***DAV: yeah, over there [on the xerox machine]**

***MCS: it's yours. It's not my job. [pause] How many?**

***DAV: one [Marcos leaves the room]**

***KAR: how many! [laughs]**

***DAV: it's just like I tell him to jump, he says "How high?"**

***MCS: [returning to the room] he says he couldn't**

***DAV: who?**

***MCS: J- [the Executive Director]. He said to come over there. [pause] Just joking! [Hands over David's copy] [laughter].**

Power plays also took the form of tattling, or accusing another child about some behavior while positioning me as an authority to whom the other child had to respond. The presence of other children also served to shame the child who was being recriminated. Although this discourse strategy was most prevalent among the youngest children, Margarita and Ariel, all participants engaged in tattling. Consider the following examples:

***KAR: ...you pushed me to the toilet!**

***MCS: that is true?**

***KAR: yes, it's true. Look what he did to me. I still have that scar right there**

***DAV: liar!**

***KAR: I'm not a liar.**

***DAV: you know, my grandmother threw a slipper at her mouth twice**

***KAR: no!**

***DAV: yeah, she threw it. She was aiming for your mouth but she hit you in the butt**

***KAR: no she didn't!**

***MCS: [annoyed] Ariel!**

***ARI: [running around the room] *ella me está diciendo que yo la cache* [She's telling me to catch her]**

***KAR: I'm not saying to catch her**

***MCS: Ok, fine.**

I also positioned myself sometimes as manager of our working group, as when I teased Karina and David about taking special measures to get them to behave by using the imperial "we":

***JOC: ok ok. Keep writing. He hasn't started**

***DAV: hold up**

***KAR: [competing] I started!**

***DAV: I have to write away from her**

***JOC: are we gonna have to separate you two? [playfully]**

***DAV: that's a good idea.**

Teasing was a discourse strategy used a great deal to place oneself in a position of power within a sibling relationship, or within older/younger cohorts. This type of verbal interplay has been documented in research literature as a sociocultural context for children's development and learning (Daiute, 2000; Daiute et al., 1993). In a study on teasing as verbal play in the language socialization of Mexican children, Eisenberg (1986) found that humorous verbal play was valuable to interpersonal relationships in safe contexts. One of the functions of teasing she found was that it emphasized relationships, or degrees of closeness and solidarity. On one occasion, when I tried to position David in solidarity with Marcos who was being teased by other children in school, David used the occasion to further tease him:

***MCS: my classmates call me pizza boy**

***JOC: why?!**

***MCS: last time I brought pizza and they still call me pizza boy**

***JOC: oh...**

***DAV: what you bring pizza for?**

***MCS: my mother wanted to...**

***JOC: well, what's your advice?**

***DAV: maybe you should deliver pizza**

***JOC: [laughs] no! That's not good advice!**

However, there were moments of solidarity, especially between peers of the same (older/younger) cohort or of the same gender. For instance, in the next segment, Karina and Marcos were teasing Jorge by singing a cartoon theme song with his name:

***MCS: george, george, george of the jungle [sings]**

***KAR: watch out for that tree! [sings]**

***DAV: shut up!**

***MCS: oooh, ow!**

***KAR: Jorge, are you ok? [teasing]**

At other moments, Marcos and Jorge would side with David when he teased Karina; on these occasions I aligned myself with Karina in her defense. Other instances of positions of solidarity took place when participants identified with each other according to commonalities based on birth order. In the next example, David was criticizing his sister's self-pity for being the middle child. The ensuing discussion raises common family values about children's responsibilities to each other based on birth order:

***DAV: [reporting Karina's speech] "Oh the little one gets attention cause she's little. The big one because he's big." I'm the one who gets messed up**

***JOC: I'm the middle too**

***DAV: yeah, but I get messed up the most**

***JOC: cause you're the oldest**

***DAV: yeah**

***JOC: you have to be responsible for everybody**

***DAV: that's what my mother says. You have to, you have to. I don't have to do anything!**

***MCS: yeah, I hate to be bigger!**

***JOC: see? He is too**

***MCS: I have to be responsible for everything**

***JOC: for the little ones**

***MCS: yeah.**

Finally, code-switching was another strategy used by the children to enact or perform identity by positioning themselves and others during our meetings. For example, when the children addressed me in Spanish, they used the formal *usted* which positioned me as an adult and created a social distance between us (Blas-Arroyo, 1994). Although the children generally spoke English during the booklet project, they consistently reserved Spanish to address adults or very young children. That is, Spanish was used to show respect or courtesy to an adult, but it was also used to position some children as language socializers of younger children. For instance, in spite of the fact that Marcos had claimed not to know Spanish well, he spontaneously addressed his youngest two-year-old cousin (a non-participant in the booklet project) in Spanish. In such situations, he used Spanish to model responses using the command *dile* [tell him/her], thus positioning himself and his cousin as an expert and a novice Spanish speaker, respectively.

Throughout these examples, we have seen that the children used diverse discourse

strategies in their immediate context; this is consistent with other research on children's literacy and sociocultural development (Daiute et al., 1993; Dyson, 1997). Here, these discourse strategies were found to be used by children to identify themselves and their peers based on a range of social structures that did not include immigration status, nor race or ethnicity, even though these did emerge as structures of identity in discussions about the world outside of our working group. In our immediate context, age, generation, sibling relationship, and gender were identifying social structures used by the children in the production of one's social positions. Their developing identities were constructed socially and interpersonally, rather than linearly in an age-based sequence.

DISCOURSE STRATEGIES	IDENTIFYING CRITERIA
editing revising questioning name-calling tattling teasing defending resisting code-switching translating	age physical size generation cohort (younger/older; expert/novice) relationship gender birth order power status occupation language

Table 11. Children's discourse strategies and identifying criteria

Language and literacy practices in the education of Mexican immigrants and children

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate how educating takes place outside of school, and includes other institutions such as la *Organización Guadalupeana* and the families in which individuals are enculturated, socialized, and informed through a broad range of language and literacy activities entailing certain ways of knowing, thinking, and

understanding.

Some research has advocated for the need to foster communication between Latino families and community programs and schools (Hidalgo, 1998; Zentella, 1997b). This study invokes the same spirit of need for communication between institutions that educate by presenting the identities of Mexican immigrant families in their development from the cultural values, knowledge, and language and literacy activities that were enacted in the Organization or that were reported to me by its members. It is important for educators to understand the families and communities that their students come from, especially when dealing with minority populations whose views often differ from predominant ones privileged in school (Delpit, 1995; Heath, 1983). While educators may be inclined to take into account the diversity of their students in their own classrooms, one barrier to their accessing students' communities is that many undocumented families in the U.S. overtly discourage children from voicing personal information to their teachers (Pease-Alvarez & Vásquez, 1994; Valdés, 1997). Nevertheless, the existence of an Organization makes accessible the ideas, discourses, and cultural practices of its members.

In the case of this research, the *Organización Guadalupeana* served as a vehicle for making public the common issues, problems and barriers that undocumented Mexican families in New York face. These are commonalities that individuals use to foster community-building, and to organize themselves, in part, through language and literacy activities. As others have argued, *educación* or education rather than *escuela* or formal schooling refers to one's upbringing (Delgado-Gaitán & Trueba, 1991; Valdés, 1997). For this reason, it was important to understand the cultural values and knowledge into which

Mexican children are socialized, and how this knowledge was encoded and produced in oral, written and graphic texts of identity.

In this dissertation, I argue that for this community of Mexican immigrants, being "educated" goes beyond formal schooling and includes exposure and participation in institutions like the *Organización Guadalupeña* where expressing knowledge different from that permissible in "official" spaces and predominant discourse is possible. Being undocumented became expressible for the women I interviewed once they had undergone a process of consciousness-raising and had acquired the tools they needed to be able to defend themselves. The women described their personal transformations through the development of language skills, leadership skills, and alternative ways of understanding their condition as undocumented immigrants. Grassroots organizing functions as a tool for the development of an undocumented identity through such purposeful language and literacy cultural practices. They and the children also pointed to structural conditions, outside of the Organization, such as social class and racial diversity that have to do with their personal development in U.S. (and Mexican) societal history. Further investigation would reveal more about the extent to which their personal transformations affect their relationships in other spheres, or how they place contradictory demands on their lives. For instance, the women's ability to question authority may not be well-perceived in traditional societies such as in their towns in Mexico. Their children may also acquire these same skills that can cause tension later when they question parental authority.

Although their children displayed a wide range of knowledge about undocumented immigrants and generally positioned themselves as their advocates, their social positioning

in the context of the writing workshop invoked identifying criteria (see Table 11) that came forth moment by moment, interpersonally, in discourse strategies that were pertinent to the immediate situation (see Appendix for matrix of all analyses conducted in this chapter). For them, some important assets in their interactions were their bilingual, multidialectal, and bicultural knowledge, rather than legal status. Unlike their mothers, the children needed to be probed for issues around illegality to come forth. It was through their emergent cultural knowledge in collective speaking and writing activities that my participants were able to identify themselves and others by adopting a number of social positions based on continually changing criteria. The next chapter discusses at greater length how their cultural knowledge about illegality invoked both their own and the Organization's understanding of citizenship.

CHAPTER 6

From private silence to public action: Institutional and personal transformations of illegality and citizenship⁶

Notions of illegality, as they exist in mainstream media, public opinion, and even other research do not take into account the point of view of undocumented immigrants themselves (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). We need to understand how illegality becomes a tool for undocumented immigrants to identify themselves in their own terms, in their own communities, and in relation to U.S. society as they enter pre-existing social conditions. As I have argued earlier, certain conditions in the United States presuppose both legal and illegal subjects. Upon entering the United States, immigrants are positioned and must position themselves according to the legal terms that are already available to them. While social and political conditions along with public representations portray undocumented immigrants as criminals and unwanted foreigners (Edstrom, 1993), a question remains as to how undocumented immigrants make sense of this “illegal identity,” and how they make use of pre-existing conditions and structures to re-present themselves to U.S. society.

One has to understand illegal immigration and “illegal” immigrants’ identities as products of multiplicity: particular combinations of social, historical, political, and personal conditions. How one becomes undocumented, however, is a process that begins in people’s migration preparation activities in Mexico that are part of a larger illegal system of human

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smuggling. Being “illegal” then becomes salient in particular places and activities that involve Mexican immigrants coming to the U.S., such as crossing the border, obtaining false documents, securing work “off the books,” and other clandestine actions. It follows that if goal-directed actions serve the development of consciousness (Leont’ev, 1978), then undocumented immigrants’ particular underground activities directed toward living in the U.S. illegally give rise to an illegal identity with consequences on their confined visibility, voicedness, and public presence. In this chapter we will see how an illegal identity emerges in activities, as well as how the concealed nature of an “illegal” identity is transformed into a public “undocumented identity,” particularly through migrants’ involvement in the Organization’s activities.

This research posits that *la Organización Guadalupeana* of which my participants form part is a key instrument in the production of undocumented immigrants’ identities, and is, moreover, a site for the renewal of societal definitions of rights and citizenship. Based on this formulation, three sites including the mothers’ interview session, monthly bulletins, and work sessions involving children and teens were probed for “illegality” as a discourse that can be used and understood or, contrarily, seem invisible across the data. As we will see later, the children, especially those who did not migrate to the U.S., had to be questioned most explicitly about their thoughts on illegality. The results in this chapter discuss whether and how illegality emerged, how it was understood by participants, and whether it was used as an identifying tool by them. My re-construction of illegality as an identity takes on a somewhat sequenced time frame, beginning with narratives of migration, and continuing with written texts and discussions of the current life experiences of Mexican immigrants and

their children.

In this chapter, I focus on the content of participants' descriptions of their migration, along with aspects of their discourse (such as before/after indexicals) that point to how they come to identify themselves as "illegal," and later as "undocumented" immigrants. I first discuss my participants' personal narratives of migration that revealed their reasons for migrating, preparation activities, and expectations about life changes after migrating. As I discussed in Chapter 2, narrative has been theorized as a mode of thinking (Bruner, 1986), and as a tool for the construction of culture (Freeman, 1997) and identity (Penuel & Wertsch, 1995). By personalizing narratives of migration, one learns of the specific conditions that lead to psychological change and through which Mexican migrants' identities are produced. I then review written narratives produced by members of the Organization and that are published in its monthly bulletin to understand better the threads that build a common discourse of migration and illegality, and how an ideal developmental trajectory is formulated by the institution that shifts from being illegal or undocumented immigrants to citizens. I end this chapter by discussing the extent to which these discourses of identity are shared by children and youth in their own activities, experiences, and texts. I will also discuss their own political socialization and cultural knowledge that allow them to position themselves within particular discourses of illegality and citizenship.

Becoming undocumented: Narratives of migration, settlement, and belonging

In the focus group interview I conducted with Rosa, Mercedes, and Lucía (see Appendix for interview protocol), I had planned to elicit their "crossing over" stories. Rosa

began to tell her story in response to an illustration that I pinpointed to all three women. It was an illustration of a maze leading from Mexico to New York illustrated by Karina and David, both Rosa's children (see illustration in Appendix). This material, produced by the children themselves, elicited further elaboration about illegal migration by the women. This exemplifies a participatory grounded method in which the interpretation of data was exercised by participants themselves. When I pointed out the fact that *la migra*, or INS was represented as dead ends in the maze, each of the women laughed. Finding humor in the illustration, Mercedes and Lucía commented that they thought the illustration was creative and asked me who had drawn it. Before I responded, Rosa guessed that it had been her own children. She then mentioned that David remembered crossing the border even though he was only four years old at the time, and then proceeded to tell the story of how she crossed the border, alone with her two children, ten years earlier.

After stating briefly that she had flown in from Mexico City to Tijuana and then crossed the border illegally, I asked Rosa how she and her children had managed to make the trip. Interpreting my question as curiosity about how she crossed the border without getting caught, the following excerpt begins with Rosa's response:

***ROS:** *corriendo!* [risas] *Corriendo...* [running!] [laughter]

***LUC:** *cubriéndote bajo las matas, ¿no?* [taking cover under the plants, right?]

***MER:** [bajo] *los árboles, ¿no? Sí, así es* [under the trees, right? Yes, that's how it is]

***ROS:** *pero lo que le digo a mi esposo [es] que lo increíble es que David parecía como que lo habían adiestrado para eso..Porque primero, cuando cruzamos, tuvimos que*

regresar ¿no? Porque casi nos agarraban y después ya hubo un momento en que yo perdí al muchacho que traía a mi hija. Y después cuando volvimos a cruzar yo no le solté a mi hija y él me decía, "No vas a poder. Te ayudo." Y yo decía, "No, no, yo sí puedo. Yo sí puedo." Yo sentía que la espalda me reventaba. Sentía que me explotaban los pulmones. Pero yo no solté a mi hija y le decía a mi hijo, "No te alejes mucho." Y hubo un momento en que yo perdí a mi hijo porque entramos como a unos matorrales...y yo de momento me quedé parada porque no supe por dónde estaban. Y yo casi grito, lloro, porque yo no sabía qué hacer. Dije, "Mi hijo se me perdió," cuando de repente veo los matorrales, sale David. Dice, "Mami, ven [motioning] [risas]. Sí, me dice [bajito] "Por aquí mami... Pásame a mi hermanita," porque pasaba yo bajo...un árbol. Y se la pasé yo a él, [la] jaló, la abrazó, y luego me dice, "Vente, vente." Dice, "Ahí están", y ahí vamos corriendo y mi hijo decía agachadito, "¡Ahi vienen, ahi vienen!" Parecía que lo habían adiestrado a David, pero [eso] le afectó. O sea, con el tiempo, cuando se recordaba, a veces tenía pesadillas en la noche y--, y decía, este, lloraba, y yo, "¿Qué pasa?" Y decía... "El helicóptero, mami, el helicóptero." [But what I tell my husband is that what was incredible was that it seemed as though they had trained David for this...Because when we first crossed we had to turn back, right? Because they almost caught us, and later there was a moment when I lost the young man who was carrying my daughter. And later when we crossed again, I didn't let go of my daughter, and he told me, "You're not going to make it. I'll help you." And I told him, "No, no, I can do it. I can do it." And I felt as if my back was splitting. I felt that my lungs were exploding.

But I didn't let go of my daughter, and I told my son, "Don't get too far from me." And there was a moment when I lost my son because we had walked into some plants...and suddenly I stood still because I didn't know where they were. I almost screamed, cried, because I didn't know what to do. I said, "I lost my son," when all of a sudden I see David come from the plants. He says, "Mami, come here [motioning] [laughter]. Yes. He says [whispering] "Over here, Mami," and then he says, "Hand me my little sister," because I was crossing under a tree. And I handed her over to him, he pulled, hugged her, and then he tells me, "Come here, come here." He says, "They're over there," and we ran, and my son said all hunched over. "They're coming, they're coming!" It seemed as though they had trained David, but it affected him. That is, in time, when he remembered, sometimes he had nightmares at night and--, and he would say, um, he would cry, and I [would say] "What's wrong?" And he would say, "The helicopter, Mami, the helicopter"].

In spite of the danger as well as both the extreme physical and emotional difficulty of the crossing, Rosa, and the other women who followed with their own stories, interspersed their narratives with humor. That is, they did not recall their migration experience with sadness or anger, but rather stated the event in a matter-of-fact way, and even used humor at times to narrate their story. This ability to face or recollect difficult situations with humor may be a form of resilience. One might have expected my elicitation of their crossing-over narratives to be emotionally difficult, but they were not. As we can see in the segment above, although her story was emotionally charged, Rosa's recollection of it did not appear to cause

her any particular distress. This may have been due to several factors, including temporal distance from the actual event. From other comments, we also learned that Rosa was convinced that coming to the U.S. was necessary for her family's well-being in spite of the dangers she could face. Fortunately, Rosa managed to recover her children and all three were reunited with Rosa's husband in New York.

Rosa was able to narrate the event as a hurdle of the past that was overcome. The context in which her narration took place was also a safe one in the sense that she was speaking to other women personally familiar with the illegal immigration experience. One can detect this from the way Lucía and Mercedes elaborated Rosa's initial description of what the crossing was like. As we will continue to see in their use of discourse strategies, the three women I interviewed often finished or elaborated each other's statements, pointing to commonalities of their border-crossing experience even though they had each migrated on distinct and separate occasions. This collective interview, then, provided a means for the women to construct their current position as undocumented immigrants, a position available in my questions, by co-narrating a familiar past without much distress. Other research also remarks that resiliency in immigrants is facilitated through extended networks and access to services (Christopher, 2000; Taylor & Wang, 2000).

This is not to say that Mexican immigrants are generally resilient and unaffected by this type of experience; this was illustrated in Rosa's description of David's ensuing emotional trauma. Popular conceptions of undocumented immigrants generally portray them as adult workers. As Rosa's story confirms, this is not the case. Undocumented immigrants are also children (Suárez-Orozco, 2001). For those migrants, like Rosa, who refuse to be

separated from their children for indefinite periods of time by leaving them in the care of a relative while they work illegally in the U.S., there is the perilous option of bringing their children across the border illegally as well. In either case, the decision is risky. In Rosa's case, as in many others, parents and children face all the usual dangers of border crossing, along with the added risk of losing each other permanently. Clearly, this creates a severe social and psychological problem.

As for the other two women, Lucia and Mercedes, their narratives bore some similarities to Rosa's experience, but differed in that at that time they were newly married women without children. In Lucía's crossing-over narrative, she described her trip as having taken place about thirteen years earlier when she was a newlywed traveling with her husband; in her narrative, she described how, in this new situation, he should have taken better care of her. This experience was described by Lucía with some humor about gender roles, primarily about a husband's responsibility to care for his wife. In the next chapter, I will discuss changing gender roles and expectations as a result of immigration in more detail. In this case, Lucía's husband had followed orders from the smuggler who was separating everyone in smaller groups, and this meant separating himself from his wife. He was scolded later for his compliance in lieu of staying back to protect his wife.

Lucía began her narrative by contrasting her experience with Rosa's by stating that she first traveled by land from Mexico City to Tijuana in order to reach the border one night:

**LUC: bueno, nosotros cuando nos vinimos, nosotros vinimos de México pero en autobús para Tijuana, que eso era caminar toda esa montaña, adonde está la montaña rusa.*

*Bueno, un dolor de cabeza [*MER: una tensión, con necesidad de comer, de hacer del baño] de ver ese coladero que te vas, parece--, hasta allá va uno, y saber que aquí vas, hasta allá tienes que llegar [*MER: La rumorosa, le llaman...] Y ahí 'tuvimos, llegamos y nos llevaron a otro lugar, del coyote...Me acuerdo que en ese viaje mi esposo me--, se fue adelante. Se adelantó digamos porque el coyote decía, "Te vas tú, tú, tú, tú y tú, tú, y tú te quedas." 'Ton's a él se le hizo fácil seguirse y pues me dejó, y ahí [yo] iba con mi padrino, el de la boda, y me dice [*MER: era recién casada], "A la mujer no se lleva [deja], dice, porque se agarra como la pistola [risas] y como la pistola va cargada [*JOC: y la está dejando] y la está dejando. Pero [a] él ya cuando llegó [le] dice "No, no tienes que dejar a la mujer." Veníamos como once...y le decía... "Tenías que agarrarla," y ya cuando llegamos...cruzamos de Tijuana a San Diego una noche. Dormimos toda esa noche, y a las siete de la mañana nos teníamos que levantar...Ya nosotros salimos como a las cinco de la tarde de San Diego a Los Angeles. Por eso no, no corrimos mucho. De Tijuana a San Diego solamente corrimos...un buen tramo, pero entre [*MER: como cuarenta y cinco minutos]. No mucho. Fue entre rejas, alambrado, y corriéndolo debajo de los árboles, que no pasara la migra porque la migra estaba en los helicópteros arriba y ya cuando logramos pasar y cruzar una calle grande, una avenida...donde nos metimos debajo de unos matorrales..., de los árboles y ya cuando, decían que cuando era la señal...nos teníamos que salir. Teníamos que salir de esa ramita y meternos [a un carro] como quisiéramos, como fuera. Entonces...ya llegamos a San Diego. De ahí salimos al otro día a Los Angeles y...duró como tres*

dias el cruce. [Well, when we came, we came from Mexico City but on a bus to Tijuana, and that meant walking over that mountain, where there's a steep mountain. Well, [it was] a headache [*MER: tense, hungry, needing to go to the bathroom] seeing that long line that you're going to, it seems--, you're going all the way over there and you know you're over here but you have to get over there [*MER: they call it *La rumorosa*...] And there we were, we got there and they took us to another place, to the *coyote*...I remember that on that trip my husband went ahead of me. He went ahead because the *coyote* was saying, "You, you, you, you and you, you and you stay." So for him it was easy to just go on ahead, and he left me there, and I was with my best man and he says [*MER: She was a newlywed], "You don't let go of your wife, because you hold on to her like a gun [laughter] and since guns are carried [*JOC: but he's leaving her behind] but he's leaving her behind. But when he got there he says, "No, you shouldn't leave your wife behind. We were about eleven [people] and he said "You were supposed to hold on to her," and then when we got there we crossed from Tijuana to San Diego in one night. We slept all night and then we had to get up at seven in the morning. So we left around five in the afternoon for Los Angeles. That's why we didn't run very much. From Tijuana to San Diego we only ran a good way, between [*MER: about forty-five minutes]. Not a lot. It was between gates, wires, running beneath the trees so *la migra* wouldn't come because *la migra* was in the helicopters above and then when we managed to pass and cross a big street, an avenue...there we hid beneath some plants..., trees, and then when they told us the signal...we had to leave. We had to leave from underneath that branch

and get inside [a car] however we could. Then...we got to San Diego. From there we left for Los Angeles, and so the crossing lasted about three days].

Mercedes, who was not present when Lucía crossed the border was able to fill in details of Lucía's narrative by completing her sentences for her in several places in the excerpt above. This was probably due to her familiarity with the story and to similarities between their migration experiences. In the Organization, such common experiences set the stage for cultural knowledge about illegality to be assumed and shared. Actually, all three women were originally from small towns in the state of Puebla, but had migrated to the outskirts of Mexico City to find work. All three had to venture to a border city they had never been to in order to make the trip into the United States. From Lucía's narrative, we see that their smuggling system did not end on the border, but continued into major cities from which migrants could connect to their final destinations.

As a result of undocumented migrants' method of connecting to New York by air from Los Angeles, INS raids took place at major airports in the New York area for some time. The *Organización Guadalupeña* intervened at this point because migrants were being selected for inspection and deportation based only on appearance. That is, in the INS' practices in airports at this time, Mexican migrants were racialized immediately upon arrival or rather, the INS' method of selection constructed undocumented immigrants as Mexican people of color. As a result, the Organization publicly denounced the INS, claiming that Mexican immigrants, including those who had entered the country legally, were being discriminately selected for inspection.

Other steps taken by the INS such as border reinforcement in the form of air patrol and physical wire borders were also reflected in these women's narratives. In addition, as we will see in Mercedes' story, the path from Tijuana to San Diego was cleared of vegetation so that migrants would no longer be able to hide. This is the kind of information of which migrants need to be aware in order to reach the other side of the border successfully. The women I interviewed demonstrated this kind of personal border knowledge and its changing nature through their narrations that invoked the societal history of Mexicans in New York.

After I asked if Lucía's border-crossing story was similar to her own, Mercedes responded:

**MER: sí, fue igual porque en aquel tiempo nosotros, hace doce años casi, pasábamos por Tijuana. Era más, como dice ella, era nada más una cosita que corríamos. Yo corri un cerro pero un cerro que yo no sé ni dónde pisaba porque estaba bien oscuro, [el] cual ahora creo que ya está bien..., como quitaron los árboles, y ya está todo en orden para que la gente ya no pase más allí. Pasábamos por ahí. Yo no--, mi esposo se había ido más adelante que yo. Yo venía después y...venía yo con un muchacho...y este, pasamos bien todo. La verdad no sé dónde me metieron. No sé dónde me sacaron [risas]. [*JOC: pero llegaron.] Hay que cambiarse de ropa. Hay que sacarse ésa. Hay que ponerse otra. Nos tuvieron dos días, tres días, como ¿qué serían? Como quince días casi en una casa. A veces nos daban de comer, a veces no...ya que habíamos pasado...Por la razón que decían que inmigración estaba en los aeropuertos, y no nos podían sacar. Y bueno fue así como nosotros pasamos.*

Y...por no hablar inglés también la persona que tenía que sacar[me] aquí en el aeropuerto, no le entendía yo nada. No sabía qué decía. Y yo...estaba bien nerviosa, bien asustada, pero no, gracias a Dios y a la Virgen que no nos abandona siempre [nunca], todo salió bien. [Yes, it was the same because at that time we, about twelve years ago, we passed through Tijuana. It was just, like she says, a little path that we ran. I ran over a hill, but it was a hill where I didn't know where I was stepping because it was very dark, which now I think is very..., since they cleared the trees, it's all in order so that people won't cross through there anymore. We crossed through there. I didn't--, my husband had gone ahead of me. I was coming afterward and...I was coming with a young man...and we crossed through alright. The truth is I don't know where they stuck me. I don't know where they drew me out [laughter]. [*JOC: but you got there.] We had to change our clothes. Take off the ones we had on. We had to put on other ones. They had us two days, three days, about how many, nearly about fifteen days in a house. Sometimes they fed us. Sometimes they didn't...once we had already crossed. For the reason that they said Immigration was in the airports and they couldn't let us leave. So that was how we crossed. And...also for not knowing English, the person who was supposed to clear us here in the airport, I didn't understand anything. I didn't know what he was saying. And I...was really nervous, really scared, but no, thank God and *la Virgen* who never abandons us, everything turned out alright].

After the border was reinforced according to the 1996 Immigration Reform and

Control Act, especially the area between Tijuana and San Diego, migrants still attempting to escape poverty had to turn to more dangerous areas of the border. An unofficial measure then was taken by migrant hunters in Arizona who took it upon themselves to find and kill would-be Mexican migrants trying to enter the U.S. from Nogales. The *Organización Guadalupeana* also began to intervene during this time (the latter part of 2000) to make this information public by contacting the media; the Organization conducted protests against both the U.S. and Mexican governments for their inaction, especially after a tape depicting INS and Mexican police passively watching two young men drowning in their attempt to swim across the Rio Grande into the U.S. was aired repeatedly on Spanish-language television.

As one can see from Mercedes' story, migrants can only prepare so much before finding themselves in perilous situations; at worst, these situations are life-threatening, and at best they present the threat of deportation. In Mercedes' case, ignorance about where you are physically when you actually cross the border, as well as a lack of English language skills upon arriving in the U.S. was the kind of preparation she did not have. Of the three women, I interviewed, Mercedes was the only one who returned to Mexico once and had to cross the border illegally a second time. On that occasion, she informed us that she had to pay a larger fee to cross into the U.S., although the circumstances were less dangerous and she had to rely on false documents. The others had not returned, and although all three women were living in New York with their immediate family and some extended family, they had not been able to see their parents over long stretches of time. This was the only regret the women mentioned when I asked them if they had any after having crossed the border illegally.

While migrants such as the women I interviewed rely on personal contacts for

information about smugglers on the border, for money to help pay for their fee, and for assistance as they actually cross through dangerous places in the border area, these resources do not guarantee success at crossing the border, nor do they generally prepare migrants for the life circumstances they will face once living in the United States. After the women told their stories about crossing the border, their own narrations elicited a comparison of each other's experiences after having arrived in New York. Throughout the content of their narratives, one can detect both the personal and the shared, social characteristics of migration that may serve as the grounding conditions for the emergence of an illegal identity.

For example, the women's lack of preparation about the conditions in which they would live was further described in their exchanges that entangled illegality with social class. The shock they described upon finding that they would be sharing small apartments in poor conditions with a number of unfamiliar people because they could not afford to live with their families on their own was only magnified by their inability to report such conditions to higher authorities. In the next excerpt, Rosa called this lack of preparation a "deception," implying that it could have been avoided by those migrants who were here before them and had information that could have helped but that was intentionally withheld for unmentioned reasons. One could speculate that returning migrants choose to focus on the positive outcomes of their stays in the U.S., such as the accumulation of some capital, the purchase of commodities in Mexico, or the acquisition of some English language skills, rather than the negative conditions that could humiliate them or worry family members. From these narratives, it seemed as though the women had focused more of their preparatory attention on the border-crossing experience itself, and less on the actual day-to-day living once arrived.

Regardless of the motivations, illegality develops as an identity in the U.S. on the basis of misconceptions drawn from poor preparation in Mexico and the deliberate withholding of information by returning migrants. In other cases, the harsh reality of life post-migration may be hard to imagine by those who are already getting by under difficult circumstances, and they may be selectively listening only to the positive consequences of migrating since this is assumed to be their best, or only, option for survival.

By searching for instances where cultural knowledge was shared in the content of their discussion, the women were repeatedly found to use the discourse strategy of co-constructing their narratives. In the next excerpt, they discuss the living conditions for which they were unprepared when they first arrived; together they raised more issues than may have emerged if they had been questioned individually:

**ROS: y luego el engaño que uno tiene porque uno cree que acá es bonito, ¿no? Bueno no sé, yo veía fotos y pues se van a tomar fotos allí a los Gemelos y uno dice, "Ay no, es bonito," pero no le mandan fotos a uno de donde vive [and then the deception that one has because you think that it's nice here, right? Well, I don't know, I used to see pictures, but they take pictures there at the Towers and you say, "Oh, it's pretty," but they don't send you pictures of where they live]*

**LUC: ¿donde uno duerme! [where you sleep!]*

**MER: donde dormimos, donde comemos [where we sleep, where we eat]*

**ROS: exacto. Y después cuando yo llegué, cuando yo venía del aeropuerto para la casa, pues yo veía—, del aeropuerto hay casas bonitas, ¿verdad? Y yo decía, "Ay qué*

bonito," ¿no? Y cuando llegamos a Brooklyn yo les digo, "Y ¿aquí vamos a vivir?!"
Y David también dice, "Mami ¿aquí vamos a vivir?" Y digo, "Yo no sé." Y mis hijos
pues acostumbrados a vivir solos, cada quien tenía su cama y yo tenía mi cama. Mi
hijo tenía su recamarita chiquita, mi hija su cuna. Todo, ¿no? Viviendo solos, solos.
Porque ni con mi mamá me quise quedar. Cuando él se vino, yo no me quise ir con
mi mamá. Y me quedé sola, viviendo sola y llegar aquí y [exactly. And then when I
arrived, when I was coming home from the airport, well I saw--, from the airport
there are pretty houses, right? And I said, "Oh, it's pretty," right? And when we got
to Brooklyn I tell them, "Is this where we're going to live?!" And David also says,
"Mami, is this where we're going to live?" I say, "I don't know." And my kids were
used to living alone, each one had a bed and I had a bed. My son had a small
bedroom, my daughter her crib. Everything, right? Living alone, alone. And I was by
myself, living alone and to get here and]

**LUC: dices "Wow. ¿en dónde me metí!" Es bien difícil. [you say, "Wow, where did I put*
myself?!" It's really hard].

In this excerpt Rosa alludes to the poor, shared living arrangements she and her children were unprepared for when they first arrived in New York, in spite of the fact that her husband had already been living in the city. Also, in spite of the housing she had and considered to be poor in Mexico, Rosa alludes to her loss of ownership and privacy as she left her own house in Mexico and entered a new one in New York that she shared with a number of other people. The women I interviewed also mentioned their experiences living

in roach or rat-infested apartments, plagues they had never encountered even in the poor towns in which they lived in Mexico. In the following section of this conversation, Mercedes drew a link between such living conditions and their undocumented status which she refers to as the “situation that we’re in”:

**MER: y yo creo que lo [peor] que hay en Nueva York es que tú pagas tu renta, eres cumplida con la renta, y el super nunca se presenta a [*ROS: arreglar] arreglar ese lugar. Nunca. Nunca. Yo no sé si es por la misma situación en la que estamos o a todo mundo le pasa lo mismo, pero yo creo que nada más a nosotros [and I think that the worst thing about New York is that you pay your rent, you’re on time with your rent, and the super never shows up to [*ROS: fix] fix the place. Never. Ever. I don’t know if it’s because of the very situation that we’re in or if it happens to everyone, but I think it’s only us].*

In this manner, the system of poor housing conditions and neglect on the part of landlords is explained as a result of the women’s status as undocumented immigrants. The *Organización Guadalupeana* has often handled such cases in which undocumented immigrants live in poorly maintained buildings, yet feel that they cannot make demands on their landlords because a greater number of people than is legally allowed live in the same apartment, and because many immigrants fear that a report to the police would disclose their living arrangements and undocumented status. In the next excerpt, Rosa responded to Mercedes’ explanation for the housing negligence they faced by further describing their

invisibility as a result of living illegally:

ROS: *no, es que nos escondían. Mi cuñado nos escondía. Cuando iba a cobrar el super la renta decía, "No salgan. Escóndanse." Porque supuestamente nada más vivía él con su esposa y sus niños, pero vivíamos también nosotros con nuestros niños, aparte mi hermana, aparte mi primo, aparte mi prima, aparte--, ¿no? Vivían muchos. [No, they used to hide us. My brother-in-law used to hide us. When the super would come for the rent, he would say, "Don't come out. Hide." Because supposedly only he lived there with his wife and children, but we also lived there with our children, aside from my sister, aside from my (male) cousin, aside from my (female) cousin, aside from--, right? A lot of people lived there.]

Needless to say, poor migrants share housing with many other people in order to reduce personal expenses as they cannot afford to live in legally adequate housing on their own. However, the price they pay takes the form of loss of privacy, loss of ownership, silence, concealment, and many other hardships. Rosa, for example, described how her own children were not allowed by other children who had lived in the apartment longer than they had to come down from their bed to play. They were restricted to a bare minimum of space during the day when their parents were away at work in an already reduced, shared environment. Over time, I have observed the Organization, particularly the Director of Urgent Services, become a mediator in cases of families whose children were discovered in substandard living conditions and were taken away by child welfare agencies charging

parents, who were unknowingly breaking the law, with child neglect. This is yet another type of situation for which families need information in order to prepare themselves to live illegally in the United States.

I have demonstrated through an analysis of the women's co-construction of narratives, and before/after indexical contrasts in them, how Mexican migrants become "illegal." First they search for means to cross the border, and subsequently participate in a system of concealment in which they are drawn into the impossible task of becoming non-existent. Illegality is an available social position that is occupied by Mexican immigrants in such real activities.

Upon hearing about their difficult life conditions in New York, I wondered about what the women's immediate motivations for migrating had been. I asked each of the women to tell me about how they decided to come to the United States. In this next section, my intent is to, again, detect shared cultural knowledge through co-constructed narratives, and to further explore the material conditions in Mexico through which an illegal identity develops.

Both Mercedes and Rosa replied that they came to meet their husbands who had already been living in New York, while Lucía described how she made the trip with her husband after he returned from a previous stay in the city. Aside from their immediate reasons, Mercedes went on to describe what the general economic situation was like in Mexico that pushed her to leave. Her use of indexicals indicates that she generalized her own experience to other migrants in the following excerpt, although she was likely to be describing the common situation of workers in urban, rather than rural centers:

**MER: Yo creo que es el dinero que nosotros vemos que no avanza. No hacemos nada.*

*Mira, allá es triste en México porque--, pero es la verdad. En México aunque trabajes de obrera, tienes que ir bien vestida. Si tú no te vistes bien, o son las compañeras o es tu jefe, o es tu jefa...empiezan a murmurar, a verte y casi siempre--, en todos los lugares que yo fui a trabajar, tenías que ir bien vestida. Aunque fuera, te digo, de obrera. Aunque tú ganes el sueldo mínimo. Ahora, eso no te da para pagar tu renta, vivir como debes vivir [*JOC: ni de vestirse como los demás quieren] y la ropa que muchas veces uno se pone, es pagarla en pagos. O sea, te haces--[*ROS: en abonos] [risa] en abonos como decimos los mexicanos. Te haces como amiga de alguien, ¿no? Que vende ropa bonita y tú vas cada ocho días a pagarle y te da un traje. O sea, es feo decirlo, pero es así. Es la verdad. [I think that it's the money we see that doesn't grow. We don't do anything. Look, it's sad in Mexico because--, but it's the truth. In Mexico even if you work a lower-class job, you have to be well-dressed. If you don't dress well, either it's your co-workers or your (male) boss or your (female) boss...they start whispering, looking at you and almost always--, in all the places that I worked, you had to go well-dressed. Even if it was, I'm telling you, as a worker. Even if you earn the minimum wage. Now, that doesn't leave you much for rent, to live like you ought to live [*JOC: nor to dress the way others want you to] and the clothes lots of times, that you put on, it means paying it in parts. That is, you become--[*ROS: en abonos (on lay-a-way)] [laughter] en abonos like we Mexicans say. You become someone's friend, right? Someone*

who sells nice clothes and you go every week and pay and she gives you a suit. That is, it's ugly to say, but that's how it is (the economic situation in Mexico). It's the truth].

Thus, Mercedes attributed Mexican migrants' primary reason for emigrating to the lack of social-economic mobility they face at home, and qualifies this situation as sad (*es triste; es feo*); however, we also saw in the women's narratives that another powerful reason for migrating was family reunification. The question that remains, then, is whether Mexican immigrants in New York expect to move upward socioeconomically in the U.S., or whether their stay in the U.S. is to be used as a tool for their upward mobility in Mexico. Before the interview ended, I questioned the women about their life expectations asking them where they expected to see themselves in 10 or 20 years. They found the question quite difficult to respond to, an indication of the uncertainty of their futures as a result of their migration. Mexicans know that migrants generally believe they will stay in the U.S. temporarily while they work and earn enough money to return to Mexico, build a home, and invest in some way as to ensure their economic stability (Valdés, 1997). However, migrants often stay much longer than they had planned, have children in the U.S., and form social networks that increase their likelihood to settle permanently in the United States (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). The Organization's activities allow migrants to see their commonalities. The broad community of the Organization is aware that migrants may never leave, and that either staying or returning has to do with a large number of factors, including those that are outside of one's individual control such as government economic and immigration policies. Again,

this is a juncture where individual and societal histories meet, and it was expressed in the women's hesitance and difficulty in predicting their future. Much of the work of the Organization has been focused on policy reforms, as well as more local, internal work geared toward improving the quality of life of migrants while they are living in New York, rather than allowing migrants to postpone plans for personal fulfillment after they return to Mexico which may or may not be a realistic objective. This is part of the collection of organized activity that leads to a new social position and the adoption of an "undocumented" identity.

When they did respond, all three women replied that they were unsure about their future. They each had plans to build their own home in Mexico, or had already begun construction there. Both Lucía and Mercedes had been studying English on a regular basis for a few years, and Lucía mentioned wanting to learn enough English to teach it later in Mexico. However, she also mentioned that she was pregnant at the time with her third child, and thus she was unsure about how the pregnancy would change her plans. Rosa wanted to stay in the U.S. long enough to save money to start building a home which other financial obligations had kept her from doing. When Mercedes heard of her plans, she offered some advice that also pointed to the ways in which migrants make sacrifices and tend to leave certain kinds of material acquisitions for later use that are lost when people do not actually return to Mexico. She stated: *Yo te voy a dar un consejo bien grande. No sé si lo quieras tomar o lo quieras dejar. Cuando yo recién llegué, yo no me compraba zapatos, no me compraba XXX porque era todo para allá... Todo se vino abajo. Todo se perdió* [I'm going to give you a big piece of advice. I don't know if you want to take it or leave it. When I first arrived, I didn't buy myself shoes, I didn't buy XXX because everything was [put aside] for

over there...Everything came down. Everything was lost]. In fact, Mercedes discussed how ownership of the house she and her husband had managed to finance in Mexico was under dispute and at risk of being lost entirely.

The women I interviewed, after living in New York for ten or more years, had only begun to attain what they had set out to do when they first arrived: upward economic mobility as reflected in steady, unexploitive jobs and ownership of certain commodities. However, these women did manage to overcome initial difficulties, were better prepared for hardships typically faced by recent immigrants, and also had personal and social support networks in their neighborhoods, primarily through the *Organización Guadalupeana*. Their resourcefulness and involvement in the Organization gave them a sense of community and belonging as they used their earlier experiences as new migrants in their new-found community activism as I discussed in the previous chapter. In the broadest sense, these women and many of those immigrant families involved in the Organization continue to demonstrate a sense of belonging through their activism in their communities and around New York City. Beyond the individual dimension, the Organization takes further this sense of community and belonging to propose arguments in favor of Mexican immigrants' legal citizenship. Its campaign for General Amnesty reflects the idea that U.S. citizenship is not really the end in itself, but a tool toward a higher goal. Rather, what Mexican immigrants advocate is the liberty to choose where and when to live and work in either Mexico or the United States. Common individual goals are re-framed by the institution as an Organizational agenda. Taking the Organization's largest goals into account, they outline what I have come to think of as its ideal developmental trajectory: a progression leading from an illegal identity

to an undocumented identity to U.S. citizenship to a binational or transnational identity (see Figure 3). Most Mexican immigrants in New York probably fall under one of the first two developmental shifts ($\Rightarrow$ becoming illegal $\Rightarrow$ becoming undocumented), and most of my discussion of findings rests on the second shift as a result of the research context of the Organization. Of course, not all ontogenetic trajectories are as linear nor universal; this is a point exemplified in differences found between participants' oral and written life histories, and differences between mothers' and children's narratives.

Illegal $\Rightarrow$ Undocumented $\Rightarrow$ U.S. Citizen $\Rightarrow$ Binational/Transnational Citizen

Figure 3. Developmental Trajectory

In the next section, I will discuss how the link between developing a personal sense of justice and belonging in the city leads into the societal argument for both cultural and legal citizenship, especially as this emerges in texts published in the Organization's monthly bulletin.

Questioning illegality through cultural citizenship

In order for the structure of the *Organización Guadalupeana* to foment a sense of community and to ensure its functionality, it has to share a common identity. Apart from being *guadalupanos*, a pre-migratory cultural and religious identity that initially binds members of the Organization, members also share a political identity based on immigration status. If we examine closely how identity based on immigration status develops, we must

look at each historical dimension (societal and individual) as different lines of development (Scribner, 1985) that converge into a psychological system where individuals use existing social conditions as personal resources to make sense of themselves and to act within/on society.

Undocumented Mexicans in this context are making use of institutions and community organizing as means of making their identities public, making demands, and enforcing their rights. This also provides them with a tool to construct personal, familiar meanings and identities in a foreign place. Through their participation in community organizing, immigrants find a way to transform one public institution into a psychological tool that allows them to understand themselves in particular ways, and to act on their worlds in a deliberate manner. As a result, they are able to make use of the public front the Organization provides to uncover unjust practices, challenge existing relations of power that identify them in derogatory ways, and reposition themselves according to grounds that diverge from those that dominate public discourse.

One of the ways Mexican immigrants in the *Organización Guadalupeña* have come to claim rights in the city is by forming a highly public constituency through cultural events. A series of scholarly works following from Renato Rosaldo's definition of "cultural citizenship" has posited that those people who occupy weaker positions of power in society are nonetheless involved in cultural activities that are central to creating and maintaining a social and cultural identity, as well as to demanding certain cultural and human rights (Flores & Benmayor, 1997). Rosaldo (1997) argues that one must study the "aspirations and perceptions of people who occupy subordinate social positions. This research demands

studies of vernacular notions of citizenship” (p.38). In this sense, one can argue that the growing number of small Mexican businesses around the city, and the introduction of local types of Mexican folklore, music, and dance in a number of institutions (church, school, radio, nightclubs, etc.) are examples of some means immigrants use to consolidate their identities and claim a cultural space in the city.

Such cultural studies on the city-wide level would illuminate the processes and extent to which Mexican immigrants make claims and occupy new positions through cultural transformation. However, I will restrict my discussion of cultural citizenship as an outcome of the activities of the *Organización Guadalupeana* and their descriptions in texts of its monthly publication. I argue that the Mexican immigrants involved in this Organization claim cultural citizenship through the public consolidation of their presence in the city. We will see that Mexican immigrants also express cultural citizenship through activities that promote cultural pride and that are claimed to transform the face of the city. I further argue that cultural citizenship is achieved in the anthropological sense that Rosaldo defines *in conjunction with* psychological change; acting toward one’s entitlement of space and rights requires that undocumented immigrants change expectations about the temporary nature of their stay in the country.

Just as the women I interviewed discussed, new Mexican migrants face a number of “myths” about what their lives will be like after arriving in New York. One such myth, as I mentioned earlier, is that migrants will stay in the U.S. for relatively short periods of time and, after having worked temporarily, will be able to return permanently to their homelands. The falsity of these expectations becomes common knowledge to those migrants in New

York who arrived with such misconceptions. Consequently, individual goals change; (semi)permanent residency replaces migrants' notions of temporary residency, and is most formalized institutionally in the Organization's major objective of acquiring General Amnesty. This initial, personal change of mind about residency is mentioned repeatedly in the texts produced by members of the Organization as we will see in the following examples that trace how its ideal developmental trajectory is put together across texts that advertise for certain changes across individuals. The examples illustrate how development is constructed interpersonally through cultural and historical discourses where members of the Organization address other members or other Mexican immigrants in the city. First, I begin with one female member's description of the misconception about how easy and how productive her life in New York would be once she arrived. This piece was entitled "*Alguien me lo dijo/Someone told me*":

Alguien me dijo que la vida en Nueva York era tan fácil. Sí, me dijo que era tan sencillo conseguir un buen trabajo, y que ganaría los dólares suficientes para subsistir y además que no tenía que matarme tanto, que podía vestir decentemente, que no me haría falta de comer, que podía compartir departamento con más personas y me dijo que pagaría muy poco de renta; que podría salir y divertirme y me sobraría para mandarle dinero a México.

Sin embargo, por el contrario, las cosas han ido al revés...En esta "tierra de esperanza" es donde he conocido la miseria, el hambre, la falta de respeto a los que venimos indocumentados, donde el que no habla inglés y no tiene la green card es

dejado de sus derechos, donde muchas veces hay que agachar la cabeza sólo por unos dólares; donde los sentimientos hay que esconderlos para que no sean ultrajados...Estamos aquí sacrificados por los patrones explotadores, estamos sacrificando a nuestros seres queridos a quienes hemos abandonado, y estamos sacrificando todo aquello que nos hacía felices. Sin embargo, ya estamos aquí, debemos ponerle fecha de terminación a nuestra aventura...o bien decidirnos ya a quedarnos para siempre.

Someone told me that life in New York was so easy. Yes, they told me it was so easy to get a good job, that I would earn enough dollars to get by and that I wouldn't have to kill myself so much, that I would be able to dress decently, that I would have enough to eat, that I could share an apartment with other people and they told me that I would pay very little rent; that I would be able to go out and have fun and that I would have money left over to send to Mexico.

However, on the contrary, things have been the reverse...In this "land of hope" is where I have learned of misery, hunger, disrespect to those of us who come undocumented, where he who doesn't speak English and doesn't have a green card is ripped of his rights, where many times you have to bow your head for a few dollars, where your feelings have to be hidden so that they won't be violated...We are sacrificed here by exploitive employers, we are sacrificing our loved ones whom we abandoned, and we are sacrificing all that used to make us happy. However, we're already here, we ought to place a termination date on our adventure...or decide now

to stay forever.

This written text was accompanied by an illustration of a woman washing clothes by hand outdoors of what could be identified as a poor rural home with mountains in the background to one side. The woman in the illustration, a representation of this text's female author, is looking back at her house while imagining a larger, well-constructed house surrounded by trees. In this excerpt, the writer addresses recurrent points about how Mexican migration is realized out of false hopes and inaccurate information. Her first-person narrative switches from the singular to the plural when she begins to describe what the reality of life in New York has been. Generalizing her experience at this point to other migrants through such use of indexicals allows this author to address an imagined community with shared characteristics. The written text in conjunction with the graphic one suggests a discourse about how people justify their migration as the result of poverty and hunger that they actually come to know in New York rather than in Mexico. Her mistaken expectations are marked in her use of quotation marks around the phrase "land of hope" to refer to the United States. The easy life she was promised turned out to be a life of sacrifice, as the author states repeatedly. The theme of hope and improvement is recurrent as she concludes this text in an unexcerpted portion with advice for others; she advises her readers to not allow themselves to be humiliated, but instead encourages them to actively search for a way to use their stay in New York, however short or long it may be, as an opportunity to improve as individuals. Sharing her position of illegality with her imagined audience, this author hints at the developmental shift discussed above. One becomes "undocumented" by re-appropriating

control of one's life and making decisions about one's place of residence. This message, also resonating the theme of resilience, is that not all hope is lost, but that it should be nurtured in realistic terms by putting an end to the indecisive nature of Mexican migration that may cause people to lose more than what they might gain as "illegal" immigrants.

In another article, a different female member of the Organization constructs a similar argument about wasted opportunities as a result of the false expectation that migrants' come to live in New York only temporarily. In her article entitled "*Algo que ayuda a progresar/Something that helps to progress*," this author begins her argument about the need to learn English in the following manner:

La mayoría de nosotros al venir a este país, venimos cargados de sueños e ilusiones, pero muchas veces los vemos truncados al enfrentarnos a muchas barreras; y una de las más comunes aparte de nuestra situación legal es el idioma. Pero como casi todos venimos "por un año" no nos preocupamos en aprender porque pensamos que en nuestro país de qué nos sirve, y nos dedicamos a trabajar, a dormir y a pachanguear. Pero se pasa el año por el que venimos, y se pasan dos y muchos más; muchos se casan o se unen a su pareja, aquí tienen hijos y siguen sin aprender el idioma...Yo te invito a ti joven, adulto o adolescente; que acabas de llegar y que vienes "por un año," a que no desperdicies tu tiempo...Yo ya perdí seis años y ya no quiero perder uno más...

Most of us when we come to this country, we carry dreams and illusions, but many

times we see them truncated as we confront many barriers; and one of the most common apart from our legal situation is the language. But since almost all of us come “for one year” we don’t worry about learning because we think in our country how is this going to serve us, and we dedicate ourselves to working, sleeping and partying. But the year we came for goes by, and two go by, and many more; many get married or are reunited with their spouse, they have children here and continue to fail to learn the language...I invite you youth, adult or adolescent; who just arrived and who is coming “for one year,” to not waste your time...I already lost six years and I don’t want to lose one more...

Along with the written text is an illustration that reinforces the message that the author attempts to convey; it depicts a woman holding a candlestick in one hand and a textbook in the other while the book’s cover reads the title ENGLISH in capital letters. In this article, the author also uses quotation marks to emphasize that the idea of working temporarily in the U.S. “for one year” is only a false expectation. In a sense, this author also proposes that migrants should take advantage of their stay and develop their language skills in English, and that, to do so, they must first change their expectations. A belief in permanent settlement as an option for Mexican migrants, in spite of their undocumented status, as well as resolution to acquire English language skills are examples of activities, both psychological and material, that would enable Mexican immigrants to develop some of the resources needed to claim cultural rights, and access citizenship.

The following article was written by a male member of the Organization; it is entitled

“Este via crucis un granito de arena más/One more grain of salt that is solidifying the community’s presence,” referring to the annual *via crucis* enacted on Good Friday. The author reflects on its significance in a poem:

<i>Queremos dejar bien claro</i>	We want to make very clear
<i>Que el pueblo Mexicano está presente,...</i>	That the Mexican community is taking a
<i>Pues veo bebitos, niños y jóvenes gritando</i>	stand....
<i>con los que ya grandes estamos</i>	I see babies, children and youth shouting
<i>“Si se puede!” muchas veces, y</i>	with those of us big already
<i>“Aquí estamos, y no nos vamos,</i>	“Yes we can!” many times, and
<i>y si nos echan, nos regresamos!”</i>	“Here we are, and we won’t go,
	and if they throw us out, we’ll come right
	back!”

In this example we see that the author’s portrayal of Mexican immigrants is one of unified, contemporary, rather than temporary, disunited presence as he describes how members of the community of all ages participate in the chants typical of the *Organización Guadalupeana*’s public rallies and other events. It exemplifies the notion that the discourse about Mexican immigrants’ existence in the city is both a personal and a public statement. At the same time, we can see that while the message is similar across the articles I excerpted above (i.e., that Mexican immigrants are here to stay), the audience changes once the message becomes public. While the articles are generally used to inform Mexican

immigrants, the reported speech in the poem illustrates that the message from the community is also directed to the general public in its civic events. The societal message warns that Mexican immigrants are a presence that will not be erased even if people are “thrown out” or deported. It is important to recall that the *via crucis*, a sacrificial path of life, is an occasion that the *Organización Guadalupeana* uses to advocate for General Amnesty. Therefore, I argue that by reformulating their stay in the U.S. from temporary to long-term in both personal and societal discourses, Mexican immigrants are able to make plans and make claims that go beyond personal benefit as the previous examples proposed. Here we begin to see a shift from personal to societal understanding of Mexican migration that involves community participation, permanent settlement, and simultaneously from advocacy of cultural rights to advocacy of legal rights. In the following text we see what some of the outcomes of changing one’s consciousness about the temporality of migration and making public claims might be:

...Y quiero contarles algo que me llena de orgullo y satisfacción: fue la participación que cada uno de los jóvenes del grupo Guadalupeano de mi parroquia aportó;...Por eso estoy segura que este evento hará historia en este país, y en nuestra comunidad Mexicana que radica en esta ciudad. Sigamos uniéndonos para que de esta manera se nos respete en nuestras Parroquias, en el vecindario, en este país; y sobre todo para que nosotros mismos nos respetamos sabiendo que somos capaces de hacer esto y mucho más...

...And I want to tell you about something that fills me with pride and satisfaction: it was the participation that each one of the youths in the guadalupano group of my parish brought;..This is why I am sure that this event will make history in this country, and in our Mexican community that lives in this city. Let's continue to unite ourselves so that in this way we will be respected in our Parishes, neighborhoods, in this country; and above all so that we will respect ourselves knowing that we are capable of doing this and much more...

The article from which this excerpt came was entitled "*Haciendo historias: Ecos del 12 de diciembre*/Making history: Echoes of December 12th" and was written by a female member of *la Organización Guadalupeña*. While members of the Organization propose a change in one's consciousness about the length and benefits of one's stay in the U.S., conversely, the ability to make public claims and to occupy a cultural and historical space in the city can afford immigrants a sense of cultural pride and empowerment as this article's content illustrates. Moreover, the next excerpt illustrates how cultural pride and historical consciousness are needed to develop a positive sense of identity:

...Hoy en día muchas [hay] personas de Puebla y de otros estados de México. Estamos demostrando nuestra cultura aquí en Nueva York, aunque muchas otras ya se avergüenzan de ser de Puebla y más si son de un pueblo por el simple hecho de que ahora vivan en mejores condiciones...A pesar de todo lo que vivimos aquí en este país nosotros seguiremos luchando para demostrar nuestro orgullo

Mexicano...Puebla es el estado que ganó la batalla del Cinco de Mayo y así como nuestros antepasados, también nosotros ganaremos la lucha por la Amnistía...

Today there are many people from Puebla and other states of Mexico. We are showing our culture here in New York, even though many others now are ashamed to be from Puebla and even more so if they are from a small town because of the simple fact that they are now living in better conditions...In spite of all that we live here in this country we will continue struggling to show our Mexican pride...Puebla is the state that won the battle of *Cinco de Mayo* and just as our ancestors, we will also win the fight for Amnesty...

This excerpt was taken from an article written by a male member of *la Organización Guadalupeana* who occupies an elected leadership position. He illustrates that part of being cultural citizens, or part of belonging to New York City requires taking pride in one's cultural origins, rather than feeling ashamed of them. Indirectly and unlike previous examples, he indicates that something positive has come about for some people as a result of having migrated; however, he also implies that the positive outcomes of migration are mistakenly associated with belonging to a new place. That is, the new homeland becomes the source for a new identity that supercedes and even rejects an old one. This, again, points to the contradictory ways in which Mexican immigrants are positioned. Instead of participating in cultural denial, the author invokes another view of Mexican cultural history to be used as a source of pride rather than shame. He alludes to the negative life conditions

Mexican immigrants endure (“In spite of all that we live here”), as well as to their subordinate social status as people who must “struggle” to be able to demonstrate their cultural pride. By using the discourse strategy of making a historical analogy at the end of this text, the author ties one’s sense of pride to one’s actions; that is, he reminds the reader that Puebla, the state from which most migrants are from and with which some feel ashamed to be associated, is “the state that won the battle of *Cinco de Mayo*,” a historical event in which Mexicans defeated the French colonists in spite of having much weaker resources, and that should inspire cultural pride and a strong national identity. Furthermore, the event is used to construct a parallel between the success of “our ancestors” and the potential success of those who will “win the fight for Amnesty.” Therefore, the author uses historical continuity as a discourse strategy to advocate for cultural rights (the right to demonstrate Mexican pride in the city), as well as legal rights (General Amnesty) for Mexican migrants. This use of historical continuity to construct a common identity that is idealized to end with legal citizenship among Mexican immigrants in New York is also present in the next example from an article entitled “*Seguimos ganando la batalla/ We keep winning the battle*” written by a female member of the Organization’s staff:

...la invasión francesa vino a mostrar las altas cualidades de los mexicanos, su valor indomable, su patriotismo incuestionable, la firmeza de sus principios, su amor a la justicia y a la libertad. Y seguimos demostrando esa lucha constante que se tiene para hacer valer los derechos de los mexicanos en Nueva York, el derecho a las oportunidades de trabajo, de un salario justo, de la educación y del respeto librando

las injusticias que se pasan en este país, llevando muy en alto nuestra bandera mexicana. ¡Nuestro carácter y nuestra esencia sigue viva aún en nuestros tiempos, por eso seguiremos buscando la Amnistía General!!!

...the French invasion came to show the great qualities of Mexicans, their invincible courage, their unquestionable patriotism, the strength of their values, their love for justice and liberty. And we continue demonstrating this constant struggle that takes place in order to enforce the rights of Mexicans in New York, the right to job opportunities, to a fair salary, to education and respect free from the injustices that are lived in this country, carrying high our Mexican flag. Our character and our essence continue to live in our times, that is why we will continue to search for General Amnesty!!!

Both of the previous two excerpts were inspired by current events at the time, celebrations of *el Cinco de Mayo*, and were combined with the Organization's goals. The authors both employ such themes as pride, solidarity, and success, as well as the discourse strategy of drawing historical continuity through analogies between old and new situations faced by people in disempowered social positions. I argue that this continuity is constructed in the combination of written texts and activities of the Organization, and moreover functions to produce a common national identity that is described in the last excerpt as "our essence." My purpose here is not to make a case that supports the notion that Mexicans carry in them essential characteristics, but rather to demonstrate how the community's identity is developed

culturally and historically in texts, and how this functions psychologically as Mexican migrants use identity to orient themselves toward their own knowledge, values, and goals. In this case, the goal is to build community and to place demands on those in power in favor of Mexican migrants' legalization. In the next section I discuss further how citizenship comes to be re-defined as the community of *la Organización Guadalupeña* constructs threads that tie cultural values to their petition for legal rights.

Re-writing citizenship and entitlement

Members of the *Organización Guadalupeña* define themselves under the discourse of an undocumented identity. By reviewing texts in which members wrote about their condition as immigrants, or in advocacy of a law in favor of General Amnesty, I discovered a broader narrative of oppression that immigrants used to justify their communal petition. As we have seen in their writing in the monthly bulletins, they placed a great emphasis on their economic need as a cause for the hardships they faced as a result of migrating. Their goal has been to pull themselves out of their financial instability. While these immigrants explicitly viewed their presence in the U.S. as the result of economic need, they also discussed their prior knowledge about life in the U.S. that coupled their decision to migrate which they, themselves, described as misconceptions and false expectations. Later, awareness of these misconceptions served as the building blocks for a community-wide transformation of consciousness that involved re-defining and re-valuing oneself, and planning ahead to claim both cultural and legal rights in the city.

However, members of the Organization also construct their identities through cultural

values to position themselves in their own terms as citizens in relation to the wider society. For instance, some of the cultural values that many migrants involved in *la Organización Guadalupeña* employed in the content of the articles of the monthly bulletins were drawn from their religious background. That is, some members saw their citizenship in religious terms, along with, or aside from, the legal status and human rights discourse of the Organization. Aside from using a religious discourse to identify members of their immediate communities as *guadalupanos*, immigrants also used religious terms in their texts to construct a legitimate place for themselves in U.S. society. For instance, in one article, a female member writes: *Los miembros de los gobiernos deben comprender que ya somos ciudadanos del Reino de Dios, un territorio que es de Dios y de todos los seres humanos, pero que unos cuantos individuos -pues no merecen llamarse seres humanos- le han puesto fronteras* [The members of these governments [Mexican and U.S.] should understand that we are already citizens of the Kingdom of God, a territory of God and all human beings, that a handful of individuals -who do not deserve to be called human beings - have placed borders upon]. In this example, citizenship is defined as the occupation of territory that belongs only to a higher power, and whose meaning has been distorted by those in structures of control (governments). Here, we can see that citizenship is contested on legal grounds, but is also re-defined according to a discourse of human rights that is part of a religious conceptualization of society.

Another female author, a woman in an elected leadership position in the Organization, similarly uses Holy Week to draw a historical-religious continuity between the *via crucis* of Christ on his walk to Calvary and the experiences of Mexican migrants. While

this continuity is enacted or performed during the event, this author also constructs it as she writes about the exploitation many Mexicans face. She concludes with a message of legal triumph through resurrection: *Luego vendrá la RESURRECCION, y la nueva vida para nuestros hijos, y justicia para nuestros hermanos que aún viven en explotación. Llegará la amnistía, y tendremos derechos, libertad y justicia para el pueblo mexicano* [Then RESURRECTION will come, and a new life for our children, and justice for our brethren who still live in exploitation. Amnesty will come, and we will have rights, liberty and justice for the Mexican community].

This kind of political religiosity will be discussed further in the next chapter in relation to the formation of illegality. Here, the importance lies in acknowledging religious values in Mexican migrants' organized claims to legal rights. On the other hand, not all of the Mexican cultural values expressed in the articles stem from a religious understanding of the world, although they are not necessarily incompatible. For example, in the next excerpt written by a female member of the Organization during Christmas, a traditional family holiday in Mexico, the author proposes a justification for Amnesty as a means of maintaining close family ties. She begins by reporting other members' remarks around this holiday:

... "el estar unos en México y otros en otro país causa tristeza y soledad para ambos lados de la familia. En este mes me da un sentimiento de culpabilidad y quisiera ser dos personas para estar aquí con mis hijas y allá en México con mi hijo que se quedó, siento ser mala madre por haber dejado a mi hijo por tanto tiempo." Como ellos, todos tenemos una historia que contar; es muy triste el no tener la facilidad de

entrar y salir en este país y a pasar muchas navidades lejos de nuestras familias. Luchemos para acortar estas distancias, luchemos por una Amnistía General para ser documentados y tener también el derecho a viajar sin problemas...

...“having some [family] in Mexico and others in another country causes sadness and loneliness for both sides of the family. During this month, I feel guilty and would like to be two people to be here with my daughters and there with my son who stayed, I feel I am a bad mother for having left my son there for so long.” Like them, all of us have a story to tell; it is very sad to not have the ease of entering and leaving the country and spending so many Christmases far from our families. Let us fight to cut these distances, let’s fight for General Amnesty to be documented and also have the right to travel without difficulties.

Aside from the curtailing of exploitation of immigrants and their living in fear, in this article the author extends the benefits of Mexican migrants’ legalization to their ability to also maintain closer ties to family in Mexico. Therefore, the benefits of legalization are not only limited to Mexicans living in the U.S. who would no longer have to risk their lives crossing the border illegally, but also extend to family in Mexico in the form of reunification. In the next example, the author who is a male member of the Organization also employs a similar argument in his text, although he explicitly tries to convince other immigrants about why they should participate in the campaign for General Amnesty:

...imagínate viajar hoy, y regresar la semana próxima, cargado de ilusiones, después de haber saludado al hermano que hace tantos años no veías y a tu madre...que se han estado llenando de años como nosotros...y qué bonito sería que cuando lleguen [los papeles], tu puedas decir con orgullo: ¡aquí están mis esfuerzos, logré la residencia, luché duro, sembré y aquí está la cosecha! Hice algo por mi y por mucha gente. Te sentirás satisfecho...

...imagine traveling today, and returning next week, full of dreams after having seen your brother whom you had not seen in so many years, and your mother..who are getting older just like us...and how nice it would be when the papers come for you to be able to say proudly: Here are my efforts, I got my residency, I worked hard, I planted the seeds and reaped the crop! I did something for me and for a lot of people. You will feel satisfied...

In spite of there being no immediate rewards for migrants' campaigning for Amnesty, this author also proposes the same cultural value, maintaining family unity, along with personal fulfillment as reasons for participating in this petition. In his text, however, the community's objectives become part of long-term planning, and assume permanent transitions between the United States and Mexico. It is important to note that the sense of personal fulfillment that the author promises is based on a discourse about one's actions and hard work captured in his use of the metaphor about reaping the fruits of one's labor for the community, rather than for an individual. Thus, maintenance of family and community

values in personal narratives are used to justify the Organization's campaign for General Amnesty, a societal change whose end result could be the formation of a transnational identity.

The *Organización Guadalupeana* has been involved in a number of manifestations in New York City and in Washington, D.C. to demand General Amnesty for all undocumented immigrants in the United States. In fact, the Executive Director was one of the founders of a national coalition of organizations and individual supporters who advocate for a new amnesty law. A few congressional representatives have voiced their support, and some have initiated movements for a legal proposal to Congress.

The Organization's common identities (based on immigration status, nationality, religion) are fueled by activities and discourses centered around social changes based on immigration status and human rights. This is a politically-organized movement that binds members of the Organization under a common cause: to redefine publicly what it means to be undocumented. For example, placards at protests often read such phrases as "No human being is illegal" or "We demand because we produce." The undocumented Mexican immigrants of *la Organización Guadalupeana* come to feel justified in making demands because they see themselves as contributors to the general welfare of the United States.

Consequently, the world views advocated by the Organization challenge dominant ideologies. For example, national standards define citizenship according to legal status embodied in certain documents like passports, social security cards, or drivers' licences. United States citizens' legal identifying documents entitle them to certain rights and privileges which they may choose to either exercise or not. Yet for the undocumented, as

portrayed by the *Organización Guadalupeña*, citizenship is an earned outcome of everyday economic, social, and cultural contributions, political involvement, and community memberships in the United States. Rather than assuming that citizenship is a legal condition that grants certain individual rights, privileges, and responsibilities, citizenship is broadly defined in the Organization's vernacular as a human condition, whose legalization ought to run parallel with the enforcement of human rights and community achievement. Moreover, the Organization's advocacy for amnesty is couched in a demand for official recognition of people's engagement in, and contributions to society through their daily civic participation and responsibilities. Therefore, instead of accepting an ideology of citizenship as an *effect* of legal documentation, the *Organización Guadalupeña* acts from a view of citizenship as a *cause* for legal documentation. In the community's view, undocumented Mexican immigrants are already citizens who contribute to the country's economic and cultural betterment. Societally, the Organization affords immigrants a means to contest erroneous grounds upon which their identities emerge. Thus, while societal conditions produce an "illegal" identity for immigrants who lack proper documentation to adopt in their beliefs and activities, the Organization's local and national activities and discourses provide a means to contest and counter-produce an "undocumented" identity that also serves to re-define mainstream notions of citizenship.

However, the Organization's goals do not end with a contestation or even a re-definition of illegality. Rather, its move for the eradication of an illegal identity is both a reactive and a proactive stance resulting in an understanding of citizenship based on merit, and freedom to live transnationally. Acknowledgment of the uncertainty about undocumented

immigrants' transformative power, as long as they remain undocumented in legal terms, is reflected in the Organization's primary campaign for General Amnesty. Yet the Organization's discourses and activities also call for a complete reorganization of existing power structures through acceptance of an undocumented identity and legal citizenship based on new criteria where Mexicans participate and contribute culturally, economically, and politically. Moreover, such cultural and economic capital gains are expected to warrant a transnational lifestyle. This larger movement for social change operates concurrently with the formation of personal identity based on a transformation of consciousness through goal-directed activities.

Children's understanding of illegality through social membership and power

In order to determine whether children and youth involved in the Organization share similar notions of illegality and citizenship, I examined the content of transcriptions of the sessions in which they worked with me to compose the booklet for other immigrant children and families. During one session, I had asked my core group of participants to interview each other about other people's beliefs about immigrants, and about what they, themselves, believed about immigrants. On this occasion, Karina tried to define the word "immigrant" for Marcos whom she was interviewing and who did not understand my question. Upon learning that Marcos did not know what an immigrant was, I asked Karina to explain this to him so that he would be able to answer the question. To my surprise, she affirmed that an immigrant was a person who had not lived more than ten years in the United States "cause in order not to be an immigrant you gotta have at least ten years here, then you could become

a citizen. Right?" At this moment, her older brother David began to counter this claim even after Karina insisted that you could "make the papers [file an application], and after ten years you could be a citizen." Karina was alluding to the legal conditions needed for amnesty dictated by the Immigrant Reform and Control Act of 1986 in which legal residency was granted to undocumented immigrants who could demonstrate that they had lived continuously in the United States since 1982. The cut-off date for this last amnesty was January 1, 1986. Therefore, immigrants who entered the U.S. illegally after that date would not be eligible to solicit legal residency. This includes most Mexicans currently residing in New York such as Karina and her family. One of the points of the General Amnesty proposal for which the Organization advocates is to have Congress move the registration date to the most recent possible date so that legalization would apply to all those Mexican immigrants who arrived in New York, generally, between 1986 and 1994.

Karina demonstrated that she understood citizenship in the societal-historical context of immigration as dictated by dominant power structures. In this situation, she defined citizenship as an outcome following from immigration. A citizen is a non-immigrant, but an immigrant is a potential citizen depending on time lived in the U.S. according to Karina's understanding. Perhaps recognizing his sister's partial ignorance of this subject, David challenged her understanding of citizenship as a goal of immigrants contingent on time. In their conversation, immigrants were also understood implicitly to be undocumented. David contested Karina's definition by proposing that one has to be born in the U.S. in order to be a citizen. I also attempted to clarify our definition of immigrants and citizens by asking in a confirmatory way "Citizens are people who are born here, right?" In this sense, we were

introducing a new definition of citizen in relation to immigrant, not based on legal status or human rights as the Organization posits, nor on length of stay in the U.S. as Karina proposed, but on birthplace. David further argued in favor of this new definition of citizenship as birthright, and offered that his U.S.-born, youngest sister is a U.S. citizen and a potential Mexican immigrant.

However, David further re-organized our shared understanding of citizenship by stating that he was also a citizen simply because he lived in the United States. This, again, stirred a debate between him and Karina who reverted to her original understanding: “No, that’s not a citizen! ...A[n] immigrant is a person who doesn’t have ten years over here who came from another country.” David finally ended this discussion by widening the range of what constitutes a U.S. citizen by integrating both legality and residence criteria as a means of identifying citizens. He stated, “Karina, I didn’t say I was a legal citizen!” Suggesting that he identifies himself as a citizen as a result of residing in the U.S., David could also be qualified as an “illegal” citizen according to Karina’s understanding of the issue.

Through such discourse strategies as defining, challenging, and offering counter-arguments, “citizen” was understood in relation to “immigrant,” where immigrants were defined under legal/illegal categorizations. Later that same day, David again inserted illegality as a condition of Mexican immigrants in a graphic illustration when Karina suggested that the booklet should have contained games for children. She proposed to include a maze leading from Mexico to New York as the trajectory of our booklet’s potential readers (see Appendix). Actually, David drew the maze himself and added a twist to Karina’s suggestion by inserting two dead ends in the middle of the path which he labeled “la Migra,”

a colloquial term for the Immigration and Naturalization Service. This is the same maze to which the children's mothers reacted upon the start of my interview with them that I cited earlier in this chapter. Just as the mothers found humor in the drawing, so did David embody this humor in the title he designed for the maze in the form of a challenge, "Can you get to New York without running into la Migra?"

I argue that this humor runs deeper than one might expect at first glance. Bakhtin (Morson & Emerson, 1990) theorized that carnivals, as they took place in the Middle Ages, could serve as a means to understand the liberatory potential of laughter. Humor, as it was enacted in the practices of carnivals, served to liberate oneself from the constraints posed by external conditions of class or status, and to invert the tops and bottoms of power structures in a socially accepted way. In this sense, the children's inclusion of the maze in our booklet was more than mere fun. These children managed to transform the severity of illegality by "carnivalizing" it into a challenging game fit for children complete with an answer key. It is worth recalling that David, unlike his 12-year-old sister, remembered the time when he crossed the border illegally with her and his mother, ten years earlier when he was four years old, but disliked talking about this experience openly. I argue that this kind of activity, the drawing of the maze as part of a larger project of *la Organización Guadalupeana*, provided the children with an acceptable and safe means to explore and test relations of power upon which citizens and immigrants are defined or identified; here, a possible world was created where clever, "illegal" children could outsmart a higher authority like the INS.

In a study on Chicano humor, Reyna and Herrera-Sobek (1998) claim that Mexican immigrant jokes serve particular social functions. One is a prescriptive function through

which newcomers are advised about compromising or embarrassing situations, and the other is a cathartic function where the joke provides “a socially acceptable and psychologically beneficial escape valve for their feelings of anxiety produced in the new surroundings” (p.223). Limon (1989) has analyzed the carnivalesque in the narrative discourse of Mexican American men, and cites Hearn in warning social scientists that “both mainstream and orthodox Marxist social science construe play as an ontologically secondary activity to the instrumental ‘real’ world of politics and economics. There is in such a construal a reproduction of capitalist categories of experience” (p.478). While play activity has been studied with respect to cognitive (Nielsen & Dissanayake, 2000) and social development (Sawyer, 1997), play activity needs to be investigated further and identified as a critical site for the construction and contestation of power (Dyson, 2001).

Returning to the questions with which this session began, Karina and David’s responses to them revealed that their identification of immigrants was not only expressed in terms of illegality or citizenship, but also on other social structures of power. Being an immigrant, aside from being a non-citizen, was also understood by these children in terms of class and language inequalities. When questioned about what other people thought about immigrants, Karina identified the other in “other people” as Americans. Specifically, she referred to employers and other adults and children who arrived in the U.S. prior to Mexican immigrants, describing them as people who think they are better than immigrants because they mistakenly think of them as “different” or unequal. In her response, Karina positioned immigrants as those who are treated unfairly by “Americans” as defined by a social order based on power and time of arrival. She stated, “Some people think that they’re

different...like they're disrespectful, like, people feel better than them but they're not. They're just the same...Some Americans, like, when immigrants are working for them...they treat them bad." Since her response assumed immigrants of a working class, I asked her:

***JOC: ...Can kids be immigrants?**

***KAR: yeah**

***JOC: so, what do people think about those immigrants? Cause they're not working**

***KAR: um kids? They treat them bad because since they're immigrants, they come here after them [Americans] so they don't know English and they make fun of them.**

In her responses, Karina made a distinction between adult immigrants who are oppressed as a result of their social class, and child immigrants who are oppressed as a result of their language status. As Stevens (1998) argues, assimilationist ideologies generally assume that one cannot speak a language other than English and be considered American, and that one needs to speak English in order to be American. Knowledge of such disparities with which immigrants are faced was re-taken when I asked Karina about what she, herself, thought of immigrants. She repeated that people are "just the same," meaning equals, and that immigrants "come here to make a better life, but sometimes it doesn't turn out the way they want it to...cause some immigrants, they come here to get a better job, but they, they sometimes don't. They get a worse job sometimes 'cause the bosses treat them badly..."

Moreover, she completed her thought with a piece of advice for parents of immigrant children based on her own experience. She said:

“About the kids, it’s difficult for them cause it’s hard learning English...I think that’s hard for them cause, like, I know this girl, she came [from] Mexico, and she’s supposed to be in third grade, and she has trouble speaking English, so if parents are gonna bring their children from Mexico they gotta bring them young like me ‘cause...me and David were brought young and we learned English with no trouble.”

While the youngest children in the group had not yet developed an explicit understanding of immigrants to be able to respond to my questions, Karina and David did add other criteria for citizenship that went beyond the inclusion of legal and human rights as advocated by the *Organización Guadalupeana*. In our interactions, the children also included birthplace and place of residence, as well as social class and language status as the pre-existing social structures of power upon which immigrants and citizens are identified in U.S. society. On the other hand, they did demonstrate an important commonality with the larger community discourse which was that they were capable of articulating their own and others’ immigrant identities in terms of power and social injustice in ways that diverged from predominant societal perspectives. Eventually, Karina and David’s own opinions about immigrants as expressed in this interaction took the form of a text that we included in the booklet for other children under the heading “*Los inmigrantes/Immigrants*” whose clarifying subtitle was “the people who come from Mexico to live in the United States.”

The children’s understanding also emerged during other sessions and were also included in the booklet’s content as descriptive texts or as advice columns. While David and Karina were the only participants to discuss illegality explicitly, the younger children also

demonstrated a developing awareness on the subject such as knowledge that people move from one place to another and that the actual move is quite difficult. Karina and David discussed explicitly on other occasions their knowledge about how migrants are persecuted and die on the border, and what families can do to retain their U.S.-born children if an undocumented parent is deported. In their separate advice columns to children, teenagers and adults, they only addressed illegality in their advice to adults who were warned about abuses on the part of employers, and were encouraged to demand minimum wages. David and Karina even considered naming the children's booklet "Illegal in New York," but decided that illegality was not the only topic covered in their texts about life in the city. In the next section, I will discuss how the children's developing understanding of illegality was closely related to a particular kind of institutional history, through their political socialization by their parents and the *Organización Guadalupeña*.

Becoming citizens: The political socialization of Mexican immigrant families

During the group interview with the children's mothers, I asked them whether they shared their reading of the Organization's monthly bulletin with their children. I was already aware that David and Karina were literate in Spanish and that they were, in fact, familiar with the bulletin, remarking that they especially liked its illustrations. Marcos was beginning to read in Spanish, and, according to his mother, made attempts at home to read the monthly bulletin aloud. Mercedes and Lucía, mothers of the youngest children (Marcos, Ariel, and Margarita) stated that they did not actually discuss the readings of the bulletin directly with their children, but recognized that they were exposed to adult conversations about the issues

that emerged in the bulletins, as well as their own reasons for participating in the Organization's activities. Based on what the mothers discussed and on what the children, themselves, had to say in our meetings, it was clear that even the youngest children, although not fully conscious about the meanings of immigration and illegality, were being socialized into their family's and the Organization's practices through exposure to their conversations and by accompanying their mothers to meetings, demonstrations, and other events. The mothers summarized this exposure in the next excerpt:

***JOC:** *ellos escuchan cuando ustedes hablan* [they hear you when you're talking]

***LUC:** *ellos escuchan cuando nosotros--, por qué estamos aquí, cuando hacemos reuniones ya ves que los traemos* [they hear when we--, why we're here, when we have meetings you see that we bring them]

***MER:** *a veces en la calle también [dicen]: "¡Aquí estamos y no nos vamos! [risas]. Ellos repiten* [sometimes on the street they say: "Here we are and we won't go!" [laughter]. They repeat]

***JOC:** *sí, una vez me lo hicieron aquí [risas]* [yes, once they did that here] [laughter]

***LUC:** *o sea ya ellos saben, pero me dice, "Mami." Marcos me ha preguntado. "Mami," me dijo, "¿por qué ustedes hacen eso?" ...Y dice, y "¿Yo no lo puedo hacer?" Le digo "Sí, tú me vas a ayudar. Tú nos estás apoyando pero por tu mamá, porque por ti no hay problema. Tú naciste aquí."* [in other words, they already know, but he tells me, "Mami." Marcos has asked me. "Mami," he told me, "why do you do this?" ...And he says, "Can I do it?" I tell him, "Yes, you're going to help me. You're

supporting us because of your mother, because you don't have a problem. You were born here"].

Marcos, Margarita and Ariel demonstrated some familiarity with the activities of their mothers through the Organization in their knowledge of the chants heard at demonstrations, as well as in conversations they had with me about trips they had made with their parents to Washington, D.C. for nationally-organized rallies in support of General Amnesty. While these children simply saw themselves as accompanying their parents, Marcos was already beginning to question the reasons for his parents' actions and his own involvement. His mother's reply to his questions reported in our conversation above demonstrated again how political involvement is closely tied to Mexican immigrants' sense of family unity and respect for one's parents. Lucía is teaching Marcos that the goals of his actions are not directed toward his own benefit, but rather are in support of his mother. This personal ideology has often been represented institutionally at public rallies where young children accompanying their parents carry picket signs that read: "I am an American citizen but my mommy is not. She deserves Amnesty now." Although the extent to which these children understand the political cause in which they are participating is questionable, their involvement carries wide implications as to how they are being socialized institutionally to support their parents and communities in the future through political activism. In the next segment of my conversation with the mothers, we see that the children's unfamiliarity with illegal immigration is partly due to their parents' deliberate withholding of potentially troubling information:

MER: *y más que nada a los niños no les decimos que no tenemos documentos, no, nada.

Yo sólo le[s] digo a los niños que tienen que estudiar para que no anden barriendo pasando vergüenza en la calle [and more than anything, we don't tell the children that we don't have documents, nothing. I only tell the children that they have to study so that they won't be sweeping, feeling shame on the street].

Although the women did not mention this when I asked them explicitly about their expectations for the future, their children's social mobility through formal education was another goal of their own migration. Mercedes mentioned this in the comment cited above, and the other women also made similar remarks throughout the interview about explicitly encouraging their children to become educated and live differently than they had.

All five children of the core group of participants had accompanied their parents to events of the Organization, although the older children seemed to be less involved and less supervised. Although the youngest children participated in community events, they had not yet developed an understanding of immigration, illegality, or citizenship the way the older children had. On the other hand, Karina and David seemed to be more independent and did not accompany their parents to every event as the younger children did, but instead had access to the Organization's philosophy through other kinds of activities, such as reading, that drew on their bilingual and biliterate skills. David had also spent some time as a volunteer in the Organization's office where he was exposed closely to its everyday activities.

At the same time, however, all of the children were living in the U.S. and,

consequently, were exposed to mainstream politics that, in some sense, also socializes them into a certain kind of political life in the country. This negotiation between political practices became clear in our last session during which the children discussed what the title of the booklet should be. The process of selecting a title entailed a number of discourse strategies, and began with an attempt to elect a title democratically by majority vote, but resulted in a battle between contestants campaigning for their own propositions and, at times, making authoritarian decisions. All of the participants, except for Ariel and Margarita, were vocal about a title and tried to persuade the other members of the group. However, the youngest girls did participate in the actual vote. In a sense, the entire group was involved in the enactment of a political socialization process. Karina began the session by proposing “Here in New York” as a title, and asking the group if they wanted to vote for her idea even though her title had been the only one proposed at that moment:

***KAR:** who votes for mine? I mean

***MCS:** who votes for her?

***JOC:** well we can't vote yet because we need an option. We need to have a choice...

Upon my insistence that there should be a choice of titles in order for the children to be able to select one, the children began to brainstorm other titles for the booklet. Once there were other options available, however, Karina tried to persuade the others to vote for her idea by making conditional promises until David cut her and her tactic from the table:

***KAR: vote for me. If you vote for me I'll**

***JOC: [laughs] she's a politician**

***DAV: raise your hand**

***MCS: raise your hand**

***KAR: vote for me. I promise, if you vote for me**

***DAV: shut up! How many are in favor of Karina's? Nobody.**

Nonetheless, Karina returned to this tactic of conditional negotiation later in the discussion.

In the next segment, David and Jorge reminded her that her promises were not realistic; when Karina re-framed her promise, David and Marcos used her own tactic to suppress her:

***KAR: if you vote me, I'll bring in candy every week!**

***DAV: there's no more [meetings]**

***JOR: we're not seeing you...**

***KAR: if you vote for me, I'll tell UPS to send you a box o'candy**

***DAV: we'll vote for you if you shut up**

***KAR: nooo**

***MCS: yeah. we'll vote for you if you be quiet**

***DAV: then forget it. We ain't voting for you**

***KAR: alright I'll shut up. Zip--, the key, the key [pretending to lock her mouth shut].**

At times, David's rejection of his sister's suggestions took shape more explicitly as

authoritarian decisions against her and about what the booklet's title should be, at the same time that I tried to elicit suggestions from them:

***DAV:** what about *vida en Nueva York*? *Vida en Nueva York* [life in New York]

***MCS:** yeah

***JOC:** ¿*la vida en Nueva York*? What else can we say?

***DAV:** well we got our title

***JOR:** *la vida loca* [the crazy life]

***KAR:** *la vida loca en Nueva York* [the crazy life in New York]

***JOC:** that's another option

***DAV:** no, anything Karina says is a reject. That's it.

During our voting process, there were also tactics of "dirty politics" used by Karina when she tried to take Marcos outside of the room to convince him privately about his selection in her favor. David was the first to object to this:

***DAV:** no, no, no, you can't do that! Don't do that

***KAR:** yes we can [leaving the room with Marcos]

***DAV:** no you can't. Yo, this is not the White House! Don't do that...She's trying to act like Bill Clinton.

On other occasions, rather than make decisions based on authoritarian decisions, persuasive

tactics, or negotiations, the group also used the message, purpose, and audience of the booklet as criteria for selecting a title. In the following example, the group negotiated what the readers' reasons would be for migrating to New York:

***KAR:** *el estilo Nueva York* [New York style]

***DAV:** no, no. *¿El estilo Nueva York?*

***KAR:** *el estilo and nueva york*

***DAV:** no, they not coming here for fashion reasons, man! They're not coming here for fashion

***JOC:** so, work in Nueva York

***DAV:** [whining] no, not that either [laughter]

***JOC:** well this is for kids. So should we say something about that in the title?

***DAV:** *el trabajo, la vida* [work, life]

***KAR:** *los niños en Nueva York* [children in New York].

In the next example, I attempted to persuade the children to think of a title according to the general message we meant to give the booklet's readers, but Marcos returned the voting process to the choices the group had already formulated, rather than begin another brainstorming session:

***JOC:** well maybe we should think about what the message is we wanna give the...kids who read it

***MCS: ok who votes for the first one? Which one is the first one?**

***KAR: meee, meee!**

By the end of our session, the group had elected *New York, Nueva York para niños y familias mexicanas* [New York, Nueva York for Mexican children and families] as the winning title. It was a combination of Karina and David's proposals, along with the rest of the group's approval through majority vote.

In conclusion, the last session served as an opportunity to examine the working group's politics, as well as a site for the negotiation of one's personal understanding of the societal history of Mexican immigrants in New York. The children's discussion also functioned as a reflection about the purpose of their booklet, its audience, major topics, and message. Although the children were involved in the Organization's practices and exposed to their own parents' active participation and reflection about it, they identified Mexican immigrants in relation to legal status to varying degrees. They were capable of this as a result of their involvement ranging from participating peripherally in political socialization practices to explicitly advocating for Mexican immigrants' rights. The children of Mexican immigrants, especially those who were born in the U.S., will have access to more mainstream political rights and will carry significant voting power. It is important to consider that an important segment is being socialized into an ideology of citizenship based on civic activism, and family and community values. As U.S. citizens, they will be able to solicit their parents' legalization in time. Therefore, the permanent settlement of these children and their families in the U.S., as well as the way that these families identify themselves, their communities, and

their cultural and legal rights have long-term implications for their power to bring about social change through citizenship, including both direct political involvement and community organization practices.

In this chapter, I used three primary sites of discourse on illegality to describe a developmental process of identity multiplicity as institutions and individuals interacted in different activities (responding to an interview protocol, writing for one's own community) with different resources and audiences. The three sites included: (1) the mothers' interview discussion and co-construction of migration narratives; (2) the Organization's bulletin articles on life experiences in the U.S. after migrating; and (3) the children and youth's discussions. (See Appendix for a complete list of analyses conducted in this chapter in comprehensive matrix.) The mothers' narratives primarily served to describe material conditions that lead some individuals to migrate illegally, and consequently serve as grounds for the development of an "illegal" identity. The Organization's bulletin articles together with its larger agenda for Amnesty propose an *ideal* developmental path from an illegal identity (a disempowered position of silence) to an undocumented identity (an empowered position of action) by contrasting the *actual* identities, experiences, shared misconceptions, and advice for other migrants with other possibilities.

The ideal developmental trajectory that the Organization proposes, moreover, opens a doorway to the possibility of a transnational state of citizenship where individuals live and work in either country by personal choice and by legal merit awarded for daily cultural, political, and economic contributions. This serves as evidence for the potential of Mexican migrants of the Organization to use illegality as a tool for the transformation of society's

brand of citizenship.

The children's discussions, probed most explicitly for comments concerning illegality, revealed different societal conditions that can serve as grounds for the development of an undocumented identity through their positions as immigrant advocates. All of this serves as the foundation for the development of an undocumented identity. However, the children also demonstrated the most variability through their differing access to bilingual/bicultural knowledge shared by the Mexican community, direct migration experience, socialization into community activism, and personal experiences of race, class, and language injustice. The next chapter discusses how cultural knowledge and experiences with other ethnic, racial, and/or language groups in particular emerge in the formation of identity, especially in the context of the Church.

CHAPTER 7

Constituting identities through Mexican religiosity and moral judgments

An analysis of the unique way in which Mexican immigrants are organizing themselves and their identities in New York City would not be complete without discussion of the *Organización Guadalupeana*'s close affiliation with the Catholic Church. In particular, I discuss in this chapter how the Organization has constructed a particular kind of religiosity (an institutional dimension of religious practice) that is closely tied to Mexican migrants' social and political needs, and how this religiosity is used by individuals to position themselves and others in terms of moral judgments and social justice.

While an illegal identity is first constructed societally in moralistic discourses about undocumented immigrants, it is important then to understand how moral values and personal spirituality are, conversely, used by Mexican immigrants to construct their undocumented identity. As Mexican immigrants' religious identities intersect with their political identities as undocumented immigrants, the Church becomes another important institutional context for the rise of certain interpersonal relationships where members identify themselves by negotiating the limits and possibilities of their involvement and leadership in relation to other members of the Organization, priests, and other parishioners. New kinds of social positioning based on class, ethnicity and gender emerge there for Mexican migrants. To portray this, I review the Organization's views of religiosity expressed in texts, activities, and in comparison to interviewees' testimonies of spirituality (an individual dimension of religious understanding). Since the children's discussions seemed to raise the theme of religiosity as

a cultural tool in the formation of their identities less than their mothers' discussion, I end the chapter with an analysis of how certain social structures of identity and moral judgments emerge outside of the Church in order to understand better how they are used as resources to position oneself and others.

Catholic religiosity and the praxis of liberation

The fact that *la Organización Guadalupeana* exists through Church affiliation and that its Executive Director is a Jesuit brother are details worth examining further. The Jesuit order in Mexico, and in Latin America in general, has historically been allied with social justice movements. In the tradition of liberation theology, such Christian movements seek the freedom of oppressed people from economic, social, and political barriers that keep them from living in a more just world (Schutte, 1993). Its praxis lies in activities directed toward social change and consciousness-raising conducted by oppressed people themselves; thus, the Church is required to work from and with the oppressed, and with openly political agendas (Piar, 1994). In the *Organización Guadalupeana*, this kind of religiosity is enacted in a number of ways; I argue that it is instrumental in the development of Mexican migrants' identities.

The Organization, as I described in chapter three, consists of forty affiliate Catholic parishes containing self-governing neighborhood-based groups around New York City. These are Christian "base communities" organized for social change under a grassroots structure. One of the challenges of Mexican immigrants who are organizing themselves in this way is finding a parish that is accepting of political activism of which Catholic faith is

an integral part. Potential members of the *Organización Guadalupeana* are advised by staff and active members to seek a parish in their neighborhood in which the pastor is willing to allow them space and time to organize, hold meetings, plan events and programs, and generally work together as part of the Organization. This has been a critical institutional move toward acquiring common space large enough for neighborhood memberships to form working committees and meet for free, especially when physical space is difficult to obtain by Mexican migrants who generally live in small apartments and do not have access to other spaces for this purpose. Literally, the parishes provide much-needed grounds for community activity.

Members of the Organization are generally, though with exceptions, Mexican Catholics who are active church-goers. Just as Mexican immigrants compose a new, significant immigrant population in the city, they are also among the most recent and growing number of parishioners filling the city's Catholic churches. As active Catholics, their very presence and weekly monetary donations contribute to their Church's continued functioning. As their numbers in churches become increasingly significant, so does their negotiating power. On the other hand, the more Mexican migrants come to appropriate their parishes, the more they must compete for access to these resources with parishioners belonging to other ethnic/racial groups and organizations. I will discuss my participants' personal experiences of such relationships with other parishioners later. The Church is another site where the personal history of Mexican immigrants in the Organization meets the broader societal history of Mexicans in the city.

As a community, Mexican migrants in the *Organización Guadalupeana* have often

earned their cultural right (Flores & Benmayor, 1997) to access available space in their churches by contributing further to the improved functioning of their parishes in specific economic and material ways, including the reparation and painting of old buildings and monetary donations deduced from earnings made through the Organization's fund-raising activities in the parish. For example, the women I interviewed mentioned donating portions of their earnings from weekend socials or bake sales after Sunday mass to their parishes and using the remainder to cover expenses related to the Organization's activities. Other times, they would use part of their committee's earnings to donate flower arrangements to their parish during special religious holidays. In addition to requesting access to space upon initiating an affiliate group of the Organization, Mexican immigrants also petition their pastor to accept the hanging of an image of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* in a visible part of the Church. This act symbolizes simultaneously the presence of Mexicans in the parish, as well as membership of the parish to the *Organización Guadalupeana*.

On the societal dimension, the Organization inculcates a particular kind of religiosity in which migrants' are taught that their religious history is relevant to their political history. Aside from the practices I have mentioned that directly bind members' social and religious activism, many of the texts of the Organization's monthly bulletins contain editorials, expositions, and excerpts in which analogies are made between historical-religious events and contemporary events involving Mexican immigrants in New York.

I have argued that this discourse strategy of drawing past/present analogies constructs the historical continuity necessary for community identity to be established. While articles containing religious themes are often written by the Executive Director, some are also

authored by leaders and members of the Organization; they are generally oriented toward Mexican immigrants to raise awareness about their social, historical, and economic conditions of oppression, as well as to draw similarities between their own and other religious figures' actions to change such conditions. In the end, Mexican immigrants' political involvement is legitimated not only as an acceptable feature, but a defining characteristic of this particular kind of religiosity. Therefore, the Organization's religiosity is a cultural tool for the development of an undocumented identity as we will see in the texts below.

Historical-political-religious analogies are particularly evident in texts written during important religious celebrations. For example, in December, around the feast of *la Virgen de Guadalupe*, the Executive Director writes opening editorials that explicitly use the story of Guadalupe's apparition to Juan Diego as a means of raising consciousness about the condition of Mexican immigrants in New York. Mexicans' common cultural knowledge about this story, hence, serves as a unifying starting point. In one such editorial, the text begins by narrating how Juan Diego, a native living under Spanish colonial oppression, was chosen by Guadalupe to carry out a mission of liberation by helping to evangelize the natives and free them from religious persecution by requesting the construction of a temple in her honor. Juan Diego initially rejects this task, feeling insignificant and unable to comply. Guadalupe must then convince him that he is worthy of carrying out her request:

La Virgen lo convence de que, a pesar de experimentarse con todas las características de un esclavo, Dios y ella lo valoran como ser humano y por lo tanto

capaz de ser enviado con la misión de levantar a los humildes, de liberarlos, de hacerse oír, de hacer que se respete en esa tierra y en cualquier otra, su dignidad, su cultura, y sus derechos humanos. Es un mandato de Dios, es una misión a cumplir permanentemente por cada mexicano.

The Virgin convinces him that, in spite of experiencing all of the characteristics of a slave, she and God value him as a human being and, thus, as capable of being sent on a mission to raise the humble, of liberating them, making them heard, and having their dignity, culture, and human rights respected in that land and in any other. It is a mandate of God, it is a mission to fulfill permanently be every Mexican.

This position becomes available to Mexican immigrants in New York (regardless of their feelings of worthiness) by turning Juan Diego into a representative of God, and all Mexicans into representatives of a mission of liberation. The occupation of this position is raised in a parallel argument most explicitly at the end of the editorial when the author warns readers to beware of the tricks of the oppressors:

...podemos caer en la trampa de los dominadores...convencidos ...de que no somos nadie, sólo unos ilegales...unos analfabetas...unos alcohólicos...unos dejados, unos pobres indios...etc. Tengamos fe en que la Virgen nos salga al camino y nos diga que a pesar de esa baja autoestima heredada de nuestra historia de opresión, recibamos la fortaleza de parte de Dios y de la Virgen para luchar como Jesús su hijo, para que

con nuestro esfuerzo cambiemos la situación y la imagen del mexicano en New York...Dejemos que la Virgen nos envíe a negociar con los dominadores...para negociar un cambio, para cooperar en la transformación de esta sociedad y de esta Iglesia Católica.

...we can fall into the trap of the oppressors...convinced...that we are nobody, only illegals...illiterates...alcoholics...push-overs, poor indians...Let us trust that the Virgin will appear in our path and will tell us that in spite of that low self-esteem inherited by our history of oppression, we will receive the strength on behalf of God and the Virgin to struggle like Jesus her son, so that with our efforts we will change the situation and image of Mexicans in New York...Let us allow the Virgin to send us off to negotiate with the oppressors...to negotiate a change, to cooperate in the transformation of this society and this Catholic Church.

By comparing the emotions that Juan Diego was experiencing to what Mexican immigrants currently experience, they are then positioned to learn from his example and to feel entitled to seek changes, confident that their participation in societal-institutional transformations (including within the Church) is a divine mission entrusted to them. This is yet another site in which Mexican migrants' self-esteem and self-confidence are addressed as internalized colonization and oppression. Through this counterdiscourse, Mexican immigrants' personal spirituality becomes a tool for the formation of an undocumented identity. Their individual spirituality is a motivating force for their political activism and

personal confidence as it becomes functional according to the Organization's religiosity. This re-signifying of one's spirituality is thus culturally relevant to those who already consider themselves active Catholics and have a basis of prior knowledge from which to build.

In another editorial the following year, a similar message was expressed, reiterating the idea that Mexican immigrants have been chosen to change oppressive conditions in U.S. society. Also included in one December bulletin was an excerpted statement issued by Pope John Paul II in a declaration about the feast of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* during his last visit to Mexico in which he pleads to Guadalupe for intervention, reiterating the task of Mexican migrants to spread the faith and reconstruct the Church in new places:

Virgen Santa de Guadalupe...Haz que todos, gobernantes y ciudadanos, aprendan a vivir en la auténtica libertad, actuando según las exigencias de la justicia y el respeto de los derechos humanos...Dios te bendiga, México, que sigues extrañando a tus hijos emigrantes en busca de pan y trabajo. Ellos han contribuido también a propagar la fe católica en sus nuevos ambientes...

Holy Virgin of Guadalupe...Let everyone, politicians and citizens, learn to live in authentic liberty, acting according to the demands of justice and respect for human rights...God bless you, Mexico, who continues to yearn for your emigrant children in search of bread and work. They have contributed also to propagate the Catholic faith in their new environments...

This statement clearly serves the purposes of the Organization in motivating other Mexican migrants to believe that a fundamental part of their Catholic spirituality is working actively to bring about social justice. In this sense, the particular kind of religiosity advocated by the Organization functions as a tool for further action by Mexican migrants and is constructed in texts, or in the choice of particular excerpts of texts, through historical analogies and continuities. It is important to recall that the feast of Guadalupe is celebrated by the Organization every year with a mass and marathon, a re-enactment of a tradition in Mexico on this day. The feast is used as an opportunity for Mexican migrants in the city to claim and exercise their right to a day of rest for religious observance. Thus, in the Organization's activities and texts, Mexican immigrants' religiosity is intricately tied to their political actions.

Similarly during Holy Week, the texts of the Organization's monthly bulletin draw parallels between religious beliefs and contemporary personal experiences that are cultural knowledge to Mexican immigrants in the city. While the Executive Director has written editorials alluding to this, members of the Organization also demonstrate how the discourse strategy of building religious-historical analogies function to explain their condition as migrants and to motivate changes to the oppressive circumstances under which they live. While some members insert prayers or passages from the Bible that speak to the experiences they are narrating, others use religious-historical analogies to make sense of their current experiences. For example, in one expository text a female leader of the Organization commemorates Jesus's *via crucis* to Calvary where he was to be crucified by discussing how Mexican immigrants come to live their own *via crucis* in New York City as a result of having

to endure hardships due to an unfair political system that expels them from Mexico:

...en la actualidad, nosotros estamos experimentando nuestro propio via crucis, ya que estamos pasando experiencias en tierra ajena donde todo es diferente, empezando por el idioma. Nosotros estamos aquí no por gusto, sino por una necesidad, por el sistema de injusticias que tiene de rodillas a la gente de nuestro país.

...in actuality, we are living our own *via crucis* as we are living experiences in this foreign land where everything is different, beginning with the language. We are not here by choice, but out of necessity, because of a system of injustices that has the people of our country on their knees.

In a different excerpt, another female leader writes about how religious traditions are celebrated in her hometown in Mexico during Holy Week. She then comments on how those traditions were left behind as a result of migrating to the U.S. where she and other migrants must experience their own *via crucis*:

En New York nos llegó el momento de vivir otro via crucis injusto, como el que hicieron vivir los poderosos de su tiempo a Jesús. El via crucis de pobreza de nuestra patria nos ha expulsado y hemos tenido que venir como inmigrantes a este país. Ya aquí somos elegidos, para profundizar y dar razón de la fe que teníamos y

de las tradiciones, y basar nuestra lucha por sobrevivir en esa fe y en esas tradiciones que forman nuestra identidad. Ahora buscamos al verdadero Dios y al conocer a Jesús y su lucha, descubrimos nuestra misión de luchar porque en esta sociedad Dios pueda reinar, y la justicia venga a nosotros.

In New York we have come to live another unfair *via crucis*, just as those in power had Jesus live in his time. The *via crucis* of poverty in our country has expelled us and we have had to come as immigrants to this country. Here, we are chosen to deepen and demonstrate the faith and traditions we had, and to base our struggle to survive within this faith and those traditions that form our identity. Now we seek the true God and by knowing Jesus in his struggle, we discover our own mission to struggle so that in this society God will reign, and justice will come to us.

This author also alludes to conditions of poverty in Mexico that forced immigrants to enter their own *via crucis* in the U.S. where they must use the religious faith and traditions with which they identify to couch their new struggles. The author gives evidence of a clear awareness about the function of the Organization's religiosity to prompt social action, demonstrating that this religiosity has become a psychological tool for her. In another text, two male members of the Organization write an article in which they reflect on the meaning of Holy Week, also demonstrating awareness about how they must think in order to activate change; they consider how their own suffering ought to serve as a trigger, specifically by motivating them to understand and locate the causes of their hardships in order to change

them:

Dios nos quiere, y por eso pone a prueba nuestra fe, poniéndonos frente a su Hijo Jesucristo para retornos a cambiar las situaciones que nos hacen sufrir a los seres humanos, a destruir lo que nos quita la vida y nos lleva a la muerte, a descubrir las causas de nuestros sufrimientos, para no culparnos a nosotros mismos ni culpar a Dios, sino para cambiar el origen de los males del hombre en la sociedad...Aceptar y conocer el origen de los males es pues, la clave para vivir y luchar por la paz.

God loves us, and this is why he puts our faith to test, placing his son Jesus Christ in front to challenge us to change the situations that make us human beings suffer, to destroy that which takes away our life and leads us to death, to discover the cause of our sufferings, so that we will not blame ourselves nor blame God, but change the origin of the evils of Man in society...To accept and know the origin of those evils is, then, the key to live and fight for peace.

As these members demonstrate, understanding their experiences and current condition as Mexican immigrants in historical terms allows them to develop an awareness of the structural, rather than personal or mystical causes of their distress. Clearly, one of the means available to do this has been for Mexican immigrants in the Organization to use their common cultural knowledge and beliefs within a religious framework; once their unique religiosity is defined and adopted, it becomes a cultural and psychological tool. These texts

complement the concurrent practices of the Organization during Holy Week that together define religiosity as part and parcel of social change. During this time of year, a *via crucis* is enacted in front of INS offices where Mexican immigrants proclaim the injustices they endure, especially as a result of their undocumented status, at each station of the cross. This religious re-enactment is used to perform simultaneously Jesus' and their own *via crucis*, expose injustices, and argue in favor of Amnesty for Mexican undocumented immigrants.

However, this kind of religiosity is generally new to Mexican immigrants (and other Church representatives), indicating that a psychological transformation is needed in order to embrace it. For example, in a cartoon written by the Executive Director, Mexican immigrants are urged to participate in the demands of the Organization for General Amnesty by contesting assumptions that might impede them from participating. They are encouraged to become politically active by one character in the cartoon, but his interlocutor reacts against this by arguing that he is not interested in politics. When he is questioned about his reasons, he states:

Primero, tengo malos recuerdos de los políticos de mi tierra. Y segundo, dice el padrecito de la iglesia donde voy, que si oramos no necesitamos meternos en política.

First, I have bad memories of politicians in my country. And second, the priest in the church where I go says that if we pray we don't need to get involved in politics.

While the character who is trying to persuade the other into becoming politically active understands his weariness of politicians of the sort they knew to be in Mexico's government, he takes issue with what the priest has to say by counter-arguing:

...supongo que ese padrecito no sabe que Jesucristo oraba y también luchaba para defender los derechos de todos, de los leprosos, de los huérfanos, de las viudas, de los más pobres y explotados, etc. ¡Por eso lo mataron! Además, ¿Cómo puedes andar pidiéndole permiso para luchar por la justicia? Cualquier persona que luche por los derechos propios y por los de los demás es un político...

...I suppose that priest doesn't know that Jesus Christ used to pray and also fought to defend the rights of everyone, of lepers, of orphans, of widows, of the poorest and the exploited, etc. That's why they killed him! Besides, how can you go about asking permission to fight for justice? Any person who fights for one's own and others' rights is a politician...

After further argumentation, the character being persuaded finally realizes:

¡Entonces hasta los padrecitos se meten en política cuando defienden el derecho de los bebés a nacer!

Then even priests get involved in politics when they defend the right of babies to be

born!

The cartoon continues to explain through this dialogue that the demand for General Amnesty is a political act. One of the conclusions of the cartoon is that even if a priest were to discourage people from engaging in this movement for Amnesty, one might try to convince him of the need for it, rather than follow his advice blindly. Clearly, this kind of religiosity challenges more conservative orientations that would entirely separate Church from state politics, or that would encourage a blind faith and passive kind of piety. Mexican immigrants are induced into this politicized religious philosophy that is developed by drawing on their common cultural knowledge, experiences, and spirituality to make it relevant and functional to their lives.

As I mentioned earlier, one of the challenges of members of the Organization is to find parishes and priests who are willing to engage in this kind of religiosity. Another is finding acceptability for this religious-political activism by even non-religious institutions. I have discussed how the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a highly significant event in Mexico, as well as for the Organization's strategy of incorporation of Mexican immigrants in New York City. It is also a celebration that has not proceeded without some resistance. While the Organization would have this event run similarly in magnitude to the city's yearly St. Patrick's Day parade, every year police permits for this event have been denied; although the first celebration proceeded as planned after the late Cardinal O'Connor, then Archbishop of St. Patrick's Cathedral, interceded on behalf of the Organization, in subsequent years the matter was resolved in court with a few changes to the Organization's original plans. The

Executive Director places this experience in a political-economic context in a bulletin article by pointing out that no resistance is made when Mexican undocumented immigrants are overworked and underpaid. Rather, they face state resistance when Mexican immigrants decide to undervalue capital gains in favor of their religious obligations:

...cuando los mexicanos deciden celebrar a su Reina y Madre, la Virgen de Guadalupe, se atenta contra los valores establecidos en esta ciudad. Porque los inmigrantes mexicanos vienen a decirle a la ciudad que sus creencias religiosas como ser agradecido con la madre protectora, estar unidos a su raza en una celebración, creer en un Dios misericordioso y fiel que responde al clamor y opresión de su pueblo enviando a una mujer-madre-reina para mostrarle que tienen dignidad, darle fuerza y levantar a los oprimidos, celebrar las maravillas de un Dios que nos sostiene en la lucha y de una Reina protectora en las jornadas difíciles de la migración, vale más que la miseria de dinero ganado en un día de trabajo duro.

...when Mexicans decide to honor their Queen and Mother, the Virgin of Guadalupe, the city's established values are threatened. Because Mexican immigrants come to tell the city that their religious beliefs, like being grateful to the protective Mother, being united as one race in celebration, believing in a merciful and loyal God who responds to the clamor and oppression of his people by sending a woman-mother-queen to show that they have dignity, to give strength and to raise the oppressed, celebrating the wonders of a God that sustains us in struggle and of a protective

Queen in the difficult days of migration, is worth more than the little money earned in a tough day at work.

Thus, while the religiosity of the Organization serves as a tool for Mexican immigrants to construct an identity that is both religious and political, it is a kind of religiosity that requires transformation on an individual dimension of spirituality, as well as on a societal dimension of institutional practice. In the next section I discuss how the Church has served as a context where other social structures of identity aside from illegality, such as race/ethnicity, class, and gender are also defined and appropriated through more local interpersonal relationships. While the Church may enable other psychological functions, my focus is on how it is a site where such social structures intersect with Mexican immigrants' identities through their unique spirituality and formal religiosity.

Identity formation in Church through relationships of religiosity, class, ethnicity, and gender

One of the ways that Mexican immigrants attempt to become incorporated into the city is through the community activities of the *Organización Guadalupeña*. However, each member group of the Organization must develop its own relationship with their parish, and this includes the introduction of Mexican religious traditions or rituals, explicitly political or otherwise, into the practices of their church. This, in itself, is a political move because it requires re-organization of traditions that predominate in church and in the city that sometimes belong to particular ethnic/racial groups. By having their own Mexican cultural-religious practices recognized, immigrants build a sense of belonging and ownership of their

parish in the United States. A content analysis of religiosity revealed that the women I interviewed discussed how some of their Mexican religious traditions came to be part of their church after they spoke with their pastors. In this sense, their religious practices were no longer identified with a foreign place, people, and earlier time, but were re-constructed in the present. For example, Rosa commented on how she approached her Irish pastor about the meaning of her parish's celebrations on February 2, which in the U.S. are dedicated to the feast of St. Blaise and the blessing of people's throats; she explains that in Mexico, this day has a different meaning. It is *la candelaria*, the commemoration of Jesus' presentation in temple and is celebrated by bringing one's figure of Christ Child to be blessed in church:

**ROS: este año yo le dije al padre. "Padre," le digo. "el dos de febrero aquí ustedes dicen que n'a más bendicen las gargantas...pero para nosotros en México es la presentación del niño Jesús al templo." Y más o menos--, no sé mucho porque no creas que soy muy católica, no, pero [risas] más o menos le expliqué...en México se hace eso, se lleva el niño Dios...y me dio tanto gusto que esta vez en la misa por primera vez dijo que, "Estamos celebrando que," o sea eso de la candelaria...[this year I told the priest, "Father," I told him, "Here you say that on February 2 only throats get blessed...but for us in Mexico it's the presentation of Jesus in temple." And more or less--, I don't know a lot because don't think I'm very Catholic, no, but [laughter] I more or less explained it to him...in Mexico we do this, we bring Jesus...and I was so happy that that time at mass for the first time he said, "We're celebrating that," all about the candelaria].*

Mercedes and Lucía expressed a similar experience in which their Columbian priest also recognized this same meaning in church after they explained it to him; Mercedes pointed out that the only parishioners to engage in this holiday in her parish then were Mexican:

***MER:** *...y el padre...dijo, "En algunos países se acostumbra llevar al niño y presentarlo a la iglesia"...Bueno, ese día del dos de [la] candelaria, los que se animaron ahí a acercarse para bendecir el niño fueron los mexicanos [...and the priest...said, "In some countries it is custom to bring the child [Jesus] and present him to the church"...Well that day, the 2nd of candelaria, the ones who came to bless the child were Mexicans].*

The women discussed the inclusion of their Mexican cultural traditions in their parishes as accomplishments they attained after speaking with their priests. However, this kind of religious ritual that invokes active participation, however meaningless on the surface, was not always acceptable to other parishioners as Mercedes narrates in the following segment. She alludes to the fact that intervention may at times entail going against the authority of the priest and the passive religiosity of other parishioners:

***MER:** *Mira, en mi iglesia las personas, muchas, me dieron la espalda. Muchas están acostumbradas [a] decir "es un padrecito" y "buenas tardes, padrecito," pero hasta ahí. O sea, si el padrecito dice esto es rojo, tiene que ser rojo aunque no sea rojo.*
[Look, in my church, people, many of them, turned their back on me. Many are used

to saying he's a priest and "Good afternoon, Father," and that's it. In other words, if the priest says it's red, it has to be red even if it's not red].

Mercedes also invoked the concept that one must not follow blindly the dictates of a priest: this kind of passivity is what she must confront when she attempts to convince her priest to have her own traditions integrated into the practices of her church in spite of those who look down on her behavior. In the next segment, Mercedes had been discussing the need of Catholics to read the Bible as a way of seeking spiritual guidance, and as a means of reaching one's own moral conclusions. Here again, she invoked her own spirituality to which Rosa responded by narrating her attempt to include Mexican leaders in the activities of her church:

**MER: por eso es importante, mamita, que leamos la biblia. No dejarnos guiar nada más*
[that's why it's important, *mamita*, for us to read the Bible.]

**ROS: bueno yo te voy a decir, yo nomás la leo cuando--, es que ese padrecito nos hace ir...a todos los coordinadores...nos hace ir a reuniones. Entonces ya tiene su agenda ahí* [well, I'm going to tell you, I only read when--, because that priest makes us go...all of the coordinators...he makes us go to meetings. Then he's got his own agenda there]

**MER: y les pone algo de la biblia* [and he makes you read something from the Bible]

**ROS: algo de la biblia...tres preguntas para que tú medites, tú saques tus propias conclusiones, ¿verdad? Media hora de break...tomas un café con bizcochito ahí de*

lo que hagan, otra vez, otro pasaje de la biblia. Más preguntas y yo, "Ay Dios mío. Otra vez," pero bueno [risas]...Es que nos tiene a todos los coordinadores, a todos los de los grupos pequeños, los de la Guadalupe, los de no sé qué...Y los de la Guadalupe no eran invitados. Siempre había reuniones, y...yo un día le dije al padre "¿Y por qué a nosotros no nos invitan?" Y todo por metiche ahora tengo que estar ahí [risas]...[something from the Bible...three questions so that you'll meditate, you come up with your own conclusions, right? A half-hour break...you have coffee and cake there of whatever they bake, again, another passage from the Bible. More questions, and I say, "Oh my God. Again," but anyhow [laughter]...He has all of us coordinators, all of those who belong to small groups, those from la Guadalupe, those from I don't know what...And those of la Guadalupe didn't used to get invited. There were always meetings, and...one day I said to the priest, "Why aren't we invited?" And all for being nosy, now I'm stuck there][laughter].

Although Rosa humorously depicts a breakthrough in her parish's exclusive spiritual empowerment rituals reserved for only some community leaders by describing how she must now participate in these activities in spite of her aversion for reading, she later concedes that she does actually learn something from the reflections she undergoes. Moreover, her questioning of the priest's discriminations (intentional or not) opened the door for the leaders of the *Organización Guadalupana* to occupy recognized leadership positions in her parish. Another way that Rosa incorporated her own traditions in Church was through its fundraising activities, particularly the selling of ethnic foods after mass. She described this in the

next segment where she discussed the inclusion of Mexican food alongside Caribbean food, where the populations that predominate in her neighborhood are Puerto Rican and Dominican:

***ROS:** *yo les he metido ya en las ventas-- , antes vendían que puros bacalaitos y empanadas, y yo digo vamos a meter los tacos...las tostadas...vamos a ver nuestra cultura, ¿verdad?...También en las fiestas, "Ya aquí hay pura dona. Vamos a meterles pan mexicano" ...Y les metemos ya los tacos...* [I've already stuck them in the sales with--, before they used to sell only *bacalaitos* and *empanadas*, and I say let's put in tacos...tostadas, let's see our culture, right?...Also during celebrations, "There's only donuts here. Let's throw in Mexican sweet bread"...And now we throw in tacos...].

Thus, the incorporation of Mexicans in her church involves not only inclusion of their religious traditions, but also the inclusion of their food alongside the Puerto Rican food she mentioned. This development was captured in Rosa's description of her parish through such indexicals as "before" and "now."

Ethnic partisanship in church also leads to social comparisons that identify Mexicans from other groups, especially other Latinos in the neighborhood, with respect to their religiosity. In the next excerpt, Lucía and Mercedes have been discussing their experiences in the Organization's *Misión Guadalupeana* where they carry an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe from house to house in their neighborhood and use the occasion to pray as well as to address concerns of surrounding residents. They begin to criticize the Puerto Ricans in

their neighborhood for not sharing the same devotion for Guadalupe even though they also participate in this activity, but Rosa defends them expressing her own experience with Puerto Ricans and Dominicans; in the process she voices an important reason for including other ethnic groups in their network, namely, that they constitute a support group of citizens whose cooperation they may need later:

***MER:** *puertorriqueños muy poco amor que le ponen* [Puerto Ricans put in very little love]

***ROS:** *yo no tengo paisanos en mi parroquia. Yo estoy llevando a la Virgen con la comunidad puertorriqueña y dominicana. Pero el [Director Ejecutivo] dice que...está bien porque al rato vamos a necesitar también del apoyo de los ciudadanos...* [I don't have other Mexicans in my parish. I'm taking the Virgin to the Puerto Rican and Dominican community. But [the Executive Director] says that...it's ok because later we're going to need the support of citizens as well...]

***MER:** *...nosotros la llevamos, verdad, pero yo me doy cuenta que los puertorriqueños o dominicanos...casi no le ponen esa--, tú sabes, ese amor que nosotros le ponemos, que le damos...y que se merece* [...we take her, right, but I notice that Puerto Ricans or Dominicans...don't nearly put in that, you know, that love that we do, that we give...and that she deserves]

***ROS:** *y yo es al revés, mira* [for me it's the other way around, see].

The kind of support of citizens they may need is most likely their voting power in support of a law for General Amnesty. This is practiced institutionally in the Organization's

close connections in the city and on a national level to other immigrant, Latino, human rights and labor advocacy groups that cut across ethnic or religious boundaries. Nevertheless, the church is an enabling context for personal identities to be formed through both alliances with and disassociations from other ethnic groups in the city. Aside from their personal spirituality, Lucía and Mercedes begin to distinguish themselves from others in more general terms, but Rosa, again, casts the argument in a different light:

**MER: pero tú ves a una persona, por ejemplo, en la iglesia, tú ves a una puertorriqueña o una dominicana, no hace lo mismo que uno. Siempre están diciendo que no, que no tienen, que no pueden, o simplemente no te ofrecen su casa. Así de fácil, y nosotros*
 [But you see a person, for example, in church, you a Puerto Rican or a Dominican, they don't do what we do. They're always saying no, they don't have, they can't, or they simply don't offer you their home. It's that simple, and we]

**ROS: pues mira que yo en ese aspecto no. A mí la que me tendió la mano fue una puertorriqueña....porque la mexicana...simplemente no me tendió la mano. Mi tío teniendo posibilidad de tenderme la mano me dijo, "Si tú [te] cambias a mi religión, yo te ayudo"* [well see, in that respect, I don't agree. The one who lent *me* a hand was a Puerto Rican woman...because Mexicans...simply didn't lend me a hand. My uncle, able to lend me hand, told me, "If you switch to my religion, I'll help you"].

Rosa reminded her interlocutors that the behavior of other people is not generalizable on the basis of ethnicity by offering counter-arguments based on her own experience. Unlike

Rosa, Lucía and Mercedes live in a neighborhood where many Mexicans live, alongside other Latinos. This may make it easier for them to identify with other Mexicans by contrasting themselves with other Latinos. Rosa, on the other hand, is immersed in a neighborhood that belongs almost entirely to other Latinos, and thus uses ethnicity or nationality less as a contrastive social structure of identification. As a result, the women's discussion turned to differences experienced within the Mexican community, with a particular focus on gender relations. As we will see in the next example, gender differences and conflicts were especially related to the women's new leadership roles in the Church and in the Organization. Below, Mercedes discusses a male leader in her community-based group with whom she experiences conflicts:

***MER:** *en nuestra comunidad hay hombres que por decir, "Yo he estado en mi país y yo era también encargado, y yo era esto, y yo era lo otro, y por qué no vamos a hacer..." O sea, no les gusta que después de estar en un pueblo vengamos a la ciudad y que una mujer le dé órdenes. Creo que por ahí empieza...Yo le pido que opine. "¿Qué opina usted? ¿Está bien, no está bien? Si usted me dice que no está bien, cambiamos, pero dígame su opinión"* [in our community there are men that say. "I've been in my country and I was also in charge, and I was this, and I was that, and why don't we do this..." That is, they don't like it when, after living in a small town we come to a city, and a woman orders them about. I think that's where it starts...I ask him to give his opinion. "What do you think? Is it ok, is it not ok? If you tell me that it's not ok, we'll change, but tell me your opinion"]

***ROS:** *yo les digo...es que no es sólo de venir, opinar y mandar y gritar* [yes, I tell them...it's not only about coming, judging, and ordering, and yelling]

***MER:** *exacto* [exactly]

***ROS:** *es cosa de trabajar, ¿verdad? Pero no les gusta trabajar. Sólo quieren el día de la misa irse a parar el cuello cuando nosotras trabajamos todo el año* [it's about working, right? But they don't like to work. They only want the day of the mass to go stick their necks out when we women work all year].

Interestingly, the women had an easier time agreeing on gender differences that distinguish the men from themselves in their communities, rather than on ethnic differences between Mexicans and other Latinos. All of the women attributed their gender conflicts to their leadership positions that threatened men's authority. Although they positioned themselves as female leaders, they contrasted themselves with men by positioning themselves as fair leaders who listen to others' opinions (***MER:** *if you tell me that it's not ok, we'll change, but tell me your opinion*), and as women whose word continues through their actions (***ROS:** *it's not only about coming, judging, and ordering, and yelling...it's about working*). This discourse strategy of drawing contrasts revealed that their leadership position in church and in the Organization afford a fundamental change to their traditional roles as women. In other sections of their conversation, the women discussed how their leadership activities interfere with their child care responsibilities as mothers. In this example, Rosa narrated how Karina would reproach her for her lack of time for her family:

***ROS:** *tú sacrificas el tiempo de tus hijos y la grande me lo dice... "Ma, yo estoy cansada.*

Tú, reuniones para acá, reuniones para allá, que viajes...de no sé qué porque tienes que sacar fondos del comité, que tienes venta, que tienes esto." Dice, "¿Y nosotros?" [you sacrifice the time you spend with your children, and the oldest girl tells me it..."Ma, I'm tired of it. You, meetings here, meetings there, trips...to I don't know what because you have to raise funds for the committee, sales here, things there." She says, "What about us?"]].

Although the responsibilities of the women as leaders of the Organization are demanding, and Rosa conceded that she takes time away from her children to comply, she noted that she prefers to sacrifice paid work hours to be at home after school when her children arrive. Thus, the content of her discussion tells us that while she positions herself as an involved community leader, she rejects the position of negligent mother:

***ROS:** *sólo es un día a la semana que yo llego tarde. Pero el resto del día--, ah, me salen más trabajos pero no los quiero coger porque entonces voy a descuidarlos...Trabajo el tiempo que ellos están en la escuela...Procuro [para] cuando ellos están fuera de la escuela, ya yo estar allí...[it's only one day a week that I come home late. But the rest of the day--, oh, I get more jobs, but I don't want to take them because then I'm going to neglect them...I work during the time that they're at school. I try to, when they're out of school, to be there already].*

Clearly, the women's changing gender roles and leadership extended outside of church and into their homes. Just as Rosa chose to earn less in order to spend more time at home with her children, Lucía and Mercedes were not working for pay when I interviewed them, expressing that their main reason was to be able to spend more time caring for their children, working voluntarily for the Organization, and using their time to study English. This places a great economic strain on their already low-wage households, and on their husbands who must provide for their families on their own. Although this is a traditional role for the men, the women all spoke of themselves as the financial administrators of their homes even when they were not earning a salary themselves. In the next example, Lucía described how she felt she had to cut back on her children's whims, unlike her husband who was willing to spend on his children: she explained this difference by describing her responsibility of having to keep in mind how the household's earnings are administered:

**LUC: yo me detengo porque a veces una por guardar un poquito, que te--, tienes que pagar el teléfono; que te vas a limitar un poquito. Entonces ahí digo, "Mi jito no traigo dinero." Y el papá no... Todo lo que gana me lo da...pero imagínate...tengo que sacar para la renta, para la luz, para el teléfono, para el cable, para la comida [I restrain myself sometimes to save a little but, because you have to pay the phone bill; you have to limit yourself a little. Then that's where I say, "Son, I'm not carrying any money." And his father doesn't...Everything he earns he gives me...but imagine...I have to account for the rent, electricity, telephone, cable, food].*

Similarly, Mercedes and Rosa positioned themselves as administrators, as well as the planners of their families' futures when I asked them where they saw themselves in ten years; both Lucía and Mercedes described themselves in conflict with their husbands about whether and how soon they would return to Mexico. They also attributed their families' material gains to their own financial administration and personal insistence on how best to invest their earnings:

**MER: Por él ya estaríamos allá desde qué tiempo. Es más, no tuviéramos nada. Con eso les digo todo. Pero gracias a Dios y con la ayuda también mía para estar ahí guardando un peso, un peso, un peso, un pesito, un pesito se ha hecho ese lugar [una casa] pero no sabemos qué vaya a pasar. Si por él fuera, ya estuvieramos allá [If it were up to him, we would have been living there already. In fact, we wouldn't have anything. That says it all. But thank God and with my help too to be saving a dollar, a dollar, a dollar, a dollar, we've been able to build that place [a house] but we don't know what will happen]...*

**LUC: si por él fuera ya no estuviera acá. Ya son...trece años estando aquí y siempre con el mismo trabajo. Ya hemos hecho una casita aunque está todavía, digamos, en mano negra. Si por él fuera, ya nos hubieramos ido, pero yo digo a mí me gustaría aprender un poquito más del idioma y pues mi ilusión, no mucho, pero por lo menos tener un trabajito ahí más o menos, pero no pido más...[If it were up to him, he wouldn't be here. It's been thirteen years here already, and always in the same job. We've already built a house even though it's still, say, under construction. If it were*

up to him, we would have left already, but I say I'd like to learn a little more of the language and my dream, not much, but I'd at least like an ok job, but I don't ask for much more].

Lucia especially demonstrated a humble attitude as to her future expectations. She mentioned later that she wanted to learn enough English to be able to teach it in Mexico; while her "dream" may not exactly resonate with the American dream of achieving fame and fortune, her goals, similarly to the other women, were to achieve employment stability and economic independence. This resembles Valdés' (1997) findings; the Mexican families living along the Texan border whom she studied did not expect to become rich and famous nor to have wealthy possessions, but rather were persistently humble in describing their long-term goals which often involved a financially independent life in Mexico centered around close family ties. My interviewee, Rosa, also described herself and her husband as desiring permanent return to Mexico, although they were not willing to return before accumulating some capital to also build their own home there. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1995) describes the undocumented Mexican women she studied in California, who were also community activists, as central to their families' permanent settlement in the United States. She described their community work, involving the identification of resources and establishment of support networks, as anchoring activities that conflicted with their husbands' mentality of return.

In the case of the women I interviewed, they were not adamant about returning to Mexico, and were realistic about the strong possibility of remaining in the U.S., although

return migration was desirable as seen in their material investments there (building homes). Also, in spite of describing themselves in disagreement with their husbands about returning to Mexico immediately, they were willing to wait and invest in assets that would facilitate their permanent return. Although gender differences in the desirability of return may be correlated with extent of community activity, it is important to consider that both Mercedes and Rosa's husbands occupied active leadership positions with them. On the institutional dimension, the Board of Directors is split evenly in terms of gender. Also, the critical staff work has been steered primarily by both a man and a woman (although most of the staff members are women). In the situation described in the interview, the husbands' greater desire to return may have had more to do with their gendered household responsibility of being the primary bread-winners, than with their involvement in activist work: whereas the husbands carried more of the responsibility to earn enough to support their families, the women conducted the task of administering their earnings which inherently invoked plans about how, where, and when they would be invested.

As I discussed in chapter six, the women's critical involvement in their families' settlement in the U.S. begins with the migration experience. Similarly to Hondagneu-Sotelo's findings (1995), the women I interviewed also displayed elements of going against their husbands' wishes, not only about when to return, but first about when to migrate at all. In the following exchange, the women discussed conflicts with their husbands, and how they migrated in spite of their husbands' objections:

***MER:** *es que los hombres siempre están pensando en que no vas a pasar, en que va a salir*

mal, en que no puede ser, en que te va a pasar algo, en que, no, si nosotras [decimos] hay que--, ¡ahora! Y tenemos que lanzarnos y [men are always thinking that you're not going to be able to cross, that something will go wrong, that it can't be, that something's going to happen to you, that, no, we say we have to--, now! And we have to go for it and]

***ROS:** *así me decía él ¿verdad? Me decía... "Vente tú sola y deja a los niños con tu mamá," y yo le digo, "No. Me quedo yo aquí con mis hijos. Yo no me voy." Y dice, "No pero que vente, y agarramos un tiempo y luego mandamos." [Dije.] "No. Me voy con mis hijos o no me voy"...*[that's what he would say to me, right? He used to say..."Come by yourself and leave the kids with your mother," and I tell him, "No. I'm staying with my kids. I'm not going." And he says, "No, but come, and we'll take some time and then send for them." [I said,] "No. I'm going with my kids or I'm not going"]...

***LUC:** *ya mi esposo estaba acá. Se fue a casar y nos vinimos. Pero a mí me quería dejar, que él se viniera y que yo me quedara. Y dije, "No, me voy"...Y ahora sí que le gané y nos vinimos [my husband had already been here. He went back to get married and we came. But he wanted to leave me, he was going to come and I was going to stay. And I said, "No, I'm going"....And I won and we came together].*

From arguing to setting ultimatums, the women described in such discourse strategies how they resolved their own conflicts with their husbands in order to migrate to the United States. Their position as women with traditional values from a male-dominated society did not keep them from being active women, from making decisions, planning ahead, and

becoming closely involved in their communities in spite of their undocumented status. Further analysis, beyond the scope of this study, would need to examine how the women's involvement (and their children's, for that matter) in the *Organización Guadalupeña*, with its political-religious philosophy, contributes to the development of gender identity in conflict with the conservative values of the Church. One could also investigate whether the Organization's sharing of responsibilities between men and women contributes to raising awareness about gender discrimination, and whether Mexicans' activism is seen as part of their "Americanization," or as part of their Mexican immigrant identity in the United States.

Identifying oneself and others through moral judgments

The women I interviewed also demonstrated using their spirituality to make judgments in moral dilemmas that they faced. In the process, they also identified themselves as "undocumented," according to their counter-discourse of illegality; they used the contextual factors of their own experience to judge whether they were lying and stealing from others as undocumented workers, or taking advantage of others for their own, personal benefit. In one section of the interview, Mercedes was describing how she had crossed the border a second time, lying to the INS agent who allowed her to enter the country. Below she generalizes the notion that "we," understood to be undocumented immigrants, are not stealing, but then she attempts to determine whether she is being fair in her self-assessment by contrasting her personal experiences with the definition of sin passed on by priests:

***MER:** *Yo no sé qué puede ser lo malo, o qué puede ser lo condenado ¿no? Porque yo digo*

*digo en realidad no estamos robando. Yo digo que no estamos robando. [*ROS: claro que no]. ¿Verdad? Entonces tú te paras trabajando 12 horas, 15 horas, cuando el patrón sólo te regala...300 pesos...pero entonces los sacerdotes dicen que tocar lo que no es tuyo, eso es un pecado. Yo digo, ok si es un pecado, pero entonces el pecado también será en que el trabajador coja un peso, o si se encontró un peso tirado en el suelo, y el dueño le diga, "Eso es mío. Dámelo." Y si no lo tiró el dueño, fue otra persona, ¿cómo yo voy a saber si estoy pecando?...porque tú te encuentras algo en la tienda, dicen que no, se lo tienes que dar al dueño...[*JOC: teniendo necesidad, quién se va a poner a pensar si es un pecado?] [I don't know what can be wrong, or what can be condemned, right? Because I say that in reality we're not stealing. I say we're not stealing [*ROS: of course not]. Right? So you get up to work 12 hours, 15 hours, when your boss only gives you...300 dollars...but then priests say that taking what isn't yours, that's a sin. I say, ok, yes, it's a sin, but then must it also be a sin when a worker takes one dollar, or if he found a dollar lying on the floor, and the owner says, "It's mine. Give it to me." And if the owner didn't drop it, it was another person, how am I going to know if I'm sinning?...because, say you find something in a store, they say no, you have to give it to the owner...[*JOC: when you're in need, who's going to think about whether it's a sin?].*

Mercedes' construction of this moral dilemma presents the difficulty of generalizing moral judgments between right and wrong when contextual factors are taken into account. Rosa continued this line of reasoning when she presented a real-life situation in which she chose

to be dishonest because of the difficult economic situation in which she found herself when she had recently migrated to the U.S.:

***ROS:** *yo estaba...recién mudada de Brooklyn para Manhattan sin conocer a nadie. En ese entonces cogimos un apartamento que nos costaba 650 la renta. Y él ganaba 850 mensuales. ¿Qué nos quedaba para comer? [*LUC: Pues nada.] Nada. Yo digo sí es pecado, bueno ya lo cometi pues, porque yo fui con 20 dólares a la bodega a comprar que pollito, que...[*MER: sí, lo más indispensable] lo más indispensable para la, la comida de 2, 3 días...Cuando me dieron el cambio...me tenían que dar un dólar y algo de cambio. En lugar de darme un dólar me dan 18 no sé qué...y yo sí me di cuenta, pero creeme que fue más mi necesidad...Yo agarré...el cambio [risas] y que salgo por ahí...[*LUC: y pasa cuando no tienes dinero]...Tú ya no piensas en ti. Tú piensas en los hijos. Y yo dije, "Dios mío, yo sé que es un pecado, perdóname, pero es más mi necesidad que mi honradez aquí" [risas]...Luego me dijo él [mi esposo], "Y ¿por qué no le devolviste [el dinero]?" Y le digo, "No. Si Dios dice ayúdame que yo te ayudaré, a lo mejor eso me hace falta para la comida"* [I had...recently moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan without knowing anybody. At that time we took an apartment whose rent cost us 650. And he was earning 850 a month. What did we have left over to eat? [*LUC: Well, nothing.] Nothing. I say, yes, it's a sin, ok it's done with, because I went in with 20 dollars to the store to buy a little bit of chicken...[*MER: yes, the most indispensable] the most indispensable to eat for 2, 3 days...When they gave me the change...they were supposed to give me a

dollar and change. Instead of giving me a dollar, they give me 18 something...and I did notice, but believe me my need was greater...I took...the change [laughter] and I got out of there...[*LUC: it happens when you don't have any money]...You don't think about yourself anymore. You think about your children. And I said, "My God, I know it's a sin, forgive me, but my need is greater than my honesty here"[[laughter]....Then he [my husband] said, "And why didn't you return it?" And I say, "No. If God says I help those who help themselves, maybe I'll need that [money] for food"].

In this situation, Rosa used her own spirituality to construct an argument in her favor, contending that she was helping herself in light of her family's financial crisis, rather than stealing. In the process, she described herself as weighing multiple social conditions and values to make a moral decision, including honesty, financial need, and family responsibility. This last value of responsibility toward one's family, emerged strongly and repeatedly in the interview, and was tied to a sense of retributive moral justice as we see in the next example:

***ROS:** *aun así [con poco dinero] yo ayudo a mis padres. Yo ayudo a mi hermana* [even so (without much money), I help my parents. I help my sister]

***MER:** *es lo mejor que podemos hacer. Es la bendición más grande...así tu ayudas a papi, mira mamita, yo estoy segura que nunca te vas a quedar sin comer aunque sea frijoles...*[that's the best thing we can do. It's the greatest blessing...as long as you help *papi*, look *mamita*, I'm sure you'll never go without eating at least some

beans...].

In spite of their own financial strains, all three women discussed sending remittances to their families in Mexico, and considered this to be a rewardable moral action. As far as receiving help, themselves, however, they were not always accepting, especially if they considered it to be charity. In the following example, they described their own self-righteousness and pride in preferring to work hard rather than receive government benefits or material donations without having earned them:

**LUC: Pero también hay veces que...llegas en la crisis de aquí y no tienes dinero. A veces dice la gente, "Pues vete a pedir ayuda." Es cierto, te dan ayuda, ¿no? Del gobierno, pero después te están fregando mucho y mientes mucho. ¿Para qué? [But sometimes you come to a crisis here and you don't have money. Sometimes people say, "Well go and ask for help." It's true, they give you help, right? From the government, but then they bother you a lot and you lie a lot. For what?]*

**ROS: y la verdad es que nosotros estamos acostumbradas a trabajar y no a pedir. Esa es una cosa [*MER: muy importante] porque a mí que me mandaron también a Caridades Católicas donde me iban a dar comida, y yo no llegué pidiendo comida. Yo llegué diciendo, "Yo quiero trabajar. Yo quiero que me ayuden a conseguir trabajo...porque pues, con lo que gana mi esposo realmente no alcanza." Me preguntaron "¿Cuánto pagas de renta, cuánto esto, cuánto lo otro? Ya les dije [todo], ¿no? Me dicen, "Te voy a dar unas bolsas de comida. ¿Lo necesitas?" Y yo,*

“;No!” [and the truth is that we’re used to working and not begging. That’s one thing (*MER: very important) because when they sent me to Catholic Charities, they were going to give me food, and I didn’t come in asking for food. I came in saying, “I want to work. I want you to help me get a job...because, well, with what my husband earns, it’s really not enough.” They asked me, “How much rent do you pay, how much this, how much that? So I told them, right? They tell me, “I’m going to give you some bags with food. Do you need it? And I said, “No!””].

Unlike predominant societal discourses of illegality that have identified Mexican immigrants as abusers of the welfare system and unentitled benefits (Mirandé, 1985), when it came to accepting public benefits, these women claimed to put their pride ahead of their needs and identified their entire community this way in such statements as “...we’re used to working and not begging.” While the amount and rate at which undocumented immigrants receive federal aid are a subject of controversy (Marcelli & Heer, 1998), further research is still needed to explore the other side of the coin: how much undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy in sales and even income taxes as there are some who file their tax returns without having to provide a social security number, and use a taxpayer identification number instead.

David, Rosa’s son, similarly made a related generalization about Mexican immigrants, and, moreover, used this generalization to distinguish them from other people:

***DAV: I know this lady, she’s fat, right? Puerto Rican. She had like three kids from foster**

home. She was getting mad loot from the city. She was getting mad loot. She bought them like flea market clothes. They had um hot dogs and soup for break--, for breakfast, lunch and dinner...She didn't feed them that much. She didn't buy them toys. Only like freakin' rag dolls. or something...She used to buy McDonald's for her kids. She used to have mad loot. Like every summer she used to go out to Puerto Rico, come back [*JOC: she was making a whole business outta that]...It's like the welfare factory. But I don't know no Mexicans on welfare. See? That's the thing. We work for our money.

In an attempt to play "devil's advocate," I reminded David that Mexican immigrants who are undocumented would not be eligible for certain benefits of which to take advantage. In his responses, he continued to display his cultural knowledge about the system of public benefits aside from the extreme example he narrated above:

*JOC: yeah, but if, like, the majority of Mexicans who are here don't have papers, they wouldn't be eligible for welfare anyway...

*DAV: I don't know about that cause my little sister gets it. She used to get WIC. She was born here. It don't matter. She get milk. She never drank any of it [laughter]. I drank it...Milk, cereal, cheese...You only get it 'till like you're five.

Interestingly, David did not defend the Puerto Ricans in his neighborhood the way his mother had, but instead seemed to use ethnicity (like Mercedes and Lucía had used

spirituality) as a means of distinguishing and judging them. Also interesting is that although he maintained a distinction between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, linguistic features of his talk as discussed in Chapter 5 revealed him to sound like a speaker of Puerto Rican English.

However, discussing the exploitation of benefits or of other people was not only used to judge other people and distinguish them from Mexican immigrants, but also to judge people's injustice within the Mexican community. This contradicted, or made exceptions to, the earlier generalization about Mexican immigrants working for their own welfare. Here, Mexican immigrants are distinguished from other Mexican immigrants who exploit their countrymen:

***MER:** *yo conocí un señor...dicen que le cobraba la renta, a todo el mundo, el teléfono, y 200 [a] cada quién...El apartamento se pagaba [con] 700. Vivían como 12 personas ahí; 200 por cada persona. El señor se compró su residencia en México...Cada que iba a México se llevaba su buen coche...la gente es tan inhumana...de repente este señor se salió del apartamento y nadie volvió a saber más del señor y era mexicano*
 [I knew a man...they say he used to charge everybody rent, telephone, and 200 each...The apartment cost 700. About 12 people would live there; 200 on each person. The man bought a residence in Mexico...Every time he would go to Mexico, he would take a good car...people are so inhuman...suddenly this man left the apartment and nobody knew of him again, and he was Mexican]

***ROS:** *bueno pero mi cuñado...nos explotó mucho a todos los que pasamos viviendo por su casa* [well my brother-in-law...exploited all of us who spent some time living in his

house].

While Mercedes points to ethnic loyalty as a value being violated by fellow Mexicans, Rosa further points to family loyalty as the value being infringed by her own brother-in-law. The women were making moral judgments here by evaluating these actions as inhuman according to their community's moral values. The value of ethnic loyalty was also displayed by David when I questioned him as to his own ethnic identity. He responded:

***DAV:** Mexican, man!

***JOC:** but do you think all kids say that?

***DAV:** No...My cousin, he used to say American cause he's stupid like that. Cause he thinks, he thinks that cause he's here, he's American. Idiot.

David also mentioned that his cousin could say he was American because he was white. Clearly, David values ethnicity, rather than skin color, as a legitimate basis for identity. In this sense, ethnic loyalty was another value that allowed my participants to make moral judgments and identify themselves and other people within and outside of their own community of the Organization. Although the children generally made few references to their own religiosity or spirituality as a tool, the youngest children did identify the Church as a significant place in their graphic illustrations. Margarita, for example, drew herself standing next to her church, a member parish of the Organization, when I asked her to draw a picture about who she was for the children's booklet (see Appendix). In the example above, David

demonstrated the use of community values to judge other people. Although the women's values were similar and were also used to judge between right and wrong, they were framed more explicitly within a religious framework. For the children, then, moral values rather than religiosity or spirituality functioned as a psychological tool to identify themselves and others. Another focus of future research could explore whether this difference is maintained to further distinguish between old and new generations of Mexicans in New York, or to construct a standard of Mexican "authenticity" between those living in the U.S. and those in Mexico (Vila, 1996a).

Recent research has shown that moral development cannot simply be studied in terms of universal, logical progressions or stages in the tradition of Piaget or Kohlberg's work, nor according to limited conceptions of justice (Brown & Gilligan, 1991; Turiel, 1997), but rather that culture must be taken into account as a fundamental context for the development of moral judgments. In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how societal discourses of illegality are countered by the culture of religiosity afforded by the *Organización Guadalupeana*. Through this particular religiosity that is intricately tied to actions for social justice, moral judgments are one discourse strategy through which individuals identify themselves and others. Actually, it is through moral judgments that we see how multiple (sub)cultural contexts are taken into account. Turiel (1997) states that "the interplay of individuals' judgments with roles, status, privileges, and burdens in the social and economic hierarchy means that there are contextual variations within cultures...The interplay of different domains of social thinking and hierarchy in social arrangements means that social interactions can entail conflicts, inconsistencies, struggles, and critiques from within" (p.98).

By appropriating the Organization's political-religious conceptual framework, undocumented immigrants can counter predominant moral stances, and re-position themselves to occupy a justified position in a societal institution such as the Church. Outside of the Church, however, we have seen that Mexican immigrants and their children also make moral judgments; they are based on social values such as gender and racial (in)equalities, family responsibility, and ethnic loyalty that lie in their everyday affairs even outside of the Organization which has more to do with their societal history as Mexicans in a diverse city. Thus, moral judgments are constructed culturally through varying discourses of power laden with social values (Freeman, 1991) under circumstances such as those I have described where they also become tools with which to identify oneself, one's community, and others. My participants' involvement in their parishes, and the children's talk about their neighborhoods and schools point to the structural conditions such as race, ethnicity, and gender (apart from illegality) that come to be used as resources to position themselves and others. The next chapter discusses some limitations of such moral judgments and of the Organization's attempts to intervene in undocumented youth's experiences of ethnic, racial, and other forms of violence.

CHAPTER 8

Re-thinking illegality as a violence *against*, not *by* Mexican immigrants, children, and youth⁷

The study of violence has persistently focused on members of minority groups from lower income backgrounds (Eron et al., 1994). This is an institutional injustice in research literature that produces a notion of minorities as worthy objects of inquiry only when they are emblematic of undesirable characteristics: being marginalized, poor, and likely to fail according to society's standards. Understandably, much research has addressed this institutional bias by attempting to portray minorities in something other than in a deficit model, with a more positive light around a number of issues, such as language (Labov, 1968; Zentella, 1997a), education (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991; Trueba, 1999; Valdés, 1997), or identity (Cross, 1995; Matute-Bianchi, 1991), and by re-conceptualizing violence as resistance to social injustice (hooks, 1994; Walsh, 1987). Such previous research has attempted to portray its subjects from within their own complex set of cultural lenses. This chapter presents innovative theory and methods based on case illustrations of Mexican youth that address violence as a potential outcome of societal-individual development.

Illegality as a societal-institutional violence

This is not to say that violence should not be studied at all, but that research on

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violence in relation to the lives of minority youth needs to discuss critically its origins and development within the particular situation of the population under investigation. In this chapter, I examine notions of illegality as an identity from the perspective of undocumented Mexican immigrants, particularly through the perspectives of children and youth. As I will describe, illegality is one kind of societal violence with which Mexican immigrants and their children are faced; illegality is produced on a societal dimension through social structures such as immigration laws, popular opinion, and the mass media as sites that produce and reproduce unequal relations of power (Capetillo-Ponce, 2000; Espenshade & Belanger, 1998). Consequently, undocumented Mexican youth and the children of undocumented parents must confront conflicting perspectives. Within the special context of the Organization, Mexican children and youth develop their own perspectives by negotiating between, and acting from, discourses proposed by society, family, and community. The research I conducted suggests that Mexican children and youth are faced with societal violence toward their identities, and with structural inequalities as a result of their own or their family's undocumented status, lower socioeconomic class, language and ethnic-racial memberships in the United States. Since the focus of this dissertation is to examine the formation of identity in societal/institutional and individual contexts, illegality was theorized also as a dialectal activity that could result in both physical and psychological violence. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how a dialectical relationship of violence is formed as institutionally-assaulted Mexican youth become violent youth themselves.

Sociohistorical theory proposes that psychological forms emerge through cultural tools that mediate between material and psychological activity. In this sense, it is essential

to locate the tools that are available for the formation of individuals' identities. I have theorized that societal-institutional structures of immigration status, race, ethnicity, and language are available to Mexican immigrants and children in the context of U.S. relations of power; they are potential tools for meaningful, dialectical psychological-material activity. This chapter presents initial steps toward an argument that considers whether personal acts of violence can be explained according to this theoretical premise, and illustrates it through case examples of Mexican youths' direct experiences of violence.

My analysis rests primarily on triangulation methods that verified the general ideology and political position of the Organization through both its general activities and local testimonies across participants. In this chapter I focus on data classified under the major topic of violence, a grounded category that emerged once all of the data were collected and was especially salient in terms of descriptions about Mexican youth, as well as the youths' descriptions of their own experiences of life in the city (see Appendix for matrix of analyses conducted across major topics).

Insider institutional responses to illegality

The community organization where the research was conducted was a critical site for children and youths' development as it provides an institutional re-framing of illegality as a societal violence *against* undocumented Mexican immigrants. As I have argued throughout the dissertation, the *Organización Guadalupeana de Nueva York* organizes Mexican immigrants so they can learn about and publicly defend their human and legal rights, maintain their cultural identity, and publicly expose the societal hypocrisy that underlies

discourses about undocumented immigrants. Through its public rallies, protests, cultural events, and monthly information bulletin, it affords immigrants a common discourse with which to contest multiple acts of violence (such as human rights' infractions, labor abuse, and racial discrimination) that result from both unfair practices and erroneous grounds upon which the identities particular to undocumented immigrants emerge in society. The Organization also attempts to curtail personal acts of violence that are seen as consequences of these hardships by publishing texts that raise awareness about common problems and resources in the community. In this way, the Organization constructs both the cause and solution for Mexican migrants' violence externally. Its common discourse, emerging through the communication of shared experiences and activities during community meetings, events, and published texts, portrays violence *toward* Mexican immigrants as a cause of acts of violence *by* Mexican immigrants, a cycle that begins with the actual immigration experience.

Although crossing over is a potential solution to their severe economic hardships (Smith, 1996), crossing the border illegally is a traumatic experience for many immigrants. Mexican migrants are generally ill-prepared for the dangers they face when they cross into the U.S. which includes getting caught by the Border Patrol, swindled by smugglers, and robbed or killed by border bandits. Others become lost or lose their children who were accompanying them, as Rosa's story in Chapter 5 told us. Some die of dehydration or hypothermia in desert areas (Hagan, 1998). Another under-addressed reality is the widespread violence against women who are often sexually abused in their attempt to cross the border. Consider the following excerpt exposing this knowledge. It is taken from an article published in the Organization's May 1999 monthly bulletin entitled *El mojado* [The

Wetback], written by a female author:

Cruzar la frontera es doloroso y para muchos representa un trauma psicológico recordar, vivir, y saber que otros vienen en la arriesgada travesía de cruzar la frontera. Cruzar la frontera, para muchos es cruzar un infierno inmerecido. Es un infierno que no esperábamos ni deseábamos. Es un infierno donde se violan mucho los derechos humanos tanto por la migra como por los cholos y, a veces, hasta por los coyotes. La migra nos maltrata, nos humilla, nos golpea, y hasta nos mata, con el permiso oficial del gobierno de los Estados Unidos. Los cholos nos humillan y nos despojan de lo poco que traíamos para protegernos de las inclemencias del clima y del monte, y parece que tienen el permiso oficial de la policía y el gobierno Mexicano, pues nunca se aparecen para defendernos, ni nunca se ha oído que se les castigue por todo lo que nos roban y nos hacen. ¿Y cuántas mujeres se han tenido que guardar el secreto de que los coyotes les dieron pastillas que disque para los nervios y en realidad fueron para excitarlas y luego violarlas tranquilamente? ¿Cuántos coyotes estarán aliados con esos cholos y con la migra, pues nos conducen directamente a ellos? ¿Cuántos coyotes no queriendo pagar la "mordida" normal a la migra, ponen más en riesgo nuestras vidas? Cruzar la frontera para muchos ha sido cruzar, antes de tiempo e injustamente, la frontera de la vida a la muerte, pues allí muchas vidas se han perdido.

Crossing the border is painful and for many is a psychological trauma to have to remember, live, and know that others take the risky journey of crossing the border. Crossing the border, for many means crossing into an undeserved hell. It is a hell that we were not expecting nor desiring. It is a hell where many human rights are violated by both *la migra* [Immigration] and by *cholos* [border bandits], and sometimes even by the *coyotes* [smugglers]. *La migra* mistreats us, humiliates us, beats us, and even kills us, with official permission of the United States government. The *cholos* humiliate us and take the little we were carrying to protect ourselves from the unmerciful climate and mountains, and it seems as though they have official permission of the Mexican government and police, since they never show up to defend us, nor do you ever hear of them getting punished for everything they steal from us and do to us. And how many women have had to keep secret that the *coyotes* gave them pills supposedly for their nerves, and actually were used to excite them and then rape them? How many *coyotes* are allied with these *cholos* and with *la migra* when, after all, they conduce us directly to them? How many *coyotes*, not wanting to pay the normal "*mordida*" [bribe] to *la migra* have placed our lives at greater risk? Crossing the border for many has meant crossing, ahead of time and unjustly, the border between life and death since many lives have been lost there.

This is a reality of abuse fostered by discriminatory immigration laws and economic relations that force Mexican migrants to enter an illegal underground culture of violence later reinforced by labor abuse and even racial or physical maltreatment, along with other

problems more common to poor immigrants in general. Although the excerpt above is an extreme example of abuse toward women who cross the border, it probably also functions to motivate action by those who are familiar with this experience. The adaptation of most Mexican immigrants in New York is a process grounded in special circumstances and experiences having to do with being poor, undocumented people of color.

La Organización Guadalupeana addresses such acts of violence against Mexican immigrants by raising awareness about border perils, pressuring civically both U.S. and Mexican governments to take actions to protect migrants' human rights, and defending migrants threatened with deportation by employers, landlords, or others as they live and work in substandard conditions. In addition, the Organization seeks services and alternative activities (that are both legal and non-violent) for those immigrants who become involved in gangs, abuse substances and alcohol, or those affected by domestic violence. In the process, personal acts of violence against themselves and others are construed as consequences of their specially difficult life circumstances in the city. The following excerpt typifies this view. It is taken from the monthly bulletin's March 1999 issue and was written by a male member of the Organization. In it, he describes his observations of Mexican youth in his neighborhood:

...Todos se organizan para divertirse dentro o fuera del territorio, muchos con el rencor del azote y hostigamiento de las otras razas étnicas y sociales. Cubren su dolor con alcohol o las drogas, algunos de edad madura con bastante experiencia de la mala vida, otros con la inexperiencia de caminar en la cuerda floja, siguen los

pasos del que los mueve. Intentan hacer lo posible por no quedar mal con los valedores, inclusive llegan a participar en riñas no deseadas; en ocasiones llegan a consecuencias fatales, quedando todos en silencio. Quizá son muchachos con falta del cariño de los padres, o [que por] la melancolía de encontrarse lejos de su tierra natal, se dejan contagiar por el ambiente, y es entonces cuando se adentran más en lo negativo que les brinda New York, alcoholismo, drogas, vicios, "poder", etc. Sienten encontrar el poder luchando por ser reconocidos violentamente o tomados en cuenta por parte de la sociedad que los rodea...

...Everyone gets together to have fun inside or outside of their territory, many bitter with the hostility of other ethnic and social groups. They cover up their pain with alcohol or drugs, some middle-aged with a lot of experience, others with the inexperience of walking a tight rope, they follow the steps of that which moves them. They try their best to keep face with the bullies, and even take part in unwanted quarrels; on occasion they come to fatal consequences, everyone left in silence. Perhaps they are kids who are needy of their parents' care, or are melancholic about finding themselves far from their native land, they allow themselves to be infected by their surroundings, and this is when they become more involved in the negativity that New York offers, alcoholism, drugs, vices, "power," etc. They feel that they find power in their violent struggle to be recognized or taken into account by the society around them...

This author describes the youth as those who resort to substance abuse and violence as a result of feeling alone, sad, and unwanted. He illustrates this as an unhealthy process by using the metaphor of contagion: the city affords people a particular kind of negativity that spreads across Mexican youth as they become “infected by their surroundings.”

In another excerpt of an article published in April 2000, the Executive Director writes about the murder of a young man as the result of a conflict he had with another Mexican youth. Both had been drinking and are described as victims of alcoholism. He explains the unfortunate incident in the following manner:

Para un grupo de inmigrantes que vive oprimido, sin derecho a quejarse, sin derecho a reclamar que le explotan, que lo maltratan, que no le pagan lo justo, sin ningún sindicato que reclame sus derechos, el coraje, la frustración, la rabia, la indignación se va acumulando por dentro, y cuando se está tomado, la desinhibición hace que toda esa fuerza negativa se libere, pero se libera negativamente, contra aquellos que ni siquiera son los causantes de nuestros males. Por eso el alcoholismo y la drogadicción se vuelven más peligrosos en una comunidad de inmigrantes explotados y reprimidos.

For a group of immigrants who are oppressed, without the right to complain, without the right to say they are being exploited, mistreated, paid unfairly, without a union to help enforce their rights, the anger, frustration, rage, indignation accumulate inside, and when a person is drinking and is uninhibited, all that negative force is liberated; but it is liberated negatively, against those who are not even the causes of

our troubles. That is why alcoholism and drug addiction become more dangerous in a community of immigrants who are exploited and repressed.

Consequently, violence in the community is explained as a result of youths' lack of proper outlets and means to address their troubles brought on by a system of injustice against Mexican immigrants. Such circles of violence point to a dialectical relationship between the societal abuse *faced* by Mexican immigrants and the personal acts of violence and abuse *enacted* by Mexican immigrants. The end result is a series of unrestrained, pervasive social problems. The Organization seeks non-violent means to address such problems by entertaining youth in constructive activities that build a sense of community and empowerment, and that raise consciousness to motivate peaceful yet forceful action. In the next section I re-examine the content of youths' discussions about their own experiences of violence, how they understand and respond to social violence in their lives, and how their personal experiences lay the grounds for their own psychological formation and identities. I argue that illegality is one possible source of violent expression among Mexican youth when the societal violence imposed on them becomes a psychological tool with which they can re-define, or relate to, themselves and others.

Mexican children and youths' experiences of violence and notions of illegality

Mexican children and youths' experiences of violence emerged indirectly as part of the audiotaped booklet project having to do with their general experiences of life in New York. By examining their interpersonal relationships, youths' own experiences of violence

inevitably emerged. Children and youth described their own confrontations with different kinds of violence, ranging from physical and verbal to racial and psychological. Therefore, my analysis of children's development examined the social positions of power (Harré & Gillett, 1994) and social structures they used or adopted in order to understand how they identified themselves and others. Rather than limit my examination to their social role, I was interested in their specific position within a status and power hierarchy. Wherever possible, I also compared their power positions with information gathered from the audiotaped group interview I conducted with their mothers to further place their lives in a historical context; their opinions represent another kind of institution (the family) whose point of view children and youth are exposed to in a profound way.

As the illustrations below will demonstrate, violence is afforded by society as a tool youth use to make sense of themselves, other people, and institutions. They use violence to make sense of their own and others' identities, and in their interpersonal relations and actions. In my analysis I subdivided findings according to kinds of violence, including institutional, inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic, reactive, and unexplained violence. Other researchers have similarly described aggression in terms of relational, proactive, or reactive terms (Crick & Dodge, 1996; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), but in this study I place equal importance on the violent acts exerted by youth as to those directed toward them within my sociohistorical analysis. In a Vygotskian sense, a psychological tool develops from cultural artifacts and eventually mediates a dialectical relationship between individuals' cognitive and material functions (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, I also examined whether violence carried any psychological functions for Mexican children and youth.

The youths described their experiences of violence in relation to the social structures of race, ethnicity, language background, and immigration status. For example, some children mentioned having to defend their parents or themselves as English language learners when they first arrived in the United States. Children and youth also narrated stories of ethnic conflict, as they talked about fights they had with other Latinos or other Mexicans. A thirteen-year-old girl narrated the following after listening to her 9-year-old cousin discussing her own fights with other Puerto Rican girls in her school:

“Se creen mucho los puertorriqueños [Puerto Ricans think they’re all that]. In my school, I had a fight with this Puerto Rican girl but all the girls, all of them, came up to me. I was like ‘What you want?’ They were like ‘Oh why you talking shit.’ We had a fight. She called me a lesbian and stuff like that so I got mad, right? I started cursing at her, todas me vieron [all of them saw me], right? And they were like ‘Oh why you calling her this and that, you call her mother–.’ I was like no. My friends was like ‘Yo, what’s wrong with you?’ Then they wanted to suspend me. I was like ‘No, deja eso [drop that] XXX.’ I got sick of it...I usually like-- all my friends are Puerto Rican. All of them. I’m like, I don’t get it. I fight with Puerto Ricans, I have friends [who are] Puerto Rican.”

Based on her description, it would seem that such conflicts, however irrational, stem from inter-ethnic rivalry. However, in the continuation of her narrative, we see that this is only one kind of ethnic rivalry, and that violence seems to be used as a means to address other, inexplicit and unresolved issues:

“Actually, *con los que peleo más son con mi propia raza porque hay unos que, este, like, otras chamacas, mi misma edad, igual, tienen* [those I fight with the most are other Mexicans because there are some, like other girls my same age]^{13, 14}, whatever, right? *Traen pleito conmigo. Por nada. Son,* [They have it in for me. For nothing. They’re,] um, *cholas*. I’m like, *ya van como dos veces que me paran diciendo que ando hablando de ellas* [already twice they’ve stopped me saying I’m talking about them], and I’m like *ni siquiera* [I didn’t even] XXX. *Yo una vez les dije, sí, o sea, ustedes dicen que yo hablo de ustedes y todo. O mejor si se quieren pelear conmigo ya díganme XXX que parándome y que todo* [Once I told them, ok, you say I’m talking about you and all. Better yet, if you’re looking for a fight with me, tell me XXX stopping me and all that]. I’m like ‘shit!’ *Eso me aburre ya* [I’m tired of it already]. I was like--, *ya mejor se quedaron quietas* [then they finally stopped still].”

The content of this teenager’s narration indicates that she resorted to violence in light of having to defend herself, and in her frustration at failing to understand why she was the object of others’ hostility. From her narrative it seems that she has had a great deal of contact with other Mexican youth, and had mentioned earlier that she was involved in organizing a folkloric dance group for the Mexican youth in gangs in her neighborhood. Wondering whether her contact with Mexicans and experiences of violence were taking place outside of the Organization’s activities, I asked her if there were other Mexicans in her school to which she responded:

"En la mía sí. En la mía creo que hay más mexicanos pero la verdad son como muy callejeros. Pero, se creen, ves [In mine there are. In mine I think there are mostly Mexicans, but the truth is they're really street kids. But they're snobs, see]. No, I don't get it. It's like, mira, in my school. o sea ¿no?[right?] In my school, en todas partes, cuando hay bailes [everywhere, when there are dances] and stuff, todos vamos y cuando acaba el baile, a la mitad, en medio [we all go and when the dance ends], in middle of the dance, there's fighting. Mexicans con [with] Mexicans. Mexicans, they try to kill each other. I'm like--they try to take knives out y que pistolas y que [and guns and], but I'm like 'what the--?' That's why my mother doesn't take me to dances anymore."

Throughout her narrative, this teenager used the discourse strategy of contrasting herself with other Latino and Mexican youth who start fights for no reason. She continually positioned herself as a (potential) victim of violence who resorted to violence as a personal defense against the harm toward which she is drawn under racial/ethnic segmentations and sub-divisions. One can understand this structural availability to lay the grounds for interpersonal, ethnic violence to emerge.

Aside from narrating such personal experiences of violence that children and youth face and react to, others also discussed their exposure to risky conditions in their neighborhoods. After being questioned on one occasion about how one might meet other Mexicans in the city, an eleven-year-old boy suggested youth in gangs in Mexican neighborhoods. He made an illustration of what he believed was the name of a Mexican gang

in his neighborhood after asking if it was alright with me to draw it as he had seen it on a mural in graffiti (see Appendix). He and others also mentioned their exposure to drug users and dealers in their neighborhoods or in their own school, though none of them said they had ever used drugs themselves.

Clearly, the particular experiences of violence that children narrated positioned them against other racial/ethnic groups as well as against members of their own ethnicity or nationality. Their understanding of violence, again, points to a circular or dialectal developmental pathway between societal and personal violence; they made sense of their own involvement in fights with their peers as the result of frustration at being the object of others' badgering. It should be no surprise that their participation in a society, built along racial and ethnic divisions, affords youth with racist means to address their conflicts. In light of a lack of other direct means and critical thinking skills with which to understand and address their conflicts, racial/ethnic violence is perpetuated. However, my participants' confrontations with violence did not only emerge from racial/ethnic, or intra-ethnic conflicts, but also were often discussed in relation to illegality. Therefore, I also examined their narrations' content for other points of conflict: how children's individual experiences of violence intersect with their understanding of illegality according to competing institutional definitions of illegality and "illegal" immigrants (including those of mainstream society, their families, and the *Organización Guadalupeana*). One must consider the impact that illegality as a societal violence can have on undocumented Mexican immigrants who, without organization, are silenced and easily exploited, as well as how this bears upon their children's development.

The children and teenagers who had lived in Mexico long enough to remember what it was like living there were well aware of the dangers of border-crossing and consequent injustices that Mexican immigrants face in the United States. For instance, a fourteen-year-old girl who participated only once in the booklet project with her younger sister and female cousin of about her same age (quoted above) narrated this knowledge. She was appreciating an illustration Jorge had drawn of a person being torn between the United States and Mexico (see Appendix). I asked her if she had been born there and what she remembered about Mexico. She stated:

“I remember some stuff. It was hard to live there. There was no money and when-- like something like the food was a lot of money. You buy like four things and it was already two hundred something [pesos]. You can't survive there. [JOC: That's why a lot of people come here.] But everyone's dying when they come over here, you know, they have to close that part [of the border]-- the desert. When they come, you know, they have to pass by the desert 'cause they don't have papers so in the desert they say there's a lot of snow and everything and, you know, they don't survive in there.”

Using her personal experience of economic hardship and cultural knowledge of the dangers of border-crossing, this teenager juxtaposed Mexican migrants with an unidentified “they,” an authority who has the power to close the border. She repeated the use of “survival,” first to describe Mexicans’ difficult economic situation, and later to describe the risk they take by crossing the border under hazardous conditions. Poverty and protected

borders both lie outside of Mexican migrants' individual control, and work against them as societal barriers to their survival. During this same session, the teenager re-introduced such themes of survival and control when she made an illustration of a volcano erupting lava over a town. She described it as one kind of natural disaster that lies outside of people's control. Perhaps her sense of controllability (or lack thereof) is related to her sense of injustice toward Mexican immigrants. She had commented earlier that she sometimes dislikes Americans who say they hate immigrants, but make them work hard for little pay. Thus, she is aware of the economic hardships and immigration-related violence that Mexican migrants face, and uses this knowledge to expose her understanding of people's limitations in the face of social injustice and power imbalances.

As seen from their narratives, Mexican children and youth must make sense of the illegitimate U.S. membership they, their families, and/or communities are afforded as a result of their undocumented status, and ethnic, class, and language backgrounds. This is a violence that they must confront using whatever means they have available to them. "Violenced" children and youth, without appropriate tools to defend themselves, are set up to become violent youth themselves. In addition to becoming frustrated, angry, and violent, outcomes of such violence on their personal development may have consequences on their identities ranging from children's affiliation with marginalized communities and total resistance to their oppressors, to a complete rejection of Mexican identity and assimilation to mainstream beliefs. This variability in children's development has been illustrated across the five focal children who participated in this research. For example, as I mentioned in Chapter 5, Marcos became increasingly fluent in Spanish after having participated in the booklet project with

the other children and teenagers. When his mother mentioned this change in our interview, she also contrasted his current position with his previous assimilationist stance: "*Ah, pero antes tenía la idea él que él era americano. Que él no era mexicano. Le digo, 'No, tú eres mexicano', le digo, 'porque tus papás son mexicanos. Tú eres mexicano'. 'Oh no!'*, dice, *'que yo soy americano, que um no speak Spanish'. Le digo, 'Sí, tú hablas español. Tienes que hablarlo'.*" [Oh, but before he used to think he was American. That he wasn't Mexican. I tell him, 'No, you're Mexican', I tell him, 'because your parents are Mexican. You are Mexican'. 'Oh no!', he says, 'but I'm American, I don't speak Spanish'. I tell him, 'Yes, you do speak Spanish. You have to speak it'."]

A case study: The emergence of David's critical consciousness and limitations

To illustrate one particular case of how multiple kinds of violence intersect with an individual's identity formation in more detail, I will discuss the personal case of David, one of the booklet project's main participating youths. In our conversations, David, at 14, was the eldest participant who most frequently narrated experiences of violence, largely in relation to racial tensions and illegality. Interpersonal conflicts between David and his peers and teachers, who were not necessarily aware of his immigration status, were attributed to racial tensions taking place in school. However, conflicts arising more specifically in relation to legal status generally emerged through direct elicitation. Therefore, I begin by describing the content of David's narrations of violence in general, and end specifically with his own experience and beliefs about illegality.

David was a freshman in a small all-boys Catholic high school whose population

consists primarily of African American and Latino youth with virtually no Mexicans. The school is located in a different borough from the one in which David lives. His home's neighborhood is primarily Puerto Rican. According to his mother's narration of her family's history in the U.S. cited in Chapter 6, David remembers when he crossed the border illegally with her and his two-year-old sister, Karina, when he was four years old. Recall that he dislikes talking about this experience openly because of the psychological turmoil that ensued; upon arriving in New York, his fears about this particular migration experience manifested themselves in nightmares re-enacting his own persecution by helicopters. Unaware of the circumstances under which they would cross the border, David knew only that he would soon be reunited with his father.

During our first meeting as a group when I introduced the booklet project, David was completely silent. However, over the course of the ten weeks we met he became the most talkative of the group, narrating many stories of experiences he had lived in the U.S. although he was hesitant to write them down. He described himself as a student who did not often receive good grades and who was sure to end up in summer school because he was failing 9th grade math. He often spoke of being misunderstood by his teachers who would punish him for conflicts and physical fights he did not start, but that he would engage in frequently because of other students' disrespect and outright racist remarks. In fact, David recalled one occasion in which he felt ignored by a teacher who would not call on him in class. When David muttered something about his teacher being racist, he claims the teacher conceded, "Yeah, I am."

In the interview with my participants' mothers, all of them agreed that racism was

prevalent in their children's schools, even though they admitted having had a hard time believing it at first. Consider this narration by David's mother:

“Primero empezó en pública, y después lo cambié a católica como dice ella [Lucía, la mamá de Marcos], esperando que encontrara una mejor educación, y no--, pero en verdad la educación en esa escuela donde fue mi hijo era buena. Era escuela muy estricta y todo, pero yo no le creía a David cuando me decía, ‘Mami, ahí hay mucho racismo. ‘El padre es’, este, ‘dos caras’ me decía [risas]. Si, ‘Cuando los padres están,’ dice, ‘es una cara...y cuando ustedes se van es otra cara’ ¿verdad? Y yo no le creía a mi hijo. Y no lo creía, y yo solita me tuve que dar cuenta que lo que decía David era verdad.”

“First he started in public school, and later I switched him to a Catholic school, like she [Marcos' mother, Lucía] says, expecting to find a better education, and no--, but actually the education in that school where my son went was good. It was a very strict school and all, but I didn't believe David when he would say, 'Mami, there's a lot of racism there. The priest is, um, two-faced' he would tell me [laughter]. Yes, 'When parents are around', he says, 'he puts on one face...and when you leave, he puts on another face, right? And I didn't believe my son. I didn't believe him and I had to realize for myself that what David was saying was true.”

In a later segment of the interview, the mothers again stressed that there is, in fact,

racial tension in their children's schools:

*LUC: *hay injusticias en las escuelas católicas. Uno dice que no, pero si hay favoritismos, y si hay racismos* [there are injustices in Catholic schools. One says there aren't, but there are favoritisms and there are racisms]

*MER: *ellos les dan preferencia a los blancos, a los irlandeses* [they give preference to Whites, to the Irish]

*LUC: *sí* [yes].

The mothers agreed that when they saw school authorities mistreating some students over others, or when they witnessed their own children's racial confrontations with their teachers, they could finally believe that their children's accounts about racism in school were true.

Aside from racism on the part of school authorities that David narrated and that his mother confirmed, David also frequently narrated stories about racial conflicts with his peers to which he would react in a violent manner. For instance, he once stated: "There's this kid? He's like four feet tall, or something like that, right? And he says, he says, 'Yo, if I went to Mexico I'd be average height'. I was like, 'oh my god!' But he got his ass kicked later. It don't matter."

Similarly to the teenage girl I quoted earlier, David's uses of violence reported in our conversations also displayed a defensive function. He would describe his engagement in violent acts as a reaction to other people's assaults or discrimination. Moreover, as part of

his self-protection and defensive attitude, he positioned himself continuously as a problem youth who had to be both tough and a trouble-maker. However, he did not always describe himself as being provoked into violent confrontations. The following quotes are taken from different sessions; they illustrate David's own positioning over the course of the booklet project and serve as counter-examples to other instances of violence that were provoked:

"Since I started school my mother gets complaints from the teachers...I remember I had a fight with this fat kid once. And then when I went to Brooklyn and I used to go to school with my cousin, [they said] 'Your son had a fight with his cousin' XXX. I almost ripped his ear off too. And then in the house I punched him and I busted his nose too."

"That's why I get in trouble at home. Slamming my sister against something."

"I box all the time in the street."

In addition to such acts of violence with unclear provocation, David reported other experiences of violence that seemed more gratuitous:

"There's this kid, his name is F--, right? He acts like a little kid. He is a little kid. He mad small, right?... 'Move!' Right? It was in the hallway and he's like, 'Say the magic word'. 'Now!' And I just shoved him out of the way."

Such seemingly irrational acts of violence were even more alarming in this dialogue:

*DAV: On the way back from school we was burning things. Yeah we--, I brought a lighter and then they was givin' out flyers about clubs, something like that, I burned like

three of them [laughs]. Threw them in the sewer. It was right next to the gas station too, that was hilarious.

*JOC: you could start a fire

*DAV: it wasn't gonna be my fault

*JOC: I don't know

*DAV: I woulda thrown the lighter in the sewer or somethin'. Where do you see my fingerprints? Nobody saw nothin'.

Undoubtedly, David has been both a victim and a perpetrator of numerous kinds of violence. In the cycle of violence that his case illustrates, violent behavior is one means he has available to act upon the world. What is most alarming is that personal violence may no longer need to be provoked to be exercised. On the other hand, without ethnographic data of David's activities outside our working group, it is difficult to assess whether he was merely "talking tough" or reporting an accurate portrait of himself.

In our conversations, violence toward others was aimed at societal institutions and its representatives as well. For example, David's irreverence toward the severity of his own acts was displayed at other moments as irreverence toward certain authorities. Other than his teachers whom he often qualified as dumb because they could be outsmarted by his continual mischief, we saw in Chapter 6 that David also invoked the Immigration and Naturalization Service when he drew the maze from Mexico to New York with two dead ends labeled *la Migra*. In this situation and in others, David positioned himself in contempt of social structures of control which were conversely positioned by David as repressive social means.

This is illustrated further in the following text where David discussed his pastimes:

“I wanna go on my bike and all that joint. But like out of the city. I go to this place ...They have like a ramp, only one ramp going down. It’s mad fast. It’s like a real steep hill. It’s like next to a police precinct. They [the police] be kicking them out all the time. Last time they went after me. But I was on my bike and they was on foot, so who has the advantage?”

David also questioned the practices of reporters, as he witnessed an occasion when journalists from a local television cable channel visited the offices of the Organization to interview one of the staff people. He witnessed how the reporters fabricated the piece of news they wanted to portray: “it was like a fake report cause they showed... M--...walking into a room talking. He wasn’t even talking! They just...wanted like a shot of them. I don’t know.”

Although he later concedes that this was probably done to leave the public with a positive impression of the Organization by portraying a realistic activity, one could argue that the media is one kind of authority whose word the public is supposed to trust, yet creates stories that often do not do justice, but injustice to the people whose lives they are reporting. David’s range of experiences lend them to his mistrust and irreverence toward authorities and structures of power. Many of David’s experiences seemed to be disrespectful of authority figures, and in our meetings, he also enacted this in playful ways. For instance, he consistently sought ways to outsmart me and the other participants by engaging us in power plays and playful teasing as in the following example in which he criticizes his sister:

***DAV:** you're a cornball! Oh my god. How you say cornball in Spanish? Karina, that's right [laughter]. How you say dummy in Spanish?

***KAR:** Karina

***DAV:** exactly!

David also inserted playful threats, usually directed at his sister, during our conversations:

"I'm gonna go over there and slap her!"
 "Smack her over the head. Jorge."

At other moments, he used prejudice and discrimination to taunt his sister and position her as a racist:

"Oh this is my sister['s drawing]...with her skinny-ass people...See, that's all she draws. Skinny people. She's racist against fat people" [laughter].

In the next example, Karina shamed her brother by tattling on his own racial epithets used as a means to bully her:

***KAR:** for real, he bullies me! He['s] like [pretends to be pushed], 'What, nigger? What, nigger? What you gonna do?

***JOC:** [in disbelief] that's mean!

***DAV:** [smiling] no, I don't

***KAR:** yes you do!

***DAV:** [laughs] she's lyin'. she's lyin'

***KAR:** he hits me. He goes, 'Ow! [pretends to get pushed] What, nigger? Ow! What? What you gonna do?

As one can see from these examples, even David's sense of humor was laden with violent undertones. While David cannot react with violence directly toward the social structures of power that impose illegality and other oppressive identifying markers on him, he can use violence to address other people in contexts where he occupies a dominant position of power, such as a brother toward his younger sister or a physically larger boy toward his smaller peer. This would not have been detected if David's multiple positionality and personal history in U.S. society had not been taken into account. During another session in which I suggested that the group co-author a story to accompany a drawing Margarita had made of two children walking in front of tall buildings, David's suggestions also exemplified his dark sense of humor:

"They get mugged on the way home."
"They meet the pimp who lives downstairs."
"They start a fire in the elevator."

Most of David's suggestions were intended to tease Margarita who insisted that she wanted the story to be a "happy" one. On the other hand, David's own illustrations sometimes conveyed the generalized negativity with which he associated the city. In one illustration (see Appendix), he drew the Hudson River as a waste dump including a car wreck, a dead body, a bomb, and dead fish.

In terms of illegality as a societal violence, David also consistently demonstrated a great amount of cultural knowledge about being "illegal" in his comments about new immigrants implicitly assumed to be poor and undocumented. He described them as afraid of the police, easily exploited by employers, and hard-working, rather than abusive of

government services like welfare. David positioned himself repeatedly as an advocate of immigrants, questioning both the ethics and authority of government control along the border. On one occasion, Jorge had made a drawing of someone standing on the border between the U.S. and Mexico. David was criticizing stereotypes about Mexicans he had seen depicted as natives slumped by a cactus sleeping with their heads bowed under a large sombrero. In response to the drawing, he asked me afterwards why "we" could not act similarly and close the border to keep Americans out of Mexico. After I explained that each country has its own immigration laws, and that Mexico's weaker economy has something to gain by allowing Americans to enter the country and spend their money there, David simply shook his head in annoyance at this injustice. He is aware that Mexican immigrants face a series of injustices in the U.S., and that being undocumented places constant barriers on him, his family, and his community. In our interview, for instance, his mother discussed how she had to confront her son about his undocumented status when he insisted that he wanted to work. Adamant about getting his working papers, his mother told David that he could not work legally in the country because of his undocumented status:

"...porque él ya quería trabajar y yo le dije 'papito lindo', ya le expliqué y me dice '¿pero por qué tú trabajas?' Le digo, 'Bueno porque a mí me pagan cash, pues. Yo no tengo que declarar nada'. Entonc's yo le digo, ¿verdad? 'Por eso tú tienes que estudiar, echarle ganas a la escuela'. Yo no quiero que ustedes anden como yo limpiando. Le empecé a hablar, ¿verdad? Y él quería trabajar y que estaba necio que iba a meter una aplicación y ya le tuve que explicar que no se puede. Entonces él se quedó así, o sea, como triste pero entendió."

“...because he already wanted to work and I told him, ‘*papito lindo*’, I explained [it] to him and he tells me ‘but why do you work?’ I tell him, ‘Well, because they pay me in cash. I don’t have to declare anything [file taxes]’. So I told him, right? ‘That’s why you have to study, be good in school’. I don’t want you [children] to be cleaning like me. I started talking to him, right? And he wanted to work and he was stubborn saying he was going to apply [for a job] and so I had to explain that it can’t be done. So he became sad but he understood.”

This mother’s discourse strategy of dissuading her son from working points to conflicting expectations about herself and her children. While it is alright for Rosa to work illegally in the U.S. as a means to support her family, she expects her children to surpass her own lifestyle in spite of their shared illegal immigration status. David is not allowed to work illegally, and must negotiate parental expectations to achieve academically along with the negative experiences that turn him against school, as well as the institutional barriers he must face as an undocumented Mexican youth. This is yet another point where societal and personal histories meet. A change in social policy that allows undocumented Mexican youth schooled in the U.S. to obtain working papers would prevent the truncating of their personal development.

The mothers that I interviewed saw being undocumented as a necessity for economic survival and social mobility that was unattainable for them in Mexico. Although they had achieved some financial stability and saw the possibility for further improvement of their families’ lives, living as undocumented immigrants was somehow functional to their goals.

For this reason, they did not present themselves as hostile toward Americans or to the country in spite of the injustices and hardships that they, themselves, faced. As David's mother put it, her initial motivation to migrate had to do with her daughter's health. Karina was becoming epileptic in Mexico where her family could not afford treatment. In New York, she found free medical care for her daughter in spite of their undocumented status, and Karina eventually recovered completely. It was only after her medical condition was resolved, that Rosa began planning her family's financial security. She contrasted her position of gratitude with other Mexican migrants' hostility toward the U.S.: "I hear people who complain about the country who say I--, ok, yes, we suffered in the beginning. We suffered to get here. We did suffer. But I'm grateful to it [the country]." This contrast also serves to illustrate the variability of attitudes toward the U.S. among undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the city.

For David, being undocumented is not functional; it is a barrier to the fulfillment of his goals and a source of violence against him. This structural barrier, coupled with the racism he personally confronts in school and parental expectations to achieve academically are a source of psychological conflict for him as seen in his ambivalence about going to college: "...Cause I don't wanna go to college, but I do. But if I do go to college, I wanna go really far away. I swear. Really far away." In his answer to a peer-conducted interview in which we asked what he liked least about New York, he stated racism. Thus he associates school and New York City with a series of race and immigration-related assaults committed against him, and expressed this in his narratives, graphic illustrations, discourse strategies through power plays, and even in his sense of humor.

David's range of cultural knowledge and personal experiences provide a basis upon which to understand himself and his community in relation to certain authorities. His participation in the *Organización Guadalupeña* has also served as an enabling means for him to develop a critical eye and a mistrust for authorities and social structures of power. In addition, he counts on the cultural knowledge and expectations passed on to him by his parents, as well as exposure to both of his parents' involvement as community leaders in their own neighborhood. He, himself, has attended protests and demonstrations in defense of immigrants' rights.

David's experiences of violence and access to cultural knowledge that mainstream U.S. society ignores has placed him in a special position to think critically; he can detect conflicting perspectives and question public information or social practices that identify him, his family, and his community in disrespectful ways. He is aware that social *mis*-representations lead to violent outcomes such as death on the border, abuse in the workplace, and class and race discrimination. Social theories of identity should take into account not only how social representations mediate between individuals and societal beliefs (Augoustinos & Walker, 1995), but also how individual identities are constructed through activities working within multiple and conflicting social representations. Although David's consciousness has liberatory potential (Freire, 1996), it will remain limited as long as violence is lived privately and ignored publicly by institutions of power, and as long as the means to respond to violence other than with violence remain unfamiliar to him.

Understanding the dialectics of violence

Where does the blame for violence lie? Rather than blaming the victim or blaming society as opposing sources of violence, I posit that violence needs to be understood as a dialectical process that is constantly unfolding between social structures and individuals. This chapter attempts to understand violence in relation to identity formation through its social origins and psychological development. At first glance, David's case may seem typical of a working-class youth of a minority group who demonstrates resistance to authorities and institutions representative of his group's oppression (Walsh, 1987). However, when his personal situation is examined in more detail, one can locate the particular experiences and multiple memberships in institutions that have fostered his own personal consciousness, knowledge, and actions. His defensive and destructive attitude, alienation by society, and contempt toward higher authorities are consequences of a social system of violence. While undocumented Mexican immigrants are positioned by society as unbelonging outsiders, the Organization's critical perspective re-positions them as active agents who have been victims of social injustice. This serves the purpose of mobilization. On the other hand, the means that individuals like David find to re-position themselves within these power struggles is, at times, exactly what the Organization tries to prevent: violence itself.

Society affords youth with violence as a tool to understand, reject, and defend their own and others' identities. In order to understand this development, one must look to the societal-institutional conditions that afford individuals both limitations and possibilities for personal action. David's violent actions originate as a response to violence on a societal dimension and as a defense against personal, psychological harm, yet will continue and even

be deployed upon those in weaker positions of power unless changes are made dialectically between him and the society in which he lives. That is, violence must be understood in its social origins, personal understanding and adoption, and consequent social effects for both the individual and society (Mead, 1934; Wertsch, 1985). Without access to tools that allow David and other youth like him to address directly and effectively the violence with which they are confronted, children and youth will be positioned to become violent youth themselves. This is an alarming realization that begs for both personal and institutional types of intervention.

Is society prepared for Mexican children and youth, their families, and communities?

The theoretical grounding laid forth in this chapter was illustrated through case examples of Mexican youths' direct experiences of different kinds of violence. Additional research needs to test this argument further by delving more deeply into the personal histories of youth, while simultaneously considering the potential responsibility of the State in making certain structures of power available to exert violence as a means of positioning oneself and relating to others. To continue from this point, we must first accept that violence has social origins rather than a natural, or inherently individual basis. Second, we must agree that societal violence may be internalized, and that personal acts of violence are caused by multiple external factors. For the study of identity, this implies, then, that individually-exerted violence can be curbed by simultaneous interventions on both personal and societal-institutional dimensions that present alternatives upon which self-understanding is formed.

As long as borders remain closed to some, societal representatives (such as the

immigration policy-makers or media that provide a popular conception of undocumented immigrants) must first acknowledge publicly the presence of undocumented immigrants as a steady, continuous population that exists, in part, for the sake of U.S. economic interests. Institutions of power must take responsibility for misrepresentations of the undocumented by ensuring that measures are taken to deter violence against undocumented immigrants and their children, which, in turn, may serve to prevent the formation of violent youths. Otherwise, the repercussions will be long-term as Mexican families continue to settle permanently in the United States in spite of their undocumented status.

Community-based organizations such as *la Organización Guadalupeana* can structure collaborative projects between families and schools as major institutional sites of human development, to inform each other about common problems their children face, educate each other about their respective institution's cultures, and to design together violence prevention programs that are meaningful to their children and youth. So far, the Organization has consistently sought ways to develop cultural and recreational programs through such activities as folkloric dance, soccer training, and other activities with the intention of providing a positive sense of community identity in safe spaces. Indirectly, this is a measure against violence through which youth develop social skills and community values in a supportive environment. However, mental health professionals could also aid the Organization in developing interventions that address explicitly violence-related problems and non-violent means to resolve them through conflict resolution training in a form that makes sense to this community. Mexican youth need to be provided with cultural-psychological tools relevant to their own knowledge, experiences, and goals to identify and

communicate personal and historical causes of emotional tensions and conflicts through critical reflection. Such programs could also raise parents' awareness of the particular kinds of psychological conflicts with which their children are faced.

Teacher education programs should also include curricula that prepare educators to recognize the special needs of students from immigrant populations. Educators also need to be capable of understanding and recognizing potential sources of psychological conflict that affect students' identities, academic participation, and relationships with peers and teachers. Institutionally, schools should be prepared to reach out to their students as well as other institutions potentially involved and interested in their educational success. Finally, researchers must also examine how their work can facilitate such collaboration between institutions, and reflect on how their research is used to reproduce or transform the social standing of marginalized populations. By using multiple dimensions of historical analysis (of society, community organization, and individuals) through multiple design methodologies (ethnography, interviews, and case studies) to understand the psychosocial developmental trajectories of children and youth, we can achieve a rich understanding of the complexity and variability of human development, its broad implications and possibilities.

PART IV:
THEORETICAL, METHODOLOGICAL, AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

CHAPTER 9

Further possibilities of social change: Relationships between research, societal, and individual action

This dissertation has discussed multiple ways in which *la Organización Guadalupeana* functions as a cultural-psychological tool for the transformation of Mexican immigrant and children's identities as undocumented people. Through its organized, community-based activities, especially through acts of speaking, writing, and educating, Mexican immigrants are able to re-arrange their world view by placing their common condition as "illegal" subjects in a historical, political, and economic context of oppression. The community-based transformation of individuals resulting in the raising of personal consciousness is, indeed, an impressive one. For people, especially those who have not enjoyed the privileges of elevated social status in their home country, to be able to learn to view themselves in a way that allows them to interact with a new world, lose their fears, and become active agents of their own fates is an enormous achievement. The fact that this is accomplished at all points to a vast resourcefulness in the community that is based on a rich cultural heritage, family values, and strong religious faith, important parts of their array of functional psychological tools. Through hard work, service toward others, and even humor, pre-existing structural and institutional conditions are adopted to construct, counter, and re-construct one's subjectivity.

Much of the success of the Organization in enabling this transformative process is due to several factors, including its grassroots operating structure, voluntary service, and high public profile. Drawing from the community's own cultural knowledge, habits, and

experiences to build common objectives facilitates the individual's development of an illegal to an undocumented identity. The fact that these objectives are motivated by common needs, rather than profit, and realized through voluntary rather than paid service, also has diminished the potential for conflicts of financial interest to emerge in the institution. The Organization's close contact with the media further enables the possibility for the raising of awareness about illegality to extend beyond the Mexican population of the Organization.

This psychological transformation has been particularly meaningful for those Mexican immigrants involved directly in the *Organización Guadalupeña*, including children or teens who have greater personal experience with illegality as a result of their own undocumented status, and who participate directly in the planning and unfolding of the Organization's activities. We have seen that an undocumented identity emerges through language and literacy activities, both internal to the Organization, and external toward the general public. Through personal oral and written narratives of psychological change, we learn of the parallel dimensions of individual and societal history that operate together in the development of Mexican immigrants involved in the Organization (see figure in Appendix). By undergoing a psychological change about one's visibility in society, possibilities of permanent settlement, citizenship, and religiosity through cultural activities, the development of an undocumented identity reveals several functions. Community organizing makes such tools as literacy, religiosity, and citizenship available: they allow Mexican immigrants to contest, counter-argue, claim rights, and defend themselves with new-found self-confidence and self-esteem. Ultimately, evidence of their psychological transformation is found in their ability to act on the world in a new way, and to plan and think about personal change from

a broader perspective.

Multiple discourse analyses (of content, themes, discourse strategies, social structures, graphic illustrations) together with ethnographic data have provided a complex tale of psychological transformation in the community. This was seen in the bulletin's articles and in the women's and children's contrastive talk and moral judgments that identified them differently from other Mexicans and Latinos in the city. Ethnicity and gender were some of the pre-existing structural conditions, other than illegality, that Mexican immigrants used to position themselves and others. Diversity also emerged especially strongly across the Organization's children. Where experiences, expectations or goals are different, and where children depend on contradictory authorities, illegality may not become a consistently functional, psychological tool even in a community where the concept of illegality is transformed for personal empowerment.

The second-generation youths' experiences of violence are one example of this, and point to the fact that there is still much work to be done in the Organization that will target the special needs of this sub-population within the community. The Organization can begin to think about how children's involvement can be made more directly pertinent to the work of the community in democratic, rather than hierarchical ways; Hart et al. (1996) review how children's social and cognitive development can be enhanced through direct involvement entailing such aspects as cooperation with peers and decision-making. My participants' contradictory experiences and conflicting expectations emerged often, but have not been addressed explicitly institutionally. They reveal some of their personal-societal history as Mexican children who live and have close contact with diverse racial/ethnic groups, who are

exposed to violence toward their communities, and who must meet their family's and the Organization's values in spite of the structural barriers with which they are faced. The diversity found within the Organization itself supports the idea that structural availability and exposure to common, alternative ideologies, discourses, and practices are not sufficient to contain development: not everyone develops in the same direction in spite of a common ideal. The psychological formation of Mexican immigrant families is complex and multi-directional, and is a product of the intersections of personal and societal histories.

Directions for research on Mexican immigrants in New York

Just as one resulting direction for future research lies in continuing to understand how community-based organization impacts the formation of Mexican parents and children, we also need to understand further how the psychological development of Mexican immigrants and children who are not organized in any way compare to the population I was able to study. It is possible that even informal organization of migrants may serve to create situations where illegality is not silenced, and where it is questioned and re-conceptualized. The ways that people's lives are situated in practices in and outside of the constraints of illegality could be compared across formally organized communities, informal communities, and individuals not organized in either type of support community. One could also attempt to reach other Mexican immigrants in the city, non-members of the Organization, to probe whether they have had indirect access to the work of the Organization and whether its ideas have had any effect on them. This would be one way of testing whether and how the Organization's high visibility in the press and in activities around the city actually impacts the larger Mexican

population that resides in it. By the same token, one could investigate how much of the general public in the city is aware of the Organization's work, and whether their own views on illegality are affected by it in any way.

Although there was some evidence for the transfer of participants' transformed consciousness into other institutional sites such as home or church, the population could be further questioned as to the extent to which their critical consciousness affects their interactions with persons at home, in church, at work, in school, and their relationships with other persons in Mexico as well. Do the roles of husbands and wives change in any fundamental way? What happens between parents and children when authority is questioned as a result of thinking critically? Does membership in the Organization create new status divisions within the Mexican population in the city? How do members' relationships and identities change when they re-encounter family and friends in Mexico? Research on Mexican women's organizations in the borderlands has found that community leaders on each side of the border maintain divisions even when there are similar political interests involved (Navarro, 2000), and that differences in cultural values and religiosity serve as means of judging Mexican authenticity and of maintaining divisions between Mexican and Mexican American identities (Vila, 1996a, 1996b). It would be interesting to trace how the Organization's relationships to community-based groups in Mexico or to other Mexicans in the U.S. develop in this sense. Already we can tell that the second generation's linguistic development in English would align them with Puerto Ricans and African Americans, rather than with other Mexicans in the United States. On the other hand, their linguistic development in Spanish would align them with other Mexicans rather than other Latinos. At

what point does political ideology and ethnic/national solidarity conflict with linguistic practice in the identities of Mexicans in New York?

As far as interacting with other populations, does a critical perspective create differences in the ways Mexican immigrants and children behave toward, and think about, persons of other ethnic/racial groups? There is some evidence that Mexican immigrants organize themselves similarly to the *Organización Guadalupeana* around parishes in other parts of the U.S., such as Chicago (Grossman et al., 2000), but how do both religious and secular community groups compare across the country and by generation? Are Mexicans in New York more likely to organize across racial lines (as in Black-Latino coalitions that have historically made their way into the city [Sales & Bush, 2000]), than Mexicans in other parts of the country? Do Mexican children involved in community organizing maintain this practice and become adult activists? What are their views on children's rights?

Ruck et al. (1998) have distinguished between children's understanding of care and protection as nurturance rights, and entitlement to control over their lives as self-determination rights. Does Mexican children's consciousness about illegality and socialization into political activism enable their own definition and practice of rights? Will their exposure to their community's vernacular notions of citizenship become integrated or transform traditional, mainstream means of political participation? How does their assimilation differ from that of other second generation minority youth as has been studied in the past (Portes, 1996)? Clearly, many questions remain as to the extent to which organized identities in one setting affect one's relationships, beliefs, and identities in other settings and cultural practices.

Another important direction involves understanding how the formation of second-generation Mexican children and youth differs from that of their parents in terms of the cultural tools they have access to and can develop. One could also investigate differences within the second-generation, such as between those who are undocumented and those who are citizens. For example, what factors might affect educational access among second-generation Mexican youth? Does immigration status necessarily interrupt the education of undocumented youth more frequently than that of citizens, especially at the college level? How do levels of literacy at home affect children's literacy in school? Does formal schooling prepare Mexican children to become cultural brokers between their families and mainstream society? Such a range of questions for further study provokes consideration of how research practice and theory can be advanced as well.

Toward a psychology of liberation: Cultural psychology and participatory action

Sensitive topics around illegality such as those mentioned above, need to be raised, interrogated, and studied; however, in order for them to be addressed seriously, researchers need to consider how their participants can be both collaborators and the audience of their work. Too often, theory is divorced from its practical applications just as organized movements for social change lack explicit, guiding rationale based on formal empirical evidence. I argue that research and community activism need not be mutually exclusive, albeit different practices.

Movements for social change can and should rely on cooperative work between researchers and all parties interested in addressing or deterring outcomes of injustice. Within

such communities of change. social science can provide a number of tools to enable the collaborative formulation of questions, collection and analysis of information, as well as the publication of findings in a number of formats that address the issues of interest. Researchers can offer workshops to community-based agencies, schools, and other institutions of social transformation; such workshops could discuss the role, if any, of research in community-based organization, guide the formulation of research questions and research design, plan the collection of data and evaluation of findings based on the needs and direct participation of the community. Researchers could also discuss the relationship between advocacy and research with community groups, such as the extent to which research findings may or may not support the groups' interests, standpoint, or goals. Such collaboration would necessarily re-organize the value of research, as well as the practice of rigorous standards for both researchers and activists. For instance, rather than seeing participants as objects of research, they would become co-subjects and co-agents of research; such collaborative work would also entail a great degree of accountability and mutual responsibility by re-organizing the relationships of power between researchers and participants.

This is no easy feat to accomplish. Indeed, the idea of sharing power with participants can be threatening to those researchers and philosophers of science who hold onto the idea that controllability and replicability are both possible and desirable traits of good research. On the other hand, those who might be sympathetic to this theoretical/practical direction should not be deceived into believing that such collaborative work between researchers and participants is smooth-running. Actually there are many glitches and hard edges to surpass. Collaborative action is based on close working relationships; they take time to build, energy

to maintain, and patience to improve and manage. One is constantly required to reflect on one's practice in order to continuously adjust one's roles and limitations, and to check the degree of objectivity one is exercising by repeatedly defining the purpose of research and evidence for claims made. In this dissertation, the children's developmental diversity served as the sharpest method of questioning triangulated findings.

However, this type of working model does emphasize the importance of the process/products of research that bring new knowledge to the fore, rather than quick and easy interpretations of empirical observations and data when participants are uninvolved in their evaluation. By the same token, this study was not designed to produce generalizable findings based on broad statistical analyses because the purpose was to investigate the *process* of identity formation in real-world activities. What is generalizable has more to do with the finding that the development of an undocumented identity is not universal among undocumented immigrants, and that the quality of activities in which persons engage are part of histories that define their individual, developmental trajectories. The activities that have something to do with the formation of identity need to be derived and described in their emergence and diversity, rather than come pre-set for numerical measurability. Cultural psychology has rarely adopted a collaborative, interventionist stance (although there are exceptions, especially in the education literature, e.g., Moll, 1990); however its basis in dialectical processes can be applied to the relationship between theory and practice, and integrated with participatory action design to produce theoretical-practical, grounded research for social change. This is what I have come to see as a psychology of liberation.

Thomas Teo (1998a, 1998b, 1999), for instance, has defined liberation psychology

using the Marxist tradition, Holzkamp's German critical psychology, as well as the work of other critical theorists such as Foucault, to state that the study of human subjectivity ought to involve a social-historical analysis of individuals' potential to liberate themselves from oppression. Such an analysis involves understanding various ways in which power operates in the formation of individuals. For instance, Teo (1998b) states that

“...a theory of liberation must address such broader domains—those in which social, economic and political inequalities (viz. racism, sexism, classism, imperialism) make it necessary to think about liberation. Yet a *psychology of liberation* must emphasize the individual's possibilities in these domains—even when goals can only be achieved in cooperation with others. Thus, a psychological theory of liberation must do justice to both domains: the individual as well as the societal” (p.529).

For Teo, it is important to consider that concepts are empowering tools that allow individuals to develop their views of the world and lead to changes in practices, and that concepts of power are critical to liberation. For instance, he argues that researchers can understand power as organized in labor practices, communication, or aesthetics, and that this would lead one to analyze power in various sites accordingly, such as housing, health care, welfare, discourse in personal interactions, the mass media, or physical appearance (p.541).

Lykes (2000), for instance, has addressed the health care of Mayan women in Guatemala within the framework of liberatory psychology. In other words, there are multiple sites and dimensions of power that can be analyzed for their relevance to psychological development and personal empowerment. In this sense, I believe that a psychology of liberation includes not only a strong theoretical grounding in cultural psychology and critical

sociological analysis, but also works hand in hand with applied, participatory action research in sites of social change. Moreover, the results must also provoke the involvement of institutions of power that can change structural inequalities more directly than individuals without access to traditional sites of power, including legislative election and enforcement. The next section discusses several ideas for reform that are based on the results of the research in this dissertation, and that should be considered by public officials and policy-makers; thus, a psychology of liberation ought to be accompanied by liberatory policies.

Policies of liberation: Some considerations

Given the constraints that undocumented Mexican families live within, and the multiple infractions of rights that they confront, it should not come as a surprise that the *Organización Guadalupeana* focuses so much of its efforts on its campaign for General Amnesty. As a result of their undocumented status, Mexican immigrants and their children are made vulnerable to injustices across the institutions in which they participate. As a counter-institutional mechanism, the Organization calls attention to the lived experience of Mexican migrants both in Mexico and the U.S. that together point to a complex system of transnational, structural causes of injustice. Consequently, it would be important for legislators in both countries to consider how their immigration and economic policies protect national and personal security of both native residents and immigrants. Policy-makers should consider the assumptions underlying their legal stances, and re-think whether maintaining certain people in subordinate power positions in their decisions is, in fact, beneficial to those whose interests they claim to represent. Matsuda (1995) illustrates how reparations claims

for historical discrimination and other injustices can be considered by the U.S. government; writing within critical legal studies, she argues that such claims have been initiated from the grassroots, by such minorities as Native Hawaiians and Japanese Americans. Therefore, she offers the method that laws cannot be evaluated from abstract positions, but from “the actual experience, history, culture, and intellectual tradition of people of color in America” (p. 63).

As I have stated already, examination of the assumptions of laws is especially important when considering that undocumented immigrants and their children will remain in the U.S. in the long-term despite discriminatory immigration laws that prevent their legal stay in the country. If legislators maintain the idea that the numbers of Mexican migrants entering the country need to be contained, then they also need to plan and build policies in collaboration with the Mexican government to rebuild its economy (Reid, 1995). In other words, economic policies like NAFTA that have ultimately benefitted U.S. economic interests without aiding much of the Mexican economy need to be conceived with their long-term implications for immigration. They should also include provisions for assessing the consistent, legal enforcement of human and labor rights. Binational agreements on economic and immigration policies thus need to make foremost in their concerns the prevention of violations of basic rights.

Impoverished communities in the U.S. come with a number of social problems like delinquency, high drop-out rates, and crime that affect society at-large. By proposing or protecting laws that maintain the undocumented status of certain populations, poverty and the potential for violent retribution are increased. This needs to be carefully considered, especially in the re-birth of xenophobic popular sentiments around the country since the

tragic September 11th attack on the World Trade Center and other federal buildings. As a result of their legal status in the country, many undocumented workers or their families were afraid to come forward to report the loss of a loved one, or to demand workers' compensation and other benefits. This occurred in spite of the public vow of relief organizations to aid workers and relatives of the deceased who needed aid regardless of their legal status. During this time, *la Organización Guadalupeña* intervened to call attention to this reality by meeting more frequently with the media and by working closely with relief organizations and grant-giving foundations to provide financial resources to both survivors and victims' families who were fearful of approaching such organizations directly, who were unknowing of their eligibility for aid or of the process entailed in requesting it, or who could not produce any documentation to prove their eligibility as ex-workers or ex-residents of the disaster area. In order for researchers to be able to intervene more fully and to acquire the data necessary to shed light on the ways lives are affected by undocumented status, researchers and participants need also to be able to count on confidentiality privileges, just as they are protected by law in other professional relationships between doctors and patients or lawyers and clients.

Another indirect result of the September 11th events was the increased difficulty of undocumented students to enter college. The most likely avenue for undocumented immigrant college-goers had been to seek admission into the public City University of New York if they could document their long-term residence in the city in order to pay in-state tuition. However, CUNY has proposed to increase the tuition of foreigners by requiring even undocumented students, including those who have resided in New York and have been schooled here most of their lives, to pay out-of-state tuition. In order to be eligible for

scholarships, students need to demonstrate financial need and legal residence. The latter criteria makes it virtually impossible for undocumented students to attend college. Therefore, social structures are set up as such that they prolong the educational impoverishment of the second generation of Mexicans in the city. No doubt, this can have a psychological effect on students' motivation to continue their studies before reaching the transition period between high school and college or the work force if they know that there is nothing they will be able to do to continue their education. That is, aside from this "ceiling effect" (Gibson & Ogbu, 1991) and the usual difficulties Mexican children face in school as racial and language minorities (Gutierrez et al., 1999; Trueba, 1998), immigration status is another social structure that they must confront when they attempt to access higher education. Their desire for a higher education and scholastic ability become irrelevant under these circumstances.

Educational policies then should also reflect consideration of the numbers of intellectually-able persons they are deterring from a higher education. If educators see schooling as a tool for social justice, then the incorporation of immigrant students, including the undocumented, needs to be on their agenda. Admissions and financial aid eligibility need to be seriously re-considered by both public and private schools and colleges. Undocumented children and youth who have been schooled here have report cards to demonstrate their time of residence in the U.S., and should also count on teachers' familiarity with their work to testify to their ability and scholastic eligibility for a higher education. The school system cannot assume to be a mechanism of social improvement when it operates along discriminatory policies and helps sustain structural inequalities. In fact, undocumented youth who demonstrate satisfactory completion of high school or college studies should

automatically be granted legal residency. A policy that allows such undocumented youth schooled in the U.S. to obtain legal working papers would also help them afford a higher education.

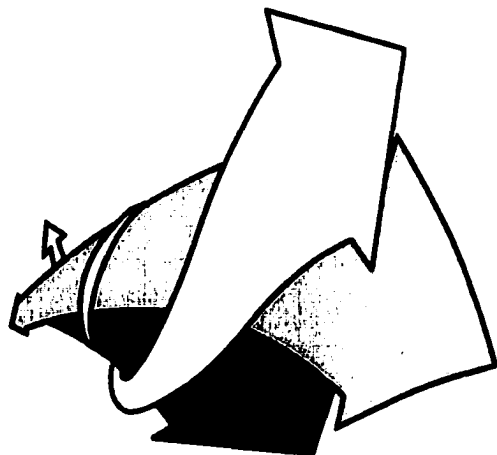
The social well-being of Mexican immigrant families cannot ignore health problems that also pervade poor communities. Governor Pataki's initiation of Child Health Plus, a program to provide free (or close to free), comprehensive health care to poor children is currently available to even undocumented immigrant children under the age of nineteen. While this is a laudable action, such services need to be extended to undocumented adults and youth. Otherwise, the underlying message is reproduced: that undocumented status, in and of itself, makes certain individuals undeserving of good health, *and* that the State is entitled to punish certain individuals for circumstances under their control (even though they are not). When illegality is portrayed as an internal state, a condition of individuals brought on by their own choice, policy-makers ignore the structural circumstances they influence that make illegality and "illegal aliens" a possibility. Unattended ailments and contagious diseases also affect not only the individuals afflicted, but others around them regardless of legal status. This is especially problematic in cases where undocumented individuals travel back and forth and can spread disease in at least two countries (Solís, 2001).

This summary of policy implications is part of my sociohistorical analysis of Mexican immigrants' development, and should be taken as the beginning of a much-needed public conversation concerning the place of undocumented immigrants in the U.S., and the responsibility of the State for their well-being. By ignoring their existence, or creating policies that make their lives more difficult and more impoverished will not make them go

away. The U.S. economy and global economic policies play an important role in ensuring that undocumented immigrants will remain in the country. It would be short-sighted to think that the residence of undocumented immigrants, as long as it is ignored, will not change the social-cultural, economic, and political life of the country. The directions of those changes, however, are not entirely within the power of those with a vested interest in maintaining inequality. As we have seen in this study, undocumented immigrants can still find creative means to improve their lives, to seek fair treatment, and advocate for policies that will benefit them. The psychological power behind this develops thanks to the availability and use of cultural-psychological tools unified under community-wide actions. Let us not underestimate the dialectical influence that individuals' psychological changes can have on society's practices and beliefs in continuous, self-organized cultural activities.

APPENDIX

Dimensions of history



- ☒ Dimension 1 Societal (history of Mexicans in the U.S./in New York)
- ☐ Dimension 2 Individual (life histories of Mexican immigrants and children in Society)
- ☐ Dimension 3 Psychological system of Identity (history of Mexican immigrants and children in Organization)

Transcription Conventions

All speaker tiers are marked by an asterisk (*) before the speaker's shortened name:

David= *DAV

Karina= *KAR

Marcos= *MCS

Margarita= *MAR

Ariel= *ARI

Jorge= *JOR

Mercedes= *MER

Lucía= *LUC

Rosa= *ROS

Jocelyn= *JOC

... Marks deleted text that was irrelevant to the meaning of the speaker cited

[] Encloses clarifying information, contextual features, and translations

-- After a word marks a false start

XXX Signals unintelligible speech

Speech was transcribed as heard on the audiotapes wherever possible to maintain some of the oral qualities that characterized the participants' talk.

Written texts were transcribed and translated in their original form, including grammatical usage, capitalization, and punctuation.

Peer Interview Questions

Original version was in Spanish:

Pepito tiene 10 años. Habla español. Tiene una hermanita de 7 años. Su nombre es Anita. Pepito y Anita están en Mexico. Van a venir a vivir en Nueva York con su mamá y quieren saber:

Pepito is 10 years old. He speaks Spanish. He has a 7-year-old sister. Her name is Anita. Pepito and Anita are in Mexico. They are going to come to New York with their mother and they want to know:

1. *¿Cómo se llega a Nueva York? ¿Cómo es el viaje?*

How do you get to New York? What is the trip like?

2. *¿Cómo es la casa donde vives? ¿Cómo es la ciudad y la gente?*

What does the house where you live look like? What are the city and the people like?

3. *¿Es diferente de México? ¿Cómo es diferente o igual?*

Is it different from Mexico? How is it the same or different?

4. *¿Tienes que ir a la escuela? ¿Cómo es la escuela? ¿Qué aprendes allí?*

Do you have to go to school? What is school like? What do you learn there?

5. *¿Cómo son tus amigos en Nueva York? ¿Tienes amigos en Mexico?*

What are your friends in New York like? Do you have friends in Mexico?

6. *¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de Nueva York? ¿Y lo que menos te gusta?*

What do you like most about New York? What do you like the least?

7. *¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de Mexico? ¿Y lo que menos te gusta?*

What do you like most about Mexico? What do you like the least?

8. *¿Cómo puedes conocer a otros mexicanos en Nueva York?*

How can you meet other Mexicans in New York?

9. *¿Qué mas deben saber los niños antes de venir a vivir a Nueva York?*

What else should children know before they come to New York?

10. *¿Qué mas deben saber los papás o demás familia de estos niños antes de venir a vivir aquí?*

What else should their parents or relatives know before they come live here?

Focus Group Interview

Original questions were in Spanish.

EL FOLLETO/The Booklet

- *¿Qué piensan del folleto?* (Point out maze drawn by children)
What do you think of the booklet?
- *¿Cómo escogieron las escuelas de sus hijos? ¿Qué les parecen las escuelas de aquí?*
How did you choose your children's schools? What do you think of schools here?

SU HISTORIAN/Your History

- *¿Cómo decidieron venir a los EEUU?*
How did you decide to come to the U.S.?
- *¿Qué hacían en México antes de venir?*
What were you doing in Mexico before you came here?
- *¿Cómo fue su llegada a Nueva York? ¿La de su familia?*
What was your arrival like? Your family's?
- *¿Han regresado a México?*
Have you been back to Mexico?

SU PARTICIPACION/Your Participation

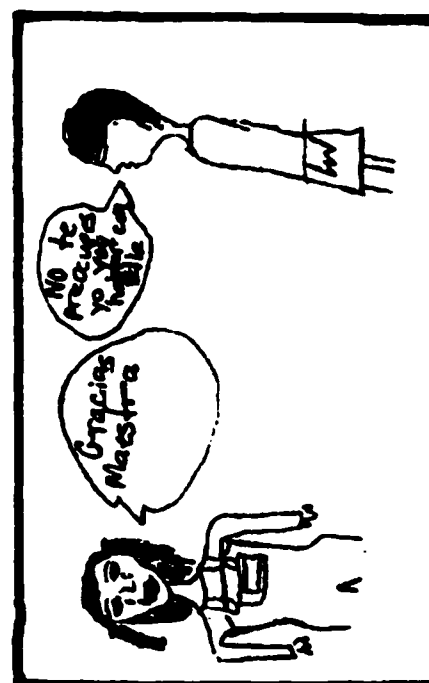
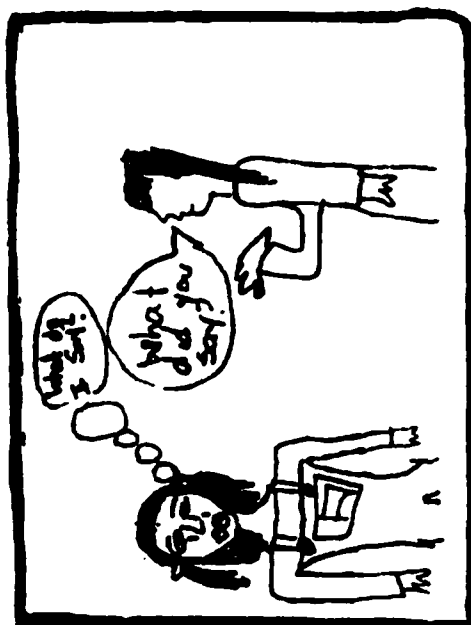
- *¿Cómo llegaron a la Organización Guadalupana?*
How did you come to la Organización Guadalupana?
- *¿De qué manera participan ustedes/ sus familias dentro de la Organización?*
How do you/your families participate in it?
- *¿Quiénes leen el boletín en casa? ¿Comparten esta lectura con sus hijos?*
Who reads the bulletin at home? Do you share this reading with your children?

SU FUTURO/Your Future

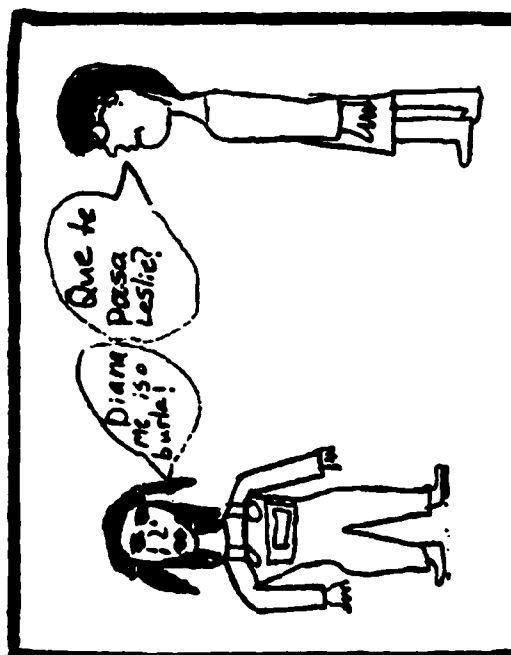
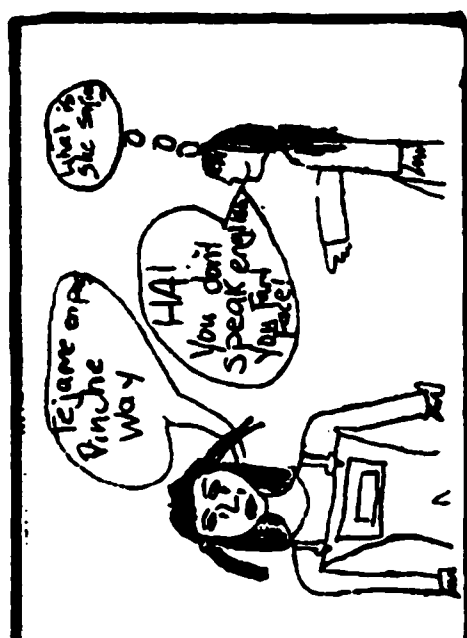
- *¿Cuáles son sus planes para ustedes mismas y para sus familias? ¿Piensan quedarse a vivir aquí?*
What are your plans for you and your families? Do you expect to stay here?
- *¿Dónde se ven dentro de 10, 20 años?*
Where do you see yourselves in 10 or 20 years?

Triangulation Matrix of Analyses Implemented by Major Topic and Sources of Data

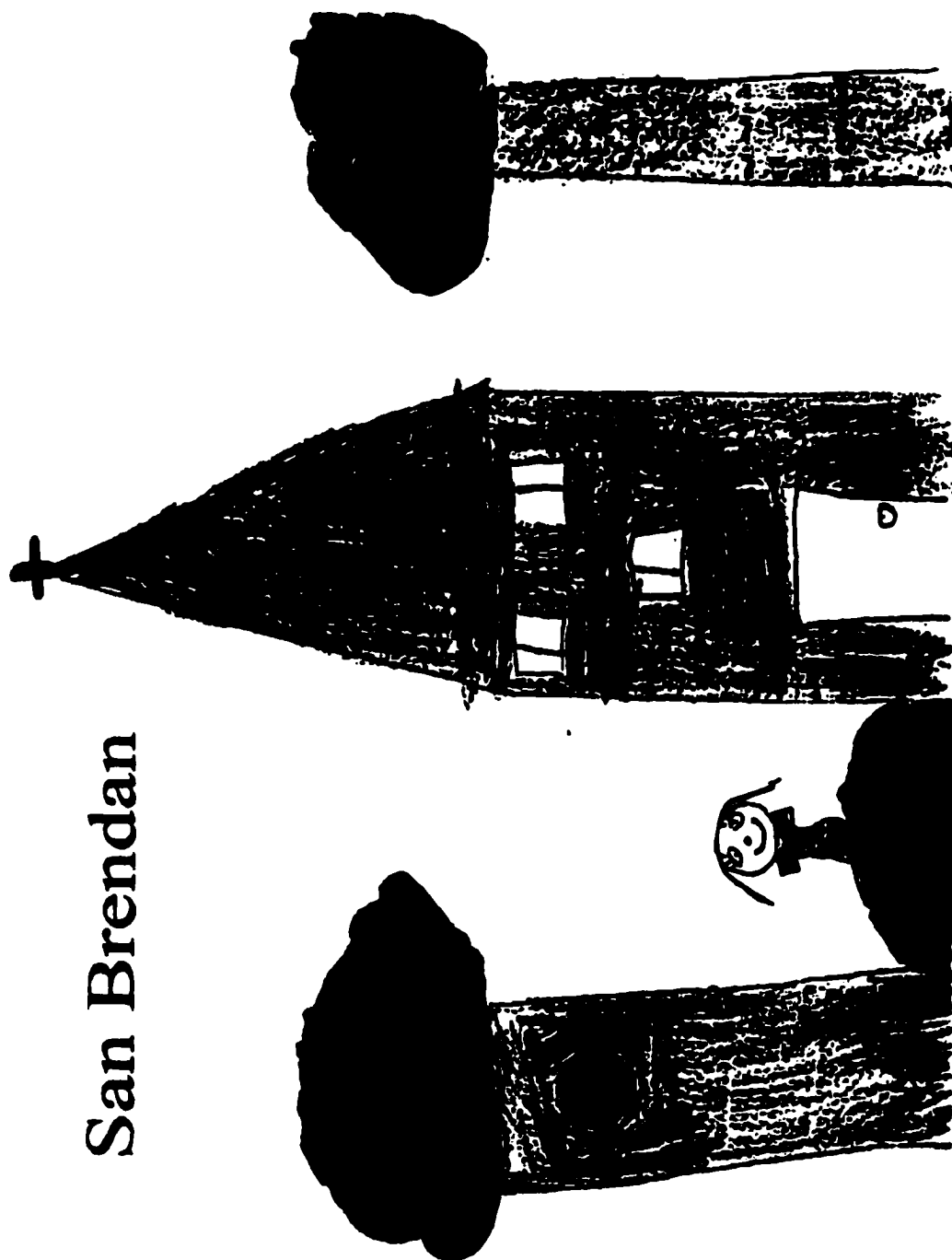
	Participant Observations in Field notes/ Journal Entries	Organization's Bulletins	Children's Conversations	Children's Writing	Interview with Mothers
LANGUAGE	Content Cultural activities	Content Discourse strategies Indexicals	Content Themes Discourse strategies Indexicals Social structures	Content Graphic illustrations Themes	Content Discourse strategies Indexicals Social structures
CITIZENSHIP	Content Cultural activities	Content Themes Discourse strategies Indexicals Graphic illustrations	Content Discourse strategies Indexicals Social structures	Content Discourse strategies Graphic illustrations	Content Discourse strategies Indexicals Social structures
RELIGIOSITY	Content Cultural activities	Content Discourse strategies	Content Discourse strategies Indexicals	Graphic illustrations	Content Discourse strategies Indexicals Social structures
VIOLENCE	Content Cultural activities	Content Discourse strategies	Content Discourse strategies Indexicals Social Structures	Content	Content



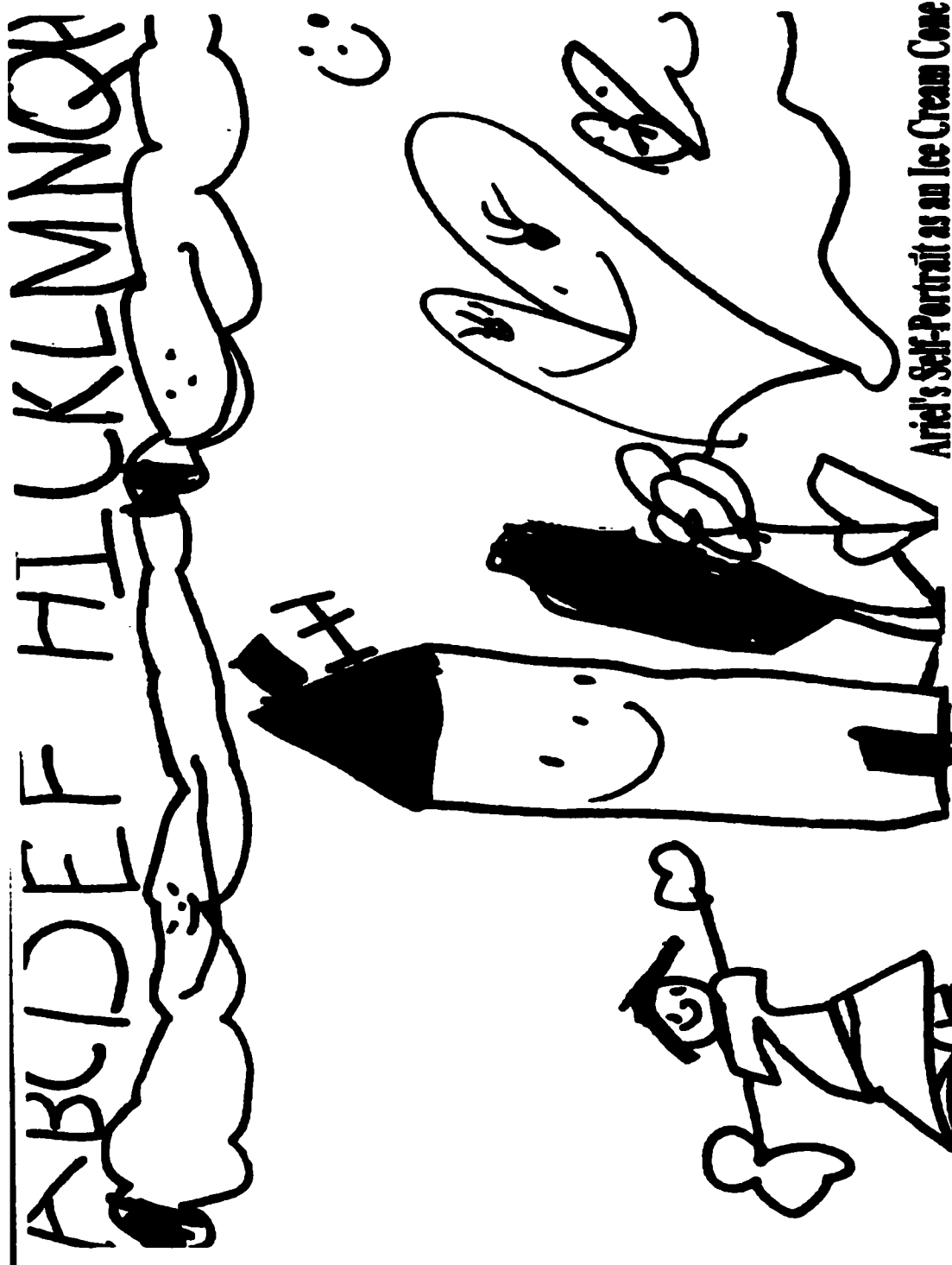
Karina's Comic Strip



San Brendan



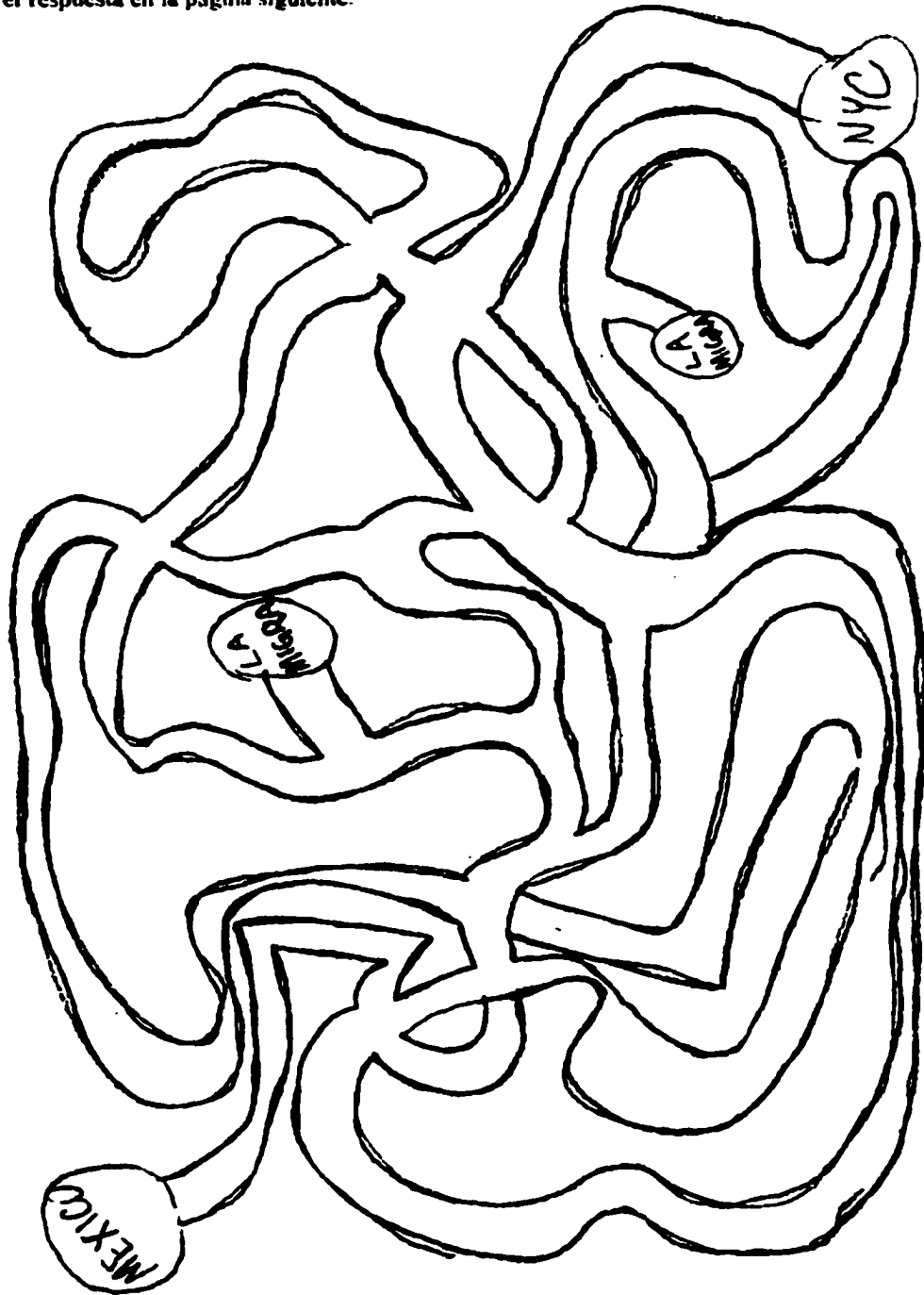
Margarita's Self-Portrait by her Parish



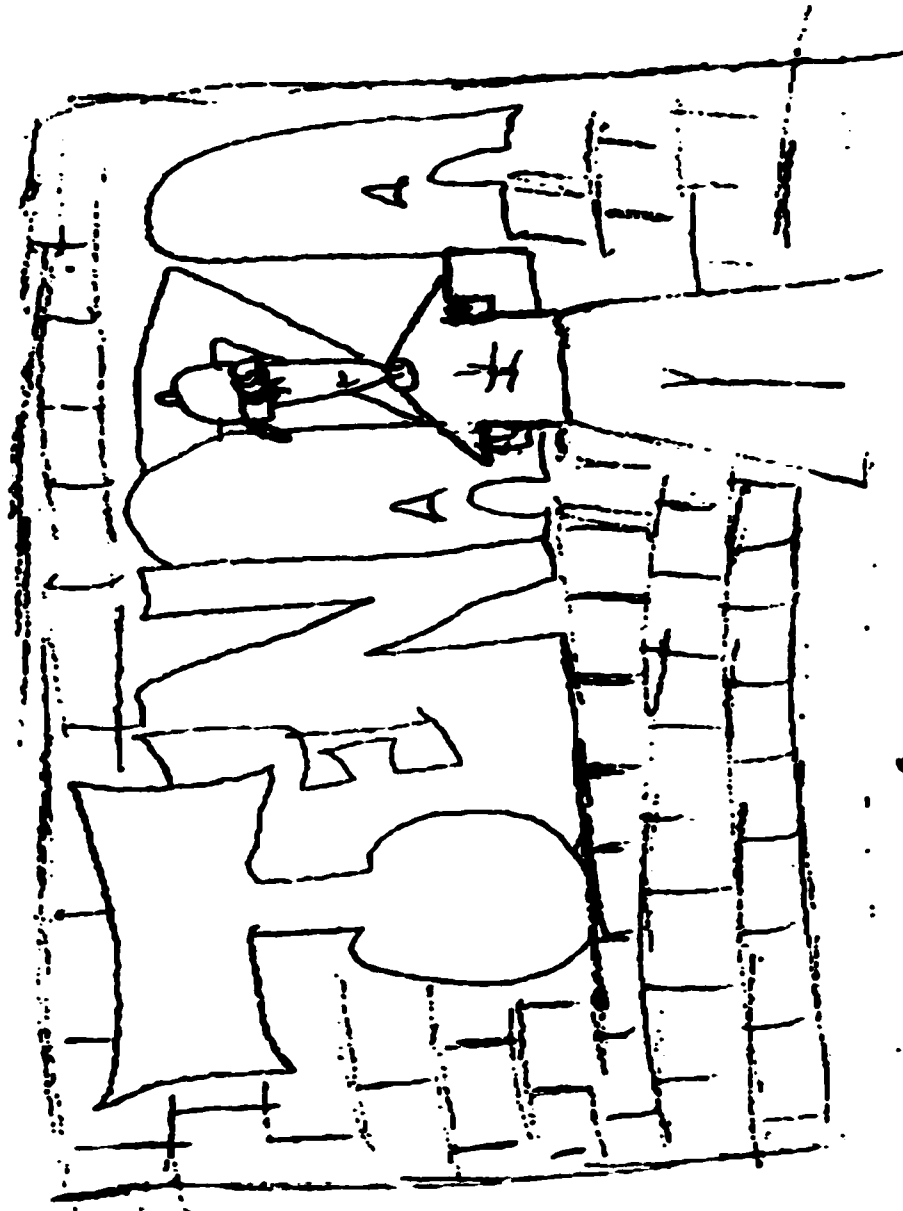
Ariel's Self-Portrait as an Ice Cream Cone

Ver respuesta en la página siguiente.

¿Puedes llegar a Nueva York sin cruzarte con la migra?



David and Karina's Maze



Graffiti in a Mexican Neighborhood



"Quiero ir a pescar,
pero no en Nueva York."
-David-

WASH

THE

"I want to go fishing
but not in New York."
-David-



David's Depiction of the Hudson River

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