MIGRATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: TRANSNATIONALISM, IDENTITY, SOCIAL CLASS, AND EDUCATION OF LATINO FAMILIES.

By

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To Karl, Lorenzo, and Thomas the loves of my life
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation addresses the connections between migration, identity, social class, and education, and how these relations create contemporary transnational individuals. I closely examine how Latino migrant families live their everyday lives within a transnational context. Specifically, I compare the migration experience of middle and poor class Latinos from varying nationality and look at how they live and narrate concepts of belonging, ethnic identity, and social class. In addition, I examine how families and schools give advantages and/or disadvantages to Latino migrant children.

Over a 12-month period, I conducted in-depth ethnographic case studies of 4 Latino families of varying nationalities and social class. The research design includes interviews with family members and school teachers, field observations at homes and schools, document collection, and field notes. The comparative ethnographic design of this research offers a detailed understanding of the processes through which families of diverse background cope with migration.

This work shows how Latino families simultaneously engage in different social practices within multiple locations. In particular, it shows how social class is being transformed by to the movement of people and the shifting global economy. The findings reveal that there are important differences in how Latinos of different background settle and adapt to a new country, create networks of support, navigate the educational system, and relate to other ethnic and racial groups, including other Latinos. It also uncovers that differences in uses and access to technology leads to inequality between schools and families; this digital divide is in many ways related to race and ethnicity. In conclusion, I point out the need to adopt a multidimensional approach when studying transnational migrants. This approach helps us understand the often contradictory set of forces operating in these families.
Implications of this study highlight the need for teachers and schools to look at the culture and the home environment of their students. The findings show that schools need to be active participants in the development of parental involvement programs that take into account the families’ cultural background. In addition, schools need to look more closely at the instruction on uses of technology needed to compete in the globalized world. For policy-makers, this study reveals that a new type of nation building is occurring; one that is based on multiple belongings and loyalties. Thus, this study suggests that the United States should adopt a migration agenda based on the possibility of having double loyalty, where migrants living in the U.S. are allowed to feel a sense of responsibility and duty to several countries.
CHAPTER ONE

“The between, the entre, is the neither one or the other. I am not of the neither one nor the other. I am rather on the side of with, in spite of all the difficulties and confusions this may bring about. (Cixous & Conley, 1984, p. 56)

Introduction

Contemporary migration has a profound effect on how we understand society. As people continue to move and develop cross border relations, perceptions on belonging, identity, space and place, social class, and education are undeniably altered. These important global changes have led scholars to attempt to de-territorialize their research and consider processes that transcend boundaries (Appadurai, 1991). This dissertation is concerned with de-territorialized and multiterritorialized processes and the influence of social class in such processes. More specifically, this dissertation looks at transnational and transcultural encounters within the Latino community and the spaces created by such encounters.

While transnationalism cannot be viewed as an uncontested term, it nevertheless provides the possibility of an alternative conceptualization of cultural and ethnic studies. My focus on transnationalism allows me to highlight questions on identity from a different perspective. This perspective does not view identity solely in terms of borders, but also allows for spaces in between. I use a postmodern approach to investigate how alternative notions of the transnational help to reshape our understanding of home, social class, belonging, family, and education as both cultural constructs and means of deconstruction. This study seeks to understand the complex
processes of incorporation, transnationalization, and ethnic and class formation in the context of massive changes in the global economy.

This dissertation explores the ways in which first generation Latino migrant families, living in the U.S., remake belonging and social class and ascertain their ethnic identity in the context of vast changes in the global structure, and more specifically, changes related to the movement of people. In addition, I compare the transnational experience of Latinos from middle and poor social class backgrounds and of different nationalities, and ask how social class, belonging, ethnic identity formation, everyday living practices, and their children’s schooling differs for these groups. I focus in particular on their everyday family life and how these daily practices influence their transnational experience. The experiences of the Latino families portrayed here are not unique, but rather are suggestive of what is happening with a large portion of migrants worldwide (Chaunhuri, 2005; Jones, 2008; Rouse, 2002): de-territorialization and simultaneous engagement in different social practices within multiple territories.

In this dissertation, transnationalism is defined as “a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations, create social fields that cross national boundaries” (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 2003, p 22). Moreover, Bourdieu’s (1977a; 1986) notions of social and cultural capital are used to explain how Latino families draw upon social networks and class-related cultural factors in order to simultaneously adapt to two different places. I start from the premise that cultures, like individuals and families, cannot be fixed to a specific place (Gupta & Ferguson, 2002), as the experiences of the families in this study surely tell us. One cannot deny the cultural forces that help construct the migrants’ transnational identities as identities that combine homeland and host society influences. The constant negotiation between these forces is essential in the reconfiguration of how migrants
perceive and are perceived by others. The stories of these Latino families allow us to understand the lives of people that overlap between two worlds. Their stories emphasize the manner in which Latino migrant families are able to exercise their agency in the process of simultaneously belonging to multiple spaces and places.

This dissertation looks at the deconstruction and re-construction of identities, stories, and lives of transnational Latino families. By looking at their everyday living experiences, this study strives to understand how Latino transnational migrants from varying social class and nationalities reshape the socio-cultural setting of the home and host land. Furthermore, it looks at how the process of movement has allowed Latino migrant families to constantly reconstruct and reinvent themselves. I look at the ways in which these families have tried to create passageways from within narrow constraints of the Latino panethnic discourse present in American society. Most importantly, this topic calls for an interdisciplinary approach, combining the fields of cultural, post-colonial, migration, and ethnic studies to show the interrelatedness of issues of race, ethnicity, class, and education.

The generalized nature of transnational migration, as well as the particularities that capture and theorize the identity and class reshaping of contemporary migrants, are addressed here. Data collected with four Latino transnational families from varying social class and nationality have allowed me to examine the ways in which they respond to larger forces operating upon them. It is through the experiences of these families, who simultaneously inhabit two worlds, that we can begin to unravel the complexity and value of transnational migration.
Organization of Chapters

In this chapter, I provide an introduction to the study and describe the literatures that drive this work. Chapter two encompasses the methodology used in this study. Included in chapter two is a description of the research setting, the participants, and the research methods utilized in this study. In addition, chapter two describes how I analyzed the data and my position as a researcher. Chapter three explores the concepts of ethnic and social identity in response to the families’ experiences in their home and host land. Furthermore, I look at how these families find ways of relating to oneself and others in interstices above and beyond the confines of panethnic identity. By examining how their class position is transformed when entering American society, I argue that these Latino families challenge classic notions of social class mobility. Chapter three also tries to explicate how Latinos from varying nationalities and social classes position themselves and perceive others.

Using Boudieu’s (Bourdieu, 1977a) concept of capital, chapter four looks at differences among Latino families of varying social class. This fourth chapter illustrates how everyday living practices, spending behavior, kinship relations, neighborhood selection, and home literacy practices of the families from varying levels of social class provide children with advantages and/or disadvantages. Chapter five examines the role of school in the children’s lives and how schools may either inhibit or promote advantages, comparing the public schooling experiences of poor and middle-class Latino children and illustrates the differences among them. Finally, chapter six concludes with a comprehensive discussion that connects the different experiences of these families. In this chapter, I consider how these different components play a part in the formation of transnational individuals. In addition, I present a discussion of the implications of this study for educators, schools, and policy makers, and recommendations for further research.
Theoretical Interlude

Increasing migration, in particular of people that maintain ties across borders, is changing the classic nature of migration. These new transnational migrants are struggling with what it means to be a citizen; a person who can belong and is loyal to several different countries. Sociologists of culture, scholars of migration, and those who study ethnicity, class, and education are rarely in dialogue with one another about how the different cultural frames formed by transnational migration and other sources inform individual identity construction. Within this chapter and the dissertation as a whole, I bring together these bodies of literature to examine how the various levels of analysis at which social class operates—individual, collective, and institutional—fit together with the diverse and patterned interpretations of ethnicity, migration, and education. I accomplish this connection by examining how Latino families from varying levels of social class and differing nationalities develop interpretations and schemas to adapt to the nature of transnational migration. Such a theoretical framework opens empirical understandings of how transnational migrants are more broadly changing approaches to race, ethnicity, social class, belonging, and citizenship.

I examine how social class operates at different levels of analysis as a means of gaining access to the various ways individuals and families draw on society to construct identities. In this specific study, I uncover the schemas of social belonging that Latinos develop while participating in multiple territories. I ask how Latino families from diverse backgrounds develop and respond to such schemas.

This section proceeds as follows. First, I provide an overview of my approach to social stratification and the utility of using a social class analysis in this specific research. Second, I
provide an explanation of how social stratification is closely related to contemporary migration; more specifically, I illustrate the transnational migration experience of Latinos in the United States. Third, I give a description of social stratification schemas, which are the interpretative frameworks generated and used by families and schools.

**Approach to Social Stratification**

The reproduction of society is one of the most controversial topics in social science. Rather than a coherent system of indicators, as earlier theorists of social stratification have argued, social class is better described as a collection of resources. In this work, I see social class broadly as the range of resources—cultural, economic, and social (Bourdieu, 1977a)—that individuals and families use to make sense of their lives, as well as the links these meanings and resources have to specific strategies of action. Theorists generally think of resources in more measurable terms, such as income, education, or occupation. This dissertation’s stance joins with that of other scholars who bring the importance of nonmaterial resources to the surface, revealing the ways in which resources, including friendships, ways of behaving, and networking, act to allow different access into society.

Several debates in the study of social class are particularly relevant to this work, including the discussion on the degree to which social class criteria are defined. For example, Marx argues that the mode of production determines class structure and inequality within social classes (Wright, 1984). Weber (1958) took into account consumption patterns, distinctive life-styles, and views of the world. Durkheim (1984) adopts a social action influence approach where individuals act according to the structure of which they are a part. Although there are many
different perspectives in defining social reproduction, most agree that societies are in constant evolution and classes are in constant change.

Bourdieu (1977a) borrows from authors such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim to explore the connections between the educational system and the social class structure. The major theoretical premise of his work embarks on the idea that “every power which manages to impose meaning and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. vi). Additionally, Bourdieu draws on the concept of capital in understanding the objective of human activity in the social world. His definition of capital is not strictly economic; rather, “capital, defined as attributes, possessions, or qualities of a person or a position exchangeable for goods, services, or esteem, exists in many forms-symbolic, cultural, social, or linguistic, as well as economic” (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1463). According to Bourdieu (1986), the form capital takes and its value depends on the field of production in which it exists:

The structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its function in a durable way, determining the chances of success for such practices. (p. 241-242)

Many authors have used Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in order to explain different phenomena related to the reproduction of social inequality (Apple, 1982; Apple & Weis, 1985; Cookson & Persell, 1985; Giroux, 1983; Weis, 2004), the impact of family background on educational attainment (De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000; DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lareau, 1987), and the influence of race in student’s education (Lareau, 2002;
Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital allows for a better understanding of the influence of family life on children’s education.

Bourdieu (1977a) suggests that the family’s social origin influences children’s educational attainment by providing different cultural and social resources. Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) research found that academic standards, believed to be neutral, are saturated with specific cultural resources and requirements acquired within the family setting. Furthermore, the authors recognize that cultural experiences lived in the home facilitate children’s adjustment to school, thereby transforming cultural resources into cultural capital. Cultural resources are defined as “familiarity with the conceptual codes that underlie a specific culture with its major artistic and normative manifestations” (De Graaf et al., 2000, p. 93). Bourdieu (1986) illustrates three types of cultural capital. First, embodied cultural capital alludes to styles, preferences, manners, and knowledge that are culturally valued. Objectified cultural capital is embedded in artifacts and goods, including literature, music, theatre, art, and museums. Finally, institutionalized cultural capital refers to academic credentials and qualifications.

Bourdieu (1977a; 1977b) argues that schools are not neutral spaces; rather, they reproduce and legitimate class structure by guaranteeing the success of students who are familiar with the valued capital. He states that families from different socio-economic backgrounds teach their children cultural experiences that facilitate or impede their adjustment to school, thus transforming cultural resources into cultural capital. These resources, taught primarily in the family, include behaviors such as modes of use and relationship to language (Bernstein, 1971), relationship to authority, perceptions and disposition towards education, preferences, behaviors, and goods. For example, Lareau (2002) illustrates how middle-class children are trained to intervene on their own behalf, allowing them to develop a sense of entitlement. On the contrary,
working and poor-class children learn to depend on institutions, and develop a sense of powerlessness, frustration, and constraint. Lareau argues that disparity in types of cultural capital provide children with different resources that affect their future outcome and reproduce inequalities.

Bourdieu (1986) also adopts the term “habitus”, defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to…membership in a group” (p. 248). The concept of habitus enables a perception of social class and ethnic identity far beyond the economic and rational analysis of society. As Diane Reay observes “Habitus…includes a set of complex, discursive dispositions. It involves understanding of identity premised on familiar legacy and early childhood socialization” (as cited in Weis, 2004, p. 11). Lois Weis (2004) offers the following definition:

Habitus encompasses all of the general dispositions (ways of doing things, of reacting, of being) which result from the internalization and accumulation of past learning; a form of ‘know-how’ inculcated by the family, the school, and the broader social environment as part of the generalized process of socialization. (p. 12)

Educational perceptions and aspirations reflect the individual’s internalized habitus. It is through the hidden nature of habitus that individuals reproduce social classes. Only through immersion into a new milieu can we become aware of the differences in habitus. Social reproduction, then, becomes a fusion of social, cultural, and economic capital and the habitus that promote and develop them. According to Bourdieu, children from upper-class origin live within and are taught substantially different cultural capital than children from working and poor-classes. At home, upper-class children are taught the cultural capital cherished by schools. School
socialization is a simple extension of their home learning process. MacLeod (1987) illustrates this point:

Children who read books, visit museums, attend concerts, and go to the theatre and cinema (or simply grow up in families where these practices are prevalent) acquire a familiarity with the dominant culture that the educational system implicitly requires of its students for academic attainment. (p. 12)

For the children of the middle-class, school is perceived as a valuable asset for bettering their social position. Middle-class parents believe that schools should prepare their children for a successful future by teaching them academic skills that will prepare them for college (Brantlinger, 2003). For working-class and poor children, future success is not always correlated with an university education; thus, they have a tendency to have lower educational aspirations and higher drop out rates (Bohon, Kirkpatrick Johnson, & Gorman, 2006).

The majority of research on cultural capital centers on its relationship to educational attainment. Cultural capital is often conceived as the activities in which families engage. In existing studies, cultural capital adopts a “highbrow” reductionist approach (Bourdieu, 1977a, 1977b; Cookson & Persell, 1985; De Graaf et al., 2000; DiMaggio, 1982). However, the argument related to cultural capital in America is much more complex than just class. Other fundamental factors such as culture, ethnicity, race, and geographical background should also be considered. Some researchers have examined the relationship between cultural capital, race, and social class (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Monkman et al., 2005; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995). Still, little research has been conducted on how cultural capital is expressed differently in diverse cultural and ethnic groups. Moreover, there has not been sufficient research conducted on how capital is expressed and reproduced within families that simultaneously participate in two
societies. However, this study addresses this gap in the literature and looks at the effects of cultural and social capital in Latino transnational migrant families.

Few researchers have studied how practices taught inside the home milieu affect the resources for family members outside the home. Exceptions are the work of Lareau (2002; 2003) and Kohn and Schooler (1983), in which the authors argue that families from different social backgrounds value different knowledge. Lareau argues that parents from different social class differ in the ways they educate their children. Middle-class parents engage their children in numerous organized leisure activities, stress language use and the development of reasoning skills, and use conversations as their form of discipline. Working-class and poor parents emphasize “natural growth” (Lareau, 2002, p. 748) as their main childrearing technique. They believe that if they provide basic necessities (e.g., love, food, safety), their children will grow up to be successful. These parents give their children free leisure time and have deeper and richer ties with their extended family. Although Lareau shows how white and black middle, working, and poor-class parents pass along cultural capital to their children, little attention has been given to the ways different cultural and ethnic contexts may affect how families acquire, reproduce, and transmit cultural capital.

In addition to cultural capital, Bourdieu points to social capital as an important class resource. Social capital refers to the resources produced through participating in social networks and the use of those resources for social benefit. Coleman (1988) argues that social capital is an important factor in facilitating children’s socialization process. In the past three decades, social capital has been defined in many different ways (Bourdieu, 1977a; Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1988). Most theorists agree that social capital has three different elements: form, norms of obligation and reciprocity, and resources (McNeal, 1983). Form refers to the structural aspects of
social relations, including the intensity, nature, size of the relation and network, and the structural gaps. Norms and values are the hidden rules related to ways of behaving. Resources include access to other social networks, relationships, information, and goods.

Portes (1988) recognizes three basic functions of social capital evident in the literature: “(a) as a source of social control; (b) as a source of family support; (c) as a source of benefits through extrafamilial networks” (p. 9). Authors have used social capital to address different educational concerns. Allenberg (1996) examines school choice and the role parent’s social networks play in accessing information about the school’s quality and enrollment process. Cookson and Persell’s (1985) study found that elite schools utilize social networking as a tool for the education and reproduction of an upper class. In all of these studies, there is a common thread. Each study demonstrated that schools perceive social networking as an essential factor in giving children educational advantages. However, research has not sufficiently addressed the ways in which social networking in the home and host country, gives advantages or disadvantages to transnational migrants and their children.

What is noteworthy and particularly relevant to my current study is the influence that social and cultural capitals have in determining the Latino migrant family’s position within the social class structure of both their home and host society. Bourdieu’s theories enable us to compare how culturally and socially diverse families simultaneously navigate the social structure of different territories. Furthermore, Bourdieu’s theory allows us to examine the different meanings that their social and cultural capital takes on within different contexts.

In this work, I show that individuals both act on and are acted upon by multiple societies. Here, by broadening our understanding of social class as a multidimensional term, one that looks at material and non-material factors, I argue that we must also understand class as a subjective
concept that is lived differently in different parts of the world. My empirical observations led me to a view of social class that is neither coherent—as some early theorists have argued—nor totally context dependent, as some present-day scholars argue. Understanding the different contexts in which social class is malleable (through examining and comparing home and host land class signifiers) helps us see how families and individuals coming from other countries with different social structures might develop very different ways of using and developing social class schemas to create their identities in the host land.

Through examining the ways social class influences the everyday life of Latino families, this study tries to understand how both their home and host land influences transnational migrants’ experiences. I look at how the social interpretations developed in and brought from their home country influence the way they develop new interpretations in the host land. Most importantly, I examine how these transnational migrants re-define and re-interpret their original thoughts and perceptions in order to belong simultaneously to two societies. This study looks at how these encounters between home and host interpretations have the potential, under the right conditions, to change the ways of interpreting and acting in the world, and significantly change existing paradigms.

**Social Stratification Within Contemporary Migration**

Since the beginning of time, man has moved from one place to another. While migration is not a new concept, it has taken on a new meaning since the beginning of the era of globalization. Previous studies on migration centered on the process of assimilation and adaptation to the host society (Fitzpatrick, 1987; Gordon, 1964). However, the increased numbers of transnational migrants with ties between host and homeland has prompted researchers to investigate the
theoretical aspects of this phenomenon. Authors have pointed to advances in technology, travel, and communications as essential explanations on why migrants maintain strong ties to and are therefore strongly influenced by their homeland (Appadurai, 2002; Hollifield, 2007; Kellner, 2002; Wakeman, 1988). These relationships, which stretch across national borders, allow for a reformulation of the concept of migration in terms of fluidity, multiple belongings, and a reconfiguration of space and place.

Transnational migration allows for experiences that cut across national boundaries, connecting communities and cultures in new spaces. However, differentiation and contextualization are critical aspects in a discussion on transnational migration. It becomes important to be aware of the heterogeneity within particular groups, including diversity in social class, reason for moving, and nationalities.

Wallerstein (2000) looks at the effects of social class on migration and distinguishes between migrants from the top of the occupation scale and those in the lower part. He shows that one may be forced to move and still find oneself in a better socio-economic position than someone who willingly migrates. Li’s (2008) study of a Sudanese family in the U.S. applies social class analysis to the understanding of migration. According to Li, traditional class analysis cannot be applied successfully to migrants’ experience. Both Wallerstein and Li agree that migration is a phenomenon that is experienced very differently depending upon one’s social class background. However, these studies have not looked comparatively at the migration experience of families from varying social class. Furthermore, little research has been conducted on how social class mobility works in a transnational context.

Multiple studies have explored the different ways in which migrants locate themselves and create cross border connections. Roger Rouse (2002) studies the experiences of migrant
communities that cut across multiple national spaces. He discusses how the Aguilillan community has formed strong ties in both Mexico and the United States. The circulation of people, money, goods, and information has closely connected the community across national boundaries. Rouse describes this phenomenon as “transnational migrant circuits”, in which those living in Mexico are affected by events happening in the United States and vice versa. Although transnational migration has allowed an important connection between two distinct places, it has not created a homogeneous experience for these two communities. On the contrary, the Aguilillans have learned how to simultaneously operate within two diverse structures.

Continuing to explore the lives of transnational migrants, Chaudhuri’s (2005) ethnographic work of Bengali migrants in a New Delhi slum illustrates how identity is constructed through everyday life within the local context. She discusses how migrant women’s identity is negotiated between the host land’s legal expectations and their homeland’s social order and culture. Chaudhuri concludes that cultural identities are not territorially rooted. Like Rouse (2002), Chaudhuri suggests that culture is not fixed to any specific place or nation, and thus has become deterritorialized. Picking up on this point, Appadurai (2002) notes that deterritorialization is one of the main forces of the current global setting, and states that it is in this ground “in which money, commodities, and persons are involved in ceaselessly chasing each other around the world” (p. 54), that the creation of a new type of citizen and society is developing.

Rouse’s (2002) work sets its discussion around the notion that these communities escape the nation-state apparatus and challenge the classical concept of citizenship. Like Rouse, I maintain that Latino migrant families are engaged in the ongoing process of reshaping a new global citizen, one that escapes the hegemonic nation building processes. This does not mean that the national ideological apparatus is obsolete. On the contrary, I believe that it is very much alive
and plays an active role in American politics and immigration laws. What it does mean, however, is that transnational communities and families are shaping themselves along different structural conditions. These conditions give rise to the possibility of being simultaneously engaged in the nation building practices of two or more nation states (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1997).

In addition, the connections between social stratification and global migration are becoming more evident. Changes in the global economy and the movement of people are expanding the traditional definition of social class from a local issue to a global theme. In this dissertation, I hold that migration, especially transnational migration, is becoming an increasingly significant component of contemporary global social stratification. It is this reshaping that lies at the heart of this study. As I will argue throughout this research, it is through the simultaneous belonging and participation to multiple spaces and places that these Latino families constantly redefine themselves within a socio-cultural global context.

*Latino Migrant Families*

Migrants have become the fastest growing and most diverse segment of America’s population. Perhaps the most significant demographic trend in the United States for the past three decades has been the explosive growth of Latinos. In 1970, 9.6 million Latinos lived in the United States (Suro & Passel, 2003). It is estimated that there are now over 45 million Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). This absolute growth of over 35 million people is nearly equal to the entire current African American population. Moreover, the growth will continue. According to conservative projections, in just twelve more years, an additional 20 million Latinos, for a total of at least 65 million people, will live in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). As
the number of Latino migrants in the U.S. increases, the ability to understand their social and cultural diversity is central to the social sciences.

In order to understand the experience of migrant families, it is essential to examine their ethnic, racial, cultural, and social identities. In addition, considerations should be given to the diversity of families within the same ethnic communities. Hall and du Gay (1996) define identity as a process by which we learn to define ourselves. Therefore, people create an identity through the use of history, language, culture, class, and other associations. The development of ethnic identity has been studied by many scholars (Alba, 1990; Davidson, 1996; Ogbu, 1983; M. Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002; M. Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Alba (1990) describes the process by which ethnic identity is created as:

From early in life, each individual is exposed to a limited set of models, constituting a framework of acceptable alternatives based on his or her background, and elaborates a personal variant, a unique identity, within this context. The resolution of each stage of the life-cycle, then, is likely to occur in terms of an ethnically contingent set of alternatives, not only because of the individual’s family origins, but also because of his or her development to that point represents an accumulation of past ethnically influenced past resolutions. (p. 22)

Alba suggests that the individual’s own perception is related to how the social structure perceives him or her. However, Alba does not open the possibility of the individual constructing a self-image that, in turn, shapes the surrounding social structure. Therefore, questions can be raised about Alba’s assertion.

In a globalized world, ethnic identity within a new setting can influence and change the host culture. In this dissertation, I understand ethnic identity to be “not given, fixed, or unchanging, but are continually evolving products of material and social circumstances and of the actions of
groups themselves, wrestling with, interpreting, and responding to those circumstances, building or transforming identities in the process” (Cornell, 2000, p. 42). In addition, I perceive ethnic identity as situational; an individual or group’s ethnic identity has the potential to change depending on their situation, including life changes and geographical location.

The majority of research on ethnic identity has centered on biculturalism (Darder, 1991), misidentification of identities (Aboud, 1987), and acculturation or the adaptation to the dominant culture (M. Bernal & Knight, 1993). However, few studies have examined how migrant/ethnic families transmit social and educational advantages or disadvantages to their children. The literature on ethnic identity, more specifically Latino identity, continues to grow and incorporate many different cultural dimensions. Latino cultural identity is a result of family heritage, cultural traditions, language, school influence, and notions of gender, family, collectivity, etc. Thus their ethnic identity shows not only how they have been positioned, but how they position themselves within a new culture (Alba, 1990). Although there is an extensive body of research that deals with Latino identity within Mexican-American and Mexican populations (Beca Zinn, 1994; Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Knight, Bernal, Cota, Garza, & Ocampo, 1993), surprisingly little research has focused on identity in other Latino populations. Furthermore, there is a need for research that examines how Latinos from different nationalities and social class perceive other Latinos from diverse backgrounds.

In understanding ethnic identity, Ogbu’s (1983; Ogbu & Simons, 1998) work highlights the differences among minorities. He situates Latinos in different categories depending upon their country of origin and historical perspective. Latinos such as Cubans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Central Americans, and South Americans are grouped into voluntary minorities. In contrast, Latinos such as Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans are categorized as involuntary
immigrants. He suggests that voluntary and involuntary minorities develop different ways of understanding and guiding their actions within the U.S. He makes an important distinction between voluntary—those who chose to migrate to the host country—and involuntary minorities—people who were brought to the host country as workers or were colonized.

Ogbu claims that voluntary minorities create a positive dual frame of reference. In this frame of reference, migrants compare themselves to those left behind in their homeland and believe they enjoy more economic prosperity, political freedom, and opportunity for upward mobility. In addition, voluntary immigrants compare their children’s education to that of their homeland and believe that the U.S. allows for better educational opportunities, especially in higher education. In contrast, involuntary minorities view their cultural frame of reference as opposed to that of the dominant group in the host country, thereby forming an oppositional identity. Involuntary minorities perceive their socio-economic standing and schooling experience as inferior to middle-class, white Americans.

Trueba (1988) argues against Ogbu’s typology and states that Ogbu does not consider the diversity within minorities and stereotypes their experience. In addition, Gibson (1997) questions the applicability of Ogbu’s typology and argues that empirical reality is far more complex than typologies of immigrant and involuntary minorities. In this study, I argue that the relationship of Latinos to their home country and their ability to travel back and forth between home and host country allows for a unique experience. In addition, there is a need to look at how minorities who simultaneously maintain ties in two countries create a frame of reference and relate to their home and host land.

Latino identity in the United States has assumed a distinctive role. While Latinos are people who come from diverse backgrounds, their experience in the U.S. has been unified to create a
Latino panethnicity. This panethnic image, in many ways, has served to create more political power for the Latino movement (Spickard & Burroughs, 2000). Nonetheless, it also generates conflicts within the Latino population, as “the various members of the category discover that, in the eyes of others, they are something they have never been in their own” (Cornell, 2000, p.99). Flores (2003) refers to the panethnic Latino approach as a “Latino imaginary”, in which a stereotyped past and present is constructed regardless of fundamental social, cultural, historical, and geographical differences between Latin American migrants. Flores states that “differences are drawn among and within the groups not so as to divide or categorize…but to assure that social identities, actions, and alliances are adequately grounded in the specific historical experiences and cultural practices that people recognize as their own” (p. 99). Thus, there is a growing need for research on Latino panethnic identity and how the relations and perceptions of Latinos by other Latinos affect and create other identities.

In addition, there is an urgency to study how first generation Latinos from diverse backgrounds experience Latino panethnicity when coming to the U.S. Most importantly, there is a need for research that highlights the diversity of the Latino community and the cultural and class differences between groups of diverse nationality. This dissertation addresses these gaps in the literature and looks at the diversity within Latino groups. Furthermore, it acknowledges Latino panethnicity as one of multiple identities that Latinos share and, most importantly, it recognizes heterogeneity within the panethnic discourse. In order to understand the migration experience of Latinos, it is important to look at the similarities that bring them together; however, it is also critical to take into account the differences that separate them. This study adopts a multidimensional lens of analysis that examines the inner boundaries that separate the Latino experience as an experience, including race, culture, social class, and country of origin.
Part of social or group identity construction deals with what sociologist Michèle Lamont calls “boundary work”, or the act of generating categories of difference between one’s group and other groups. Here, I see the kind of boundary work Lamont discusses as part of the Latino identity process. Individuals use certain frameworks, including ethnicity, race, and social class, to define which people and actions are “good” or “bad” in order to establish their social distance from other groups. Such boundaries help the individual to distinguish between members of the individual’s group and members of other groups. Generally, research on Latinos focuses on a specific national background and rarely do studies compare groups of diverse backgrounds. Thus, there is a need for studies that examine the ways in which Latinos from diverse backgrounds utilize categories of difference, including social stratification, ethnicity, and race, to adapt to a new setting and develop a sense of belonging.

*Social Stratification Schemas in Education*

Social stratification schemas are a key part of understanding how institutions, families, and individuals create interpretative frameworks to relate to one another. Schemas reveal organizational and individual differences in institutionally-based repertoires that have implications for social practices. These would include how parents relate to school personnel or choices, if any, about the type of extracurricular activities for their children. A key issue in understanding how families and schools reproduce inequalities is the relation to social class. Much of the literature points to class differences among parents and schools, and how this ultimately affects children’s educational attainment (Ayon, 1980; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Brantlinger, 2003; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Lareau, 2002, 2003; McDonough, 1997; Oakes, 1985; Rist, 1970; Useem, 1990). While the effects of social origin have been studied extensively,
little advance has been made in understanding how this process actually occurs. Lareau (2003) studies families from diverse social class and concludes that “family practices cohere by social class” (p. 236). Her observations between middle and working/poor-class families show that there are fundamental differences between them. These include the number of organized activities, pace of family life, time spent on informal play, and amount of independence children have from adults. However, not enough research has been conducted on the effects of social class in the education of migrant children.

In this dissertation, I observed Latino migrant families and show how they create specific schemas, many related to their social class background, to understand and act on their children’s education. I also describe schemas in relation to the role of families and the role of schools in their children’s education.

*Social Stratification Schemas and Families*

An extensive and growing body of literature documents the importance of family involvement with respect to their children’s future outcomes. To better understand the connections between culture, ethnicity, social class, every day living practices, and children’s educational engagement, it is essential to understand the different spectra of family involvement. Parental involvement is referred to as the participation of parents at home and at school (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992).

Even though families’ everyday living practices are known to influence children’s life chances, little is known about the mechanisms through which families transmit these advantages or disadvantages. A significant body of research documents the importance of family influence on increasing children’s educational success (Epstein, 1987; A. T. Henderson & Berla, 1994;
Olmstead & Rubin, 1983). Some researchers (Biblarz & Raftery, 1999; Boggess, 1998; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994) look at the influence of family structure and children’s educational attainment. Others (Hertz & Marshall, 2001; Jacobs & Gerson, 1998; Menaghan, 1991) have concentrated on the time factor, including how many hours parents spend at work and their contributions to childcare. A number of studies (Majoribanks, 1983, 1984; Natriello & McDill, 1986) argue that parental expectations and aspirations have a positive influence on their children’s academic performance and attainment. Dauber and Epstein (1993), who studied the involvement of parents with elementary and middle school children, found that parents’ level of education and number of children in the family were predictors of involvement, while parents’ work and marital status were not.

Although many studies have undertaken the task of assessing the relationship between parent involvement and student achievement, the literature does not indicate what form of parental involvement is specifically related to educational achievement (Keith, 1991). Some of these contradictions are due to the fact that parental involvement is a vague term with a multitude of connections (Keith & Benson, 1992), thus making it difficult to measure. The indicators of parental involvement vary significantly across studies. They include, parents’ interest in the social and academic aspects of their children (Keith, Reimers, Fehrman, Pottevaum, & Aubey, 1986), parents’ participation in school activities (Cervone & O'Leary, 1982), parental educational expectations and aspirations, and students’ perceptions of these standards (Keith et al., 1993). Home literacy experiences (Leseman & de Jong, 1998), verbal interaction between parents and children (Gonzalez & Blanco, 1991), and home rules and supervision (Bradley & Ryan, 1984; Gottfried, 1984; Kurdek & Sincalir, 1988) have also been positively related to children’s educational achievement. As a result of the multiple definitions attached to parental
Involvement, researchers have tended to give inconsistent results depending on the meaning assigned to the term (Seginer, 1983). The discrepancies between results suggest that parental involvement is a multidimensional construct, thus making it difficult to generalize. Even though several studies have concluded that a combination of both parental involvement at home and at school seems to be the most effective (A. Henderson, 1987; Kagan, 1984), it remains unclear which specific components of parental involvement have the greatest effect on student achievement. Nonetheless, research shows that one of the most effective ways of increasing students’ achievement is by involving their families (Chavkin, 1993; A. T. Henderson & Berla, 1994).

There are two major types of parental involvement at school (Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). The first corresponds to contact between parents and school personnel; e.g., parent-teacher conferences. The second type looks at attendance at and volunteering in school meetings and activities. This type includes PTA meetings and sport events. Some authors (Becker & Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1986) argue that when teachers are committed to involving parents in their children’s education, parents understand more about what their children’s educational process is; thus, they have a more positive perception of teachers and the students improve their attitudes and achievement. Other authors (De Graaf et al., 2000; Lareau, 1987, 2003) assert that parental involvement in the school is closely related to their social class. Lareau (1987) illustrates how educational skills, economic means, and time constraints are responsible for differences in parental involvement between working-class and middle-class families.

A recurrent problem with many studies on parent involvement is that they are unilaterally focused. Some researchers (Bickley, Trivette, Keith, & Anderson, 1995; Coleman, 1988; Keith & Benson, 1992) suggest that studies should take into account the individual and combined
effects that the different dimensions of parental involvement have on student attainment. Bickley et al. (1995) suggest that future research on parental involvement ought to allow for a multidimensional, comprehensive, and conceptual framework. Lareau and MacNamara (1999), in their case study with third-grade children, utilize a multidimensional approach to parental involvement. As opposed to using only one factor to describe how parents approach schools, they draw on race, class, and social and cultural capital to explain why parental involvement differs among groups. Li (2002) also adopts a multidimensional perspective when studying Chinese immigrant children. She looks at parental involvement in literacy through a socio-cultural and bilingual perspective. It is clear that sufficient attention has not been given to parental involvement within culturally diverse families of diverse social class.

In addition to parental involvement, many authors have studied the influence of other family living practices on children’s education. These studies include research on living arrangements (Blank, 1998), gender patterns (Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Scott-Jones & Peebles-Wilkins, 1986), family size (Unger & Molina, 1997), and the role of religion (D'Antonio, Newman, & Wright, 1982). Other studies emphasize the effects of social class on everyday living practices (Dekovic & Gerris, 1992; Laosa, 1989; Lareau, 2002, 2003). Lareau (2003) stresses how social class dynamics influence family’s daily lives. For example, she explains how middle-class families use language to negotiate and bargain. On the contrary, in poor families, language was used in a more functional way, such as to give children directives.

Researchers who have studied the link between family and education have also focused on family literacy practices (Heath, 1983; Li, 2002; McKay, 1993), including bilingualism (Schmid, 2001). Li (2002) examines the ways in which home practices influence children’s literacy at school. She states that the physical environment is an important means to construct literacy
practices. Furthermore, she illustrates how families can enhance their children’s literacy practices by having print materials at home and exposing their children to technology, books, and storytelling.

These perspectives allow me to include the broad spectrum of everyday living practices in the study of Latino migrant families. To better illustrate the relationship between families, culture, and schools, I adopt a multidimensional framework for understanding and analyzing the role of the family in the large socio-cultural context. By a multidimensional framework, I mean to reference the interwoven and inseparable nature of the family’s background—the cultural, national, and ethnic influences, social class, and reasons for migrating—where families become who they are and relate to their children’s education. In this sense, it is essential to focus on the family as a whole.

In addition to parental involvement and other living practices, researchers (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Lareau, 2002; Ogba, 1981; Stevenson & Baker, 1987; Useem, 1990) have recognized that family practices vary within and among groups of parents. Studies suggest that cultural background is an important factor when looking at parental involvement (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). This variation is mainly due to the fact that families have different cultural backgrounds that influence their involvement with their children. The majority of research conducted on parental involvement has been based on the white population. Earlier studies (Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1992; Muller & Kerbow, 1993) have revealed that parental involvement varies according to parents’ social, racial, ethnic, and economic characteristics. Only a few studies (Kelty, 1997; Lareau, 2002; Li, 2002; Vasquez, 2003) have paid attention to parental involvement with varying ethnic or racial groups. Vasquez’ (2003) study on a bilingual and bicultural program concerning Mexican children found that involving
parents as staff, volunteers, and learners granted children and their parents greater access to the knowledge of the dominant culture. Li’s (2002) work with Chinese immigrants in Canada suggests that factors such as the families’ shared activities, literacy experiences, cultural heritage, social context, educational background, and experiences in the new country shaped home literacy practices and contributed to differences in children’s literacy practices. She also found that economic status had less of an impact on children’s literacy development.

On the other hand, Lareau’s (2002) study on the impact of the family’s race and social class on children’s life chances links social class to educational outcomes, and emphasizes the advantages social class transmits to children. She also concludes that “[r]ace had much less impact than social class” (p. 747). According to Lareau, middle-class black and white families have very similar, sometimes even identical, practices when it comes to language use, discipline, and strategies used to negotiate with institutions. However, this is not necessarily true when studying other ethnic groups. Lareau and Li’s contradictory findings on the impact of economic status create an opening in the literature. This dissertation addresses this gap and looks at the influence of the family’s ethnic, cultural, and social class background on their children’s education.

The connection between parents and children’s educational involvement is often related to the family’s socialization process. This allows values to be passed from generation to generation (Kerckhoff, 1989; T. Smith, 1982). However, authors have suggested the inadequacy of conventional parental involvement and childrearing analysis based on the assertion that this approach is designed for white middle-class families, thus making them inadequate for understanding minority families (Ogbu, 1981). Some authors suggest that culture has a strong influence on parental involvement (Cummins, 1996; Garcia, 1999; Lopez, Scribner, &
Mahitivanichcha, 2001), and that the immigrants’ cultural background influences their children’s educational beliefs and outcomes (Kelty, 1997; Li, 2002, 2008).

Hao and Bonstead-Bruns’ (1998) study compares immigrant and native students and finds considerable differences in parental involvement between the groups. They measure parental involvement using three parent-child interaction measures: parents’ involvement in school learning, extracurricular activities, and parents’ involvement in other learning. Their study found that compared to Asian immigrants and native whites, Mexican immigrants followed by Mexican-Americans and blacks were the group that ranked the lowest in all parental involvement categories. Hao and Bonstead-Bruns also found that parental expectations were higher in Asian immigrant groups, especially Chinese and Koreans in comparison to that of native whites. However, questions can be raised about the social class background of each of these groups and how it would ultimately affect the findings.

Teachers and schools also play an important role in parental involvement and can sometimes have misconceptions of parental interest. Frequently, immigrant parents are perceived as being less involved in their children’s education. Numerous studies (Dauber & Epstein, 1993; Ritter, Mont-Reynaud, & Dornbusch, 1993) indicate that factors such as English language skills, cultural beliefs, and unfamiliarity with institutions contribute to differences in parental involvement in schools. For example, Valdés (1996) and Kelty (1997) study the different educational values to which migrant families adhere. Valdés’ (1996) study shows that Mexican-American immigrant families believe school success is not the main factor in their children’s future success. Rather, in these families, it is more important for children to show respect for adults and to help with smaller siblings. Kelty (1997) finds that communication between Latino parents and their children is one-way rather than engaging. This communication style is mainly a
result of Latino culture emphasizing obedience and respect of adult authority. It is clear that these family practices are not always perceived positively in American schools. Thus, differences in cultural family approaches to education can create disadvantages for children.

Some studies on Latino families suggest that parents actively help with homework as a way to ensure school success for their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Nonetheless, Delgado-Gaitan (1992) and Goldenberg (1987; 1989) assert that parents’ help is not always effective. This ineffectiveness is generally due to the lack of parent’s knowledge as to the correct strategies and how to use them. Moles (1993) explains that for Latino parents, schools represent an unfamiliar and hostile environment. Also, the lack of English language skills and previous discrimination experiences keep parents away from schools (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). Some studies have found that helping and guiding parents to be more involved in their children’s education is an effective tool in increasing parental involvement. While working with Latino families, Goldenberg (1987) found that when teachers sent home suggestions on things parents could do to support word-recognition skills, Latino parents responded favorably. Sung, Kim, and Yawkey’s (1997) study on the impact of parent involvement programs on Puerto Ricans shows the importance of involving culturally and linguistically diverse parents in their children’s education.

The majority of research on parental involvement regarding the Latino population has been conducted on Mexican descendents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Goldenberg, 1987; Kelty, 1997; P. Smith, Jimenez, & Martinez-Leon, 2003). Surprisingly, not enough research has focused on parental involvement at home and at school of Latinos from diverse backgrounds. I suggest that social class differences within the Latino community contribute to differences in parental involvement.
Social Stratification Schemas and Schools

There is a large body of literature that addresses the concept of class, inequality, and education. Many researchers (Anyon, 1980; Apple & Weis, 1985; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Lareau, 2003) have argued that schools and other institutions, such as the family, reproduce inequalities within society. Extensive research has been conducted in relation to schools reproducing social inequality. This point is reflected in Anyon’s (1980) work on the relationship between social class and the school’s hidden curriculum. She reveals how the educational system reproduces a division between classroom experience and curriculum knowledge among schools that teach children of varying social class. She suggests the existence of a “hidden curriculum” in schoolwork that eventually prepares children for their relationship to power and their future position in the job market. Essential to this point is the idea that social class is a determinant factor in the type of education children receive. Anyon identifies four different types of schools: working class, middle-class, affluent professional, and executive elite. She describes how each school trains their students differently based on social class background. For example, in working class schools school knowledge is seen in terms of facts and simple skills, in affluent professional schools it involves individual discovery and creativity, and in executive elite schools, school knowledge is referred to as intellectual processes such as reasoning and problem solving. Rist (1970) also argues that teachers’ perceptions and behavior influence how students are treated in the classroom and, by extension, affects their achievement. He suggests that “preferential treatment of a selected group of children appeared to be derived from her [the teacher] belief that certain behavioral and cultural characteristics are more crucial to learning in school…” (p. 423).
Contemporary inequalities within schools are also closely related to the effects of globalization and the rapid advancement of technology. Globalization and the development of technology allow for numerous opportunities for development (Norris, 2001; Servon, 2002); at the same time, they create inequalities based on types of access, uses, and equipment. Schools are no exception. Looking at the disparities between schools and how they relate to technology is crucial in understanding contemporary inequalities. DiMaggio and Hargittai (2001) describe five dimensions of digital inequality: in equipment, autonomy of use, skill, social support, and the purposes for which the technology is employed. It is clear that schools play an important role in developing skills, practices, and experiences that help communities learn and adapt to these technological changes (Norris, 2001). When schools differ in access, resources, and digital education, the digital divide transforms into social class inequalities.

Several studies have looked at the digital divide between schools serving low-income and higher income groups (Servon, 2002; Valadez & Durán, 2007). Their results conclude that there are significant differences in access and uses between students. Servon’s (2002) research illustrates how wealthier schools have better resources for technology, while poor schools have less access to technology. Valadez and Durán’s (2007) study compared low and high resource schools and found that high resource schools had more computers per classroom, more connections to the Internet, access to local area networks, and more teachers who incorporated technology into their lessons more than low-resource schools. Although there are studies that look at differences in technology among schools and how they affect racial and social disparities, there is a need to look at how migrant children from diverse social class differ in the ways they are schooled. In addition, there is a need for research that studies the relationship between access and uses of technology at home and in school, and how it varies among families of different
social class. Finally, it is important to assess how differences in technology use and access affect future outcomes.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

This study is a unique qualitative analysis of transnational Latino families. It explores the discourse and experiences of migrants who simultaneously live within multiple territories, while at the same time, examining how this movement has influenced their educational process.

In my attempt to gain valuable data from my different sites, I use several qualitative research techniques. In this ethnography, I utilize in-depth interviews with family members and schoolteachers, observation of family’s everyday living practices, field notes, and document collection. I also observe the school of one of the children in each family, who I designate as the “focus child” for that family. The use of these methods allows me to understand how Latino transnational families live their everyday life.

The Setting

This study is carried out in two main settings: at home and at school. My primary emphasis is on the home as a crucial site for the observation of everyday living practices. However, by conducting the field research in both sites, I also frame the study through an educational perspective. This allows me to juxtapose everyday family living practices and how they are represented within the school. It is important to note that the home setting is only one of numerous sites where the negotiation of everyday living practices takes place. Other sites, including church services, visits to relatives, medical appointments, and shopping, undoubtedly exist and form part of everyday life; they were also observed. The second main observational site
is the focus child’s elementary school, where it was possible to observe the connections among
the child and school learning, authority, and peers.

The study takes place in a Northeastern city of the United States, which I have named Lake
City and one of its suburbs, which I have named Main Town. The two poor families live in
downtown Lake City; one of the middle-class families resides in an affluent neighborhood within
Lake City and the other family in the suburb of Main Town. Lake City is a city of almost
300,000 inhabitants which has been undergoing the process of de-industrialization for the past 30
years. In the 1970s, Lake City’s main manufacturing companies began closing, resulting in a
serious economic downturn. Today the city still struggles with joblessness and economic
recession. Main Town, although geographically close to Lake City, has a different general
outlook. Lake City’s median household income in 2006 was $27,850 in comparison to Main
Town’s median of $59,472, and the number of families living below the poverty level in Lake
City was 23.8% compared to 4.3% in Main Town. The racial composition is also an important
differential factor between the two cities. Lake City has a higher African American and Latino
population than Main Town. African Americans comprise 39.7%, and Latinos 8.9% of the
population, compared to 51% white. Main Town’s population is mainly white: 87.6% compared
to 4.1% African American, and only 1.5% Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

Although one of the middle-class families, the Rossis, lives in Lake City, the conditions of
their specific neighborhood are significantly different from the city’s average, thus more closely
resembling Main Town’s characteristics. In 1999, the block group information from the U.S
Census Bureau shows their neighborhood with a median household income of $46,912 and the
number of families living below the poverty level at 4.5%. In addition, the racial and ethnic
composition is similar to that of Main Town: 87.1% white, 7.9% African American, and 4% Latino.

Because my study focuses largely on how Latino transnational migrant families from varying social class live out their everyday lives and how this reflects on their children’s education, it is necessary to address the school environment to which the focus child is exposed. Middle class children attend Main Elementary and Maple Elementary. The student population in Main and Maple Elementary are mainly white; 55% and 65% respectively. The presence of minority students in these schools is less than in the inner-city Lake City schools; Main Elementary, has populations of 35% African American and 6% Latino, and Maple Elementary has populations of 28% African American and 3% Latino. Daniel and Oscar go to Lake City inner-city schools; Lake Elementary and River Elementary, respectively. Contrary to the middle-class schools, Lake City inner-city school students are predominantly African American and Latino. Lake Elementary has a student population of 23% white, 59% African American, and 16% Latino. River Elementary has 13% white, 22% African American, and 63% Latino.

In addition to differences in ethnic and racial composition, these schools differ significantly in the levels of family income; to discern this difference I use eligibility for free lunch as an indicator. River Elementary and Lake Elementary have the higher rates, with 92 % and 71 %, respectively. Maple Elementary and Main Elementary have much lower rates, at 31 % and 20 %, respectively. It is clear that the differences between middle and poor-class schools mirror the differences between the neighborhoods they serve.
The Participants

In order to understand how transnational Latino migrant families go about their daily lives and how this affects their children’s education, it is essential to examine the family’s cultural, social, historical, and national background. Furthermore, it is crucial to look at the home and the school setting. This study tells the stories of four Latino families of varying social class and nationality, and how their experiences influence their children’s education. In each family, I look at the schooling experience of one child attending elementary school; that child is termed the focus child in the study. Choosing one child as the focus in each family allowed me to frame the study as a two-site research: at home and at school.

The families were chosen based on criteria which included the following: 1 or 1.5 generation migrants; living in the U.S. for at least 3 years; and having at least one child attending elementary school. The social class selection of the families was based on income, educational attainment, neighborhood location, and social class in the home country. The four Latino families studied here are the Mendozas, Rodriguezes, Denegris, and the Rossis; pseudonyms are used in order to ensure anonymity. They are differentiated into poor and middle-class families. The poor families, the Mendozas and the Rodriguezes, are first-generation Puerto Ricans, who came to the mainland United States in search for better economic opportunities. In these two families, economic capital is limited; they both receive government help and are unable to hold steady employment. The Mendozas and the Rodriguezes both live in inner-city, marginal neighborhoods and neither of the parents has ever attended university. There are four people permanently living in the Mendoza household; the mother, Juana, her two children, Daniel (focus child), 10 and Juliana, 15, and Juana’s boyfriend/fiancé Roberto, who also has a 10-year-old son, Fredo. Fredo visits during the weekends. Diana Rodriguez is a single mother living with her two
younger children, Paco, 13 and Oscar (focus child), 9. Her 22-year-old daughter, Laura, lives just three blocks away with her husband and two small children.

Initially, based on geographical and cultural considerations, this study was designed as an ethnographic study of four Puerto Rican families from varying social class. Because of the difficulty experienced in finding middle-class families in which both parents were Puerto Rican, I expanded the search for Latino families of other nationalities. As it was difficult to find middle-class families in which both parents were Latinos, the search was expanded to families where at least the mother was Latina. The Denegris and the Rossis are the two middle-class families studied here. They are both first generation Latinos from Peru and Argentina respectively. The Denegris came to the U.S. with student visas in pursuit of their doctoral degrees. They have only one daughter, 7-year-old Rosita (focus child). The Rossi household is a combination of Italian-American and Argentinean backgrounds. John, a third-generation Italian, and Marta, a first-generation Argentinean met in the U.S. and decided to reside here, close to John’s parents. The Rossi’s only son Alex (focus child) is 6 years old. At the time of the home observations, Marta’s mother was living with them. Both the Denegris and the Rossis come from middle-class families, have higher education degrees, an income that allows them to have a comfortable life, and live in a neighborhood with higher per capita income than that of the poor families.

The strategy for finding the families was based on a snowball method, through which I asked people that I knew and institutions that catered to the Latino population to give me references. In the case of the poor families, the neighborhood’s Catholic Church and their personnel were essential in helping me find these families. I spoke with the person in charge of community events and she put me in contact with the Mendozas and the Rodriguezes. The middle-class families were found through university connections. The Denegris both belonged to the Latin
American Student Association, of which I was a member. Marta Rossi is member of an Argentinean women’s group with connections to the university. As the group also meets with women from other Latin-American countries, I was invited to attend several of their meetings. Thus, the prior acquaintance to both families facilitated access to their homes.

It is important to note in this study that I am not drawing a relationship between national background and social class. Although the two poor families studied here happen to be Puerto Rican, this does not mean that all Puerto Ricans are poor, nor do they have the same socio-economic or educational characteristics as the families studied here. Rather, there are many highly educated and economically affluent Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. The same should be noted for the middle-class families I observed; not all Argentineans and Peruvians are middle-class, nor do they all have university degrees.

In addition to the sixteen family participants, four teachers also participated. The teachers were the focus children’s homeroom teachers. However, it is important to note the cultural, ethnic, and neighborhood location characteristics among the teachers. All teachers came from middle-class backgrounds; two teachers were Latinas and the other two were white. Although there was no relation between ethnic background and the school at which they were teaching, there was a clear separation between where some of the teachers lived and where they worked. The teachers who work in the inner-city poor schools, Lake Elementary and River Elementary, live in the suburbs. In comparison, teachers in Main and Maple Elementary, the middle-class schools, live in the same neighborhoods as their students.
Data Collection

The family is the first social educator. It is the basic milieu where beliefs, traditions, rules, and culture are taught and reproduced from generation to generation. Ethnographic research is essential in helping to describe and understand the culture patterns of migrant families, and how these learned patterns relate ideas to each other, to people, to material objects, to social reproduction, and to education. Ethnography is fundamental in studying and understanding the family’s everyday life patterns as they relate to their environment (Dobbert, 1982). I find that ethnography can successfully address the issue of examining families’ everyday living practices in relation to culture. Ethnography has also allowed me to study the family in its naturally occurring setting, and capture its social meanings and ordinary activities. By involving myself directly in the family’s setting and activities, I was able to collect data in a systematic way (Brewer, 2000).

Many researchers have acknowledged the importance of doing ethnographic research on families. Lareau’s (2003) study has shown how ethnography is an important tool for understanding how parenting and childrearing differ by social class. By using observation in the homes and schools, and interviews with parents and children, Lareau acquires a deeper understanding of how cultural repertoires taught to children initiate class inequality. Li (2002) makes use of ethnographic methodology as a basis for her study on literacy and cultural practices within the home setting. She draws on participant observation, interviews, field notes, and document and artifact collection in order to look into the socio-cultural practices of literacy in the home. My study is methodologically constructed through an ethnographic lens.

Although there are many different characteristics of ethnographic studies, almost all include participant-observation and in-depth interviews (Lareau & Shultz, 1996). In an effort to
understand the participant’s world, I utilize participant-observations, interviews, field notes, and document collection as my main methods. The data were all collected between June 2006 and July 2007.

*Observations*

Observing the home setting has been essential in understanding everyday living practices. Participant observation involves “data gathering by means of participation in the daily lives of informants in their natural setting: watching, observing and talking to them in order to discover their interpretations, social meanings and activities” (Brewer, 2000, p. 59). As part of the family living practices, activities such as family outings, shopping, doctor’s appointments, school meetings, religious activities, and others essential home activities were also part of the observations. The aim of my observations was to gain understanding of the ways every day life occurs in these migrant families and how it relates to their children’s education at home and at school. For example, observations on how house rules are stated, enforced, and negotiated between parents and children lead me to ask: is there a class difference in the ways in which families communicate, enforce, and negotiate rules? Does cultural background influence these rules? Reflecting upon such questions has assisted in the comparison between Latino families of varying social class.

During the first interview/introduction with the families, I proceeded to explain to them what the study was about, who I was, and why I was doing this. I also gave them the consent forms and worked on schedules that better suited them. I visited each home between two and four times a week. The span of these visits lasted between one and three months. There were between twelve and twenty weekday observations and four to ten weekend observations per family.
During the weekday observations, I was at their homes when the focus child arrived from school and stayed until they went to bed at night. During weekend observations, I arrived at their home before noon and stayed until five or six o’clock in the evening. During the home observations, I accompanied families during their daily routine, which sometimes included grocery shopping, cleaning, and family visits.

The school was the second setting observed. Bowles and Gintis’ (1976) reproduction theory stresses the importance of family, work, and schooling as the main reproducers of social class. Schools are sites where academic and social learning takes place. Many authors (Anyon, 1980; Lareau, 1987, 1989; Rist, 1970) have researched the school as a site to gain understanding on the relationship between home and education. My objective in entering the school was to gain knowledge on how family living practices relate to educational engagement. I visited each of the schools between one and five times; I followed the children throughout their school activities for the day and observed how they interacted with the lesson being taught, their peers, teachers, and other school personnel and vice versa. I also had the opportunity to attend a field trip and two school presentations.

Although my role at both sites was that of a “researcher”, the specific role differed between home and school. For the purposes of this study, I adopted a participating observer role within the home setting that mirrors that of Li’s (2002) active-member-researcher role. As a participant observer, I assumed responsibilities, participated in household chores and activities, but did not necessarily share the family’s values and goals. In the schools, I adopted a less participative role. I mainly observed the school day from the back of the classroom how the school day went about. Through these observations, as well as through other methods of data collection, I was able to capture a truly unique look at how schools and families influence each other. Only through these
observations of very personal interactions within such private settings, such as someone’s home, am I able to accurately tell the story of these Latino migrant families.

It has been noted that participant observation as a technique has limitations (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003; Brewer, 2000). Brewer (2000) acknowledges the boundaries of this technique and states that it should never be the sole research method. In my research, I use other data collection methods, such as interviews, field notes, and document collection.

**Interviews**

I utilize interviews as a critical method to collect specific details on previous observations. I conducted in-depth interviews with all family members living within the household and all the homeroom teachers. In the case of the Rodríguezes, although the older daughter, Laura, did not live with them, I interviewed her as part of the nuclear family. The fact that Laura and her family spend a considerable amount of time at her mother’s home led me to include them in the study. I scheduled a first introductory interview with both parents or with the head of the household. During this one-hour interview/introduction, I went through the study’s details, made sure that the selection criteria were met, and answered questions that the participants had. I also reassured each of the participants that I would change their names and keep the information they shared with me confidential. After the second or third week of observations in the home, I started individually interviewing the family members for a period of one hour each. I decided to first interview the adults, including parents and other extended family members living at home (see Appendix B), and then followed to interview the children (see Appendix A). The purpose of the interviews was to discuss their experience with migration and how it has changed their identity, memories and experiences with education, family background, and perception on social class. At the end of the observations, I decided it was important to get some information on topics that had
surfaced after the first interview. As a result, I conducted follow-up interviews with all the mothers (see Appendix C). These interviews lasted approximately one hour. Questions in these follow-up interviews were related to doubts and questions that arose after initial interviews of the family members and during the observations.

I approached the family interviews as what Burgess (1984) calls *conversations with a purpose*, where I engaged in an informal conversation with the interviewees in order to “access life on the ‘inside’ and to represent it accurately” (Brewer, 2000, p. 67). All interviews were audio taped and later transcribed. Many of the interviews were in Spanish; thus, they were also translated.

After the school observations, I interviewed the focus child’s homeroom teacher (see Appendix D). The teachers were asked to reflect on the ways their students interacted within the school environment both socially and academically. Furthermore, I was interested in how teachers perceived culture, ethnicity, and social class with regards to their students in general, and more specifically, the focus child and his/her family. The interviews took place in the school and lasted approximately one hour. They were audio taped and later transcribed.

Children, family members, and teachers were asked to sign consent forms, agreeing to be observed and interviewed, and allowing me to use the gathered information in my study.

*Field Notes*

I utilize Bogdan and Bilken’s (2003) two approaches to field notes. First, I used a descriptive approach, which allowed me to provide details on what occurred in the field, taking into account the setting, people, actions, events, conversations, routines, rules, etc. Secondly, I also used a reflective approach, which permitted me to write my personal account of the field, including
ideas, concerns, future questions and observations, and possible findings. After every home and school observation, I wrote down a description of the setting, interaction, personal thoughts, and ideas. I wrote my notes in a field-note notebook that I had designated for this purpose. Every weekend I compiled all the field notes and transcribed them into my computer.

The successful outcome of participant observations relies on detailed, accurate, and extensive field notes (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003). The field notes later helped me develop some of the interview questions and find crucial themes and relationships between topics. They also allowed me to keep track of daily observations, concerns, details to look at during future observations, and description of attitudes, behaviors, and physical appearances.

**Document Collection**

Finally, I collected and analyzed school documents. I collected documents in the form of tests, report cards, teacher comments, homework, and quizzes, and I used these in connection to the observations and the interviews. These documents served as an additional source to understand the link between family living practices and educational engagement. These documents allowed me to view the school’s “official perspective” (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003) on the focus child. In addition, these materials permit me to observe how the parents react to and handle their children’s schoolwork.

**Data Analysis**

It is only through the organization and analysis of data that ethnographic research is transformed into “categories and relationships between categories that explain naturalistic observation data in a processual sense” (Dobbert, 1982, p. 269). My approach for data analysis is
based on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1977). Grounded theory is a research methodology based on the idea that theories emerge from data as they are collected and analyzed. In addition, I follow the American Educational Research Association’s (2006) standards for reporting on research, which states that data analysis “should be described in sufficient detail to permit understanding of how the data were analyzed and the processes and assumptions underlying specific techniques” (p. 9). Finally, my study follows Miles and Huberman’s (1984) three major stages of data organization: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

First Stage: Data Reduction

The initial data analysis began while the observations and interviews were taking place. During the visits, I began identifying connections, similarities, and differences between the families. I annotated these connections in my field notes and returned to them during the coding process. For example, while observing the Denegris, I noticed that they made a conscious effort to speak Spanish to their daughter Rosita. I wondered if the other families would also speak Spanish at home. After observing all the families and their interaction with the Spanish language, I found important patterns between social class and language use. Thus, during the coding stage, *language at home* became one of the many codes.

All field notes and interviews were entered into digital document format using Microsoft Word. Some interviews also required translation from Spanish to English. In order to ensure accuracy of the translations, after all personal information was deleted, the transcriptions and the tapes were given to a third person knowledgeable in both languages who insured the translations were correct. Upon completion of the data entry, I selected, focused, simplified, abstracted, and transformed the raw data. All data were manually coded and organized using the N-Vivo software package. This software groups similar narratives into codes that help the final
analysis of the data. I went line by line, coding the materials assigning codes to the data. A start list of codes was developed based on the interview’s guiding questions and the theoretical framework. In addition, a second level of codes was established based on field notes and observations.

After assigning the first and second level of codes to all transcripts and field notes, I listened to each interview again while reviewing the transcriptions, the field notes, and the codes. This process permitted me to ensure accuracy of the codes and to find further connections and patterns between them. In addition, it allowed me to identify codes that overlapped, enabling me to merge similar codes together. A total of 143 codes were derived from the interviews, observations, and field notes (see Appendix E).

As a result of coding the data, I found a significant amount of codes for which I had no theoretical background. These emergent codes required me to consult relevant literature. Furthermore, after the first interview with the parents, I found myself asking questions about important themes that arose during the conversations. I then decided to do a follow-up interview (see Appendix C). This second interview lead to many of the codes related to transnationalism and social class. This first stage helped me sort, focus, discard, and organize “data in such a way that ‘final’ conclusions can be drawn and verified” (M. Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21).

Second Stage: Data Display

The second stage of data analysis was data display. This stage allowed me to better organize the information into patterns, categories, and descriptive units by using visually appropriate instruments. These forms of data display “are designed to assemble organized information in an immediately accessible, compact form, so that the analyst can see what is happening and…” draw
justified conclusions” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 22). During this stage, I proceeded along more analytical lines by reorganizing the codes; most importantly, I provided rationales for assigning and combining codes into trees. By examining the similarity and differences of the codes, I was able to group and classify them into common categories, thus creating more general themes.

I proceeded to store codes in a hierarchical or tree-structured manner. The N-Vivo software organizes data into trees, which allows for a clearer visual presentation of the codes. The tree-code system is designed as a cataloguing system; it provides broad general divisions of all topics, then finer subdivisions, hierarchically. For example, the poor-class families’ tree was divided into several codes including education, which in turn was also subdivided into several codes, such as homework. This tree system allowed me to easily store and locate codes on the same topic. Furthermore, it was convenient and helpful to be able to visually see the relationships between codes. Subsequently, I printed a copy of the trees and its subdivisions (see Appendix E) and placed it up on the wall next to my desk. While working on the study, the tree chart assisted me in visualizing how the data were organized, as well as the existing relationships and connections between them. An additional feature of this stage was an explanatory scheme that related codes to each other and their relationship to the emerging explanation.

**Third Stage: Conclusion Drawing/Verification**

During the conclusion drawing/verification stage, I utilized data reduction and display to review, verify, and elaborate on valid arguments, I then placed these arguments within a larger framework and with the existing literature. First, I looked at the patterns that developed throughout the data and further organized the data into three main trees, including
transnationalism, middle-class families, and poor-class families. Within the middle- and poor-class family trees, the divisions and subdivisions where similarly constructed. The resemblance in codes allowed me to form patterns and connections within each group of families. Furthermore, I did comparative analysis within families of varying levels of social class. Investigating the data in this basic way helped identify cross-case and inter-group patterns and differences. A few individual codes were tangential to the study and did not relate directly to the three main categories; for example, the code gender did not have sufficient data to be included in the analysis.

Second, as the codes had been organized into three major trees, now the question was: how to divide the vast information into thematic chapters? After an additional reading of the codes and discussing my thoughts with other colleagues, it was clear that transnationalism was a recurrent theme within the families’ interviews and observations; thus, transnationalism was a strong thematic chapter. I followed up by conducting an in-depth literature review on global migration studies and transnationalism. Then, I looked at studies on Latinos and transnationalism, where I found that there was a limited amount of studies on this area, and specially comparing experiences of families of varying social class and nationality. After deciding on the overarching theme of the chapter, I read the codes again and I analyzed for overlapping discourses of transnational experiences, as well as belonging, identity, and networking within a migration focus.

What was not clear at that point was how I would divide and prioritize the data on middle and poor-class families. Fine and Weis’s (2004) book _Working Method_ was crucial at this stage. Thus, my main objective was to “analyze narrative data as they relate to an articulated understanding of the current position (in the economy, family, and/or community) of the
individual and/or group under consideration” (Weis & Fine, 2004, p. 28). First, I reread each code and observed the way in which the tree codes related to one another, pressing for deeper interpretations with each reading. My main concerns here were: how are these families different or similar to each other? Does their social class and country of origin make a difference in their lives and in their children’s lives? Does social class influence how their children are raised and schooled? It was clear that “their demographic characteristics mean both that they have different experiences and that they offer differing interpretations of experiences that may, in fact, be similar” (Weis & Fine, 2004, p. 28).

As the main observations were conducted within the home and the school setting, staying within these two frameworks allowed for a clearer comparison of the lives of these families. The task of analysis then became to look back across the data for connections and patterns that differentiated the experiences of middle- and poor-class families. The use of this line of analysis allowed me to begin to understand that there were essential social class differences between families and schools. Further, I began to understand that there are also crucial differences in how Latinos perceive other Latinos, and that national origin plays an important role in Latino inter-relations. Thus, I undertook an additional reading of the codes, seeking evidence of these differences. I then looked at literature that allowed me to further my analysis.

Background of the Researcher

As an ethnographic researcher, my main objective is to better understand family behavior and experience. Adopting a participant-as-observer role helped me research the field in an overt manner while participating in it (Gold, 1958). By actively participating in my study, I was able to grasp the processes by which families construct and transmit meaning and I was able to describe
what those meanings are. Many authors have recognized the subjective nature of ethnography (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003; Brewer, 2000; Dobbert, 1982; Lareau & Shultz, 1996). Dobbert (1982) states:

All scientific research…is planned by human beings with particular personalities, aims, values; and for this reason, all scientific information is filtered. The presence of this filtering process is not a weakness in scientific procedure. If human beings did not design research and filter data through their natural modes of perception, the results would be both useless and meaningless. (p. 6)

My cross-cultural background gives me a unique position in this research. My ability to speak Spanish, my Latin-American background, and my migratory status allowed me to have a common bond with these families. This bond has been helpful in developing a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants.

As a researcher, I have to acknowledge the links that my study will have to my own personal history and identity, and I recognize a degree of subjectivity in my work. I am a white-female in my mid thirties, born and raised in Costa Rica, now pursuing a Ph.D. in Social Foundations of Education at an American university. I came to the U.S. over five years ago. Having lived almost thirty years in a Latin-American country, I have learned that my culture, for the most part, is tied to family beliefs and expectations, the type of education one receives, and, finally, these two as related to social class. Contrary to the middle-class families, poor families constantly commented on my white racial traits resembling more that of Americans than Latinos. During the introductory visit at the poor families’ homes, I did feel a sense of them not truly believing that I was “an original” Latina. My later interviews confirmed my suspicion. In the Mendoza family, my white traits became a way of joking and teasing me on how “they [white Americans] will
never know what hit them”, referring to me being blond and blue-eyed, but really a Latina. The Rodriguez family would often introduce me to their friends as “she looks like American, but she is really a Latina”, which allowed me easier access to conversations.

I come from a middle/upper social class background, which gives me access and insight into many of the living practices of the middle-class families portrayed here. Growing up in Costa Rica, I attended private schools, related to children from other prominent families, and I participated in highbrow activities, such as attending classical music concerts, being a member of a country club, and vacationing in several countries around the world. The participation in such activities allowed me a cultural and social capital similar to that of the middle-class families, but significantly different from that of the poor families in this study. These similarities with the middle-class families made it easier for me to enter their lives; in addition, it contributed to their trust in me as a researcher in their homes. In the case of the poor-class families, I made a conscious effort not to show class differences and/or judgments that would make these families feel uncomfortable with my presence in their homes.

Although my social class differs significantly from that of the poor families studied here, my experience as a transnational migrant, living both here and in Costa Rica, resembles both the middle- and the poor-class families. In addition, my command of the Spanish language and my background as a mother of two boys allowed me to find common ground with all of the families. In many ways, my concern for the well being of my children and the desire to give them the very best in life resembled the experiences and desires expressed by all the families in this study.
CHAPTER THREE
HERE AND THERE: BELONGING, IDENTITY, AND NETWORKING IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD.

“…when I’m here [in the U.S.] I’m not American enough, and when I am back home I’m not Puerto Rican enough…” – Laura, from Puerto Rico

Migration has always been part of civilization. Although the circulation of people is not a new concept, globalization has contributed to the rapid growth of travel and interconnections between people and places. Based on a global framework of socio-cultural interactions, this chapter explores the connections between movement, belonging, identity, social class, and how these relations create contemporary transnational individuals. I suggest that the Latino experience cannot be seen through a panethnic lens; rather, Latinos are a heterogeneous group that experience migration differently. Torres-Santillant (2002) reiterates the importance of looking at:

[T]he varied circumstances under which the various subgroups entered the United States, as well as the differing ‘ages’ of their relationships with this country, at least these subgroups’ economic and political leaderships differ in visibility, access to resources, and levels of empowerment…. Divides may exist even within Latinos of the same national origin if obstacles such as race and class intervene. (p. 436)

I argue that Latino families are immersed in an ongoing process of reshaping the concept of individual-family identity as a mélange of “imagined worlds” (Appadurai, 2002). This global reshaping of cultural identity, belonging, and class is central to understanding the complex interconnections between nations, cultures, and people.
In this chapter, I probe varying ways in which Latino families remake class, identity, and belonging in the context of vast changes in the global structure, and more specifically, changes related to the movement of people. In addition, this chapter looks at the identity formation among Latino transnational migrants in relation to social class and ethnicity, capturing the complex interconnections between home and host country. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to understand the ways in which social mobility occurs within a transnational context and how the home country class position is translated into the American class system. In this chapter, I suggest that Latino families look at class through a transnational lens that takes into account class-belonging criteria of the home and host land.

This chapter also presents a broad overview of ethnicity within Latino families and how it is related to concepts of social class. Using a transnational framework, I examine how Latinos from different social and geographical backgrounds perceive and position themselves and other Latinos within the American context. Data collected with four Latino transnational families have allowed me to study the ways in which individuals respond to the larger forces operating upon them. We see identities shaped in relation to constant flux and movement. It is through the experiences of these families, who simultaneously inhabit two worlds, that we can begin to understand the remaking of class, identity, and belonging. In order to examine the experiences of Latino families in the United States, it is imperative to adopt a broad lens of analysis (Li, 2008), one that looks at their experience not only in terms of ethnicity, family background, and social class, but also in terms of its transnational nature.
Culture, Belonging, and Multi-territorialism

As the era of globalization evolves, questions concerning identity and belonging arise. As people move from place to place, an increasing number of families are confronted with the debate between space and place. This reconfiguration of geography is central to the discussion on transnationalism. Where a single location was once an indication of belonging, a multi-territorialization is taking place and a sense of “imagined nation” (Appadurai, 2002) has arisen. Recent studies of migrant communities suggest that migration is a multidimensional process, where mechanisms of identity are constantly created and recreated within a diversity of places and spaces. These communities also maintain social relations and simultaneously engage in different social practices within multiple locations. Roseau’s (2002) study on Aguilillans migrants from Mexico exemplifies the process of multi-territorialization. Unlike the traditional interpretation of community, the daily experiences of the Aguilillans suggest that the concept of community has stretched its limits. Rouse shows that “through the continuous circulation of people, money, goods, and information, the various settlements have become so closely woven together that…they have come to constitute a single community spread across a variety of sites” (p. 162). The core aspect here is the possibility of seeing culture as movable and malleable, thus allowing people to concurrently engage in and belong to various communities without necessarily having to be physically present at a specific site.

Work by Andrea Louie (2000) on Mainland Chinese and Chinese in the U.S. questions the notion of a unified and shared Chinese identity among these groups. Bruno Riccio’s (2002) research among Senegalese in Italy and Senegal argues against the assumption that transnationalism creates new meanings of home. However, both Louie and Riccio affirm Rouse’s (2002) findings regarding the interconnectedness between communities spread across borders. A
common thread runs through these studies: transnational migration, technology, and economic capital connect the homeland to multiple populations abroad. In all these studies, there is an attempt to define home and belonging. Furthermore, they look at the effects that migration has on identity. Such articulations set the stage for a shift away from birthplace and residence within a nation-state as the definition of citizenship, identity, and belonging.

Comparable circumstances characterize the Latino families in this study. These families perceive their position as members of society through a construction of multiple belongings. Stuart Hall describes contemporary migrants such as the Latino families:

They are people who belong to more than one world, speak more that one language (literally and metaphorically), inhabit more than one identity, have more than one home; who have learned to negotiate and translate between cultures, and who, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures, have learned to live with, and indeed to speak from, difference. They speak from the ‘in between’ of different cultures, always unsettling the assumptions of one culture from the perspective of another, and thus finding ways of being both the same as and at the same time different from the others amongst whom they live. (as cited in Inda & Rosaldo, 2002, p. 19)

What this indicates is that the world is witnessing an era of transformation in regard to the classic perception of citizen, community, belonging, identity, and nation-state (Croucher, 2004; Inda & Rosaldo, 2002). Gupta and Ferguson (2002) have called into question the homogeneous character of the nation-state. They call for a replacement of physical location and physical territory by a framework that allows for multiple connections and territories. The Latino families portrayed here also challenge the traditional definition of nation-state. Throughout their everyday life experiences within multiple territories, they are changing the once assumed idea that
homogeneous people within a delimited territory construct and sustain the nation-state. Furthermore, they illustrate the unsuccessful attempts of the nationalizing apparatuses of the nation-state. The stories of these families demonstrate that it is possible to simultaneously belong to multiple cultures, societies, and countries.

Whereas Latino families feel they have strong ties with their homeland, they also feel a sense of being part, in some way or another, of the American way of life. They heavily criticize both countries, but at the same time recognize the advantages of living in each one. These families live in a world of multiple geographical possibilities, meanings, and expectations. Multiplicity allows the Latino families to constantly reinvent themselves in such a way that they can simultaneously navigate within different cultures and countries. Members of the families comment,

CATALINA: What are the good things and bad things about raising your child in the U.S.?

MARTA: It is a lot safer than back home. Also by living here we are giving him [her son] the opportunity to learn another language, so now Alex knows two languages. I wish I could raise my child back home. Personally, if I could choose I would be living there and not here. But because of John's job we have to be here. Regrettably, because John is a teacher, his salary in Argentina would not be very high; thus, it would not be enough to support us.

CATALINA: Tell me some advantages and disadvantages of living in Argentina?

MARTA: Well, again it is not as safe as here, which is very important for us. It is also difficult to live there if you don’t have a high income. Again, my family and friends are there. My roots are there, and I don’t need to speak English [she laughs].

CATALINA: Which country would be the perfect place for your family to live in?
MARTA: There is no perfect place. Once you leave your country it stops being perfect because you start seeing different things and the other possibilities that exist. You become very critical of your country and of the place one is living in, so it's very hard to be content. I think my son will have an easier time with this; hopefully, he will have a more open mind that will help him not to see the differences so much. I think he will also be more compassionate with the world because he is living within two cultures; that makes him more understanding of other people.

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LAURA: In Puerto Rico it was very difficult for me to have a house, to have a car, to have a job. Material things are very difficult to have. Here my kids have a lot more things. This [the U.S.] is my home. My country is Puerto Rico. That is the difference; the help that I have and the many opportunities to better myself are here. Of course, if I had money and I had more material things I would be in Puerto Rico. I would not spend the money here; I would be spending it over there.

CATALINA: So, where do you belong?

LAURA: To both, here and there. I guess it depends on what I need.

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RODRIGO: When I go to Peru I have to behave in a certain way. For example, my parents always criticize our relationship [his marriage] because they think she is too independent and that she should be home taking care of Rosita. Of course, I think that is completely ridiculous. Haven’t they seen how my sisters have done that; they are these boring and
repressed women. But I also know it’s the way they were brought up; I can’t expect them to change. When they tell me these things, although I don’t agree with them, I try not to pay attention. When I go to Peru I know they judge me, but when I am here, I know that it is normal for women to work, so I don’t care. I have just learned what is acceptable in each country.

People define who they are in relation to who they are not. In order to define who they are, they rely on an “Other”, and in order to define where they belong, they rely on an “Us” different from a “Them” (Croucher, 2004). Therefore, belonging carries a series of boundaries defined by culture, politics, traditions, language, economy, religion, and place of origin. Furthermore, belonging is not a unilateral concept; on the contrary, individuals can simultaneously belong to multiple groups. Most importantly, moving to the United States does not mean breaking ties with their home country. However, it does mean that in their homeland and in the U.S. there is always a self-sense of Otherness. All the families expressed how they belonged to both countries but also to neither of them completely.

CATALINA: You're saying that you're not American because in a way you don't really like to be here, but you're not Puerto Rican because you don't really like to be there either. So where are you from?

LAURA: It’s very difficult to say… I will never be from this country [the United States]. That is why I don't vote. Even though I am able to vote, I don't do it. I don't vote because I don't consider myself part of this country. I don't have the same traditions, customs. My traditions will never be like the ones they have here. Not even living here, I will raise my children with the same traditions that Americans have. My children are Puerto Rican; I do not want their culture to be American…. When I was applying for welfare somebody asked
me “Why is it that you're here with such a beautiful country and beautiful weather, what are you doing here?” And I told him, that regrettably I do not have all the opportunities and possibilities to better myself back in Puerto Rico, and that I was not going to let my children starve. That doesn't mean that I don’t like Puerto Rico; on the contrary, I love Puerto Rico, I love my country. But I also have to see the reality of things, that if my children need better opportunities, I can't leave them there.

CATALINA: Where do you call home? Is your home here in the United States or is it back in Puerto Rico; where is home?

LAURA: My home is in the United States. It's right here; here is where my family is. Here is where I have made a home; here is where I'm bringing my kids up…but home is also Puerto Rico, I was born there and a lot of my family is there.

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ANA: When I go to visit my family they tell me I have become American, which I think is an insult. They tell me that how I feed Rosita is purely American… and that I am raising her to be a gringa. I really don’t like it when they tell me that. It frustrates me…Then I come back here [to the U.S.] and can’t fit in either.

CATALINA: Why don’t you fit here?

ANA: Well, for starters, my English is not good, so I don’t feel comfortable talking to people. Also my culture is different.

CATALINA: What makes you feel different from Americans?

ANA: Well my culture is different; I have different expectations for my family, especially my daughter. For example, I don’t expect her to leave home when she is 18, like Americans do.
CATALINA: If they criticize you back home because you have become too American, and you don’t fit in here because of your English, then where do you belong?

ANA: No, no, don’t get me wrong, I am Peruvian and that will never change. It’s just that since I have been here I have adopted some American things that I think are good for my family. But that doesn’t mean that I am American.

CATALINA: Would you say that since you have been here you have become a little less Peruvian?

ANA: By my family’s [her extended family in Peru] standard, yes.

CATALINA: By your standards?

ANA: Probably yes, but not as much as they think. It’s just that by living here so long you can’t help but to take on some Americanisms. The good ones [she laughs].

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JUANA: Well I came here [to the U.S.] when I was very little, so I was raised here all my life. So in a way you could say I am American, but if you ask me, I’ll tell you that I am Puerto Rican… the problem is that my uncles and cousins back in Puerto Rico tell my mom that I am too American, that my Spanish is not good enough and they criticize me because I didn’t teach my kids to speak Spanish… but you know, they live over there, they don’t understand that here, things are different. Maybe they are right; I should have showed my son how to speak Spanish, I did it with my daughter, but I was just tired with Daniel.

CATALINA: How is it to live as a Puerto Rican in the U.S.?

JUANA: Well, there is a big Puerto Rican community so you kinda feel at home and the church also helps to organize events for us [Puerto Ricans]. I think the main problem is
that… I don’t know, I have been here all my life and my mom and sister also live here, but I never fit in.

CATALINA: So you’re telling me that back in Puerto Rico they don’t consider you a full Puerto Rican, and here in Lake City you don’t fit in either. So where do you belong?

JUANA: I don’t know, here I guess. My kids are here and my fiancé is here. I live here but I am Puerto Rican, I don’t know.

These families clearly experience a sense of dislocation. The transnational space is not always an easy one to navigate; most commonly it is experienced as a conflict laden and complicated process. It is the ability to acknowledge the pros and cons of each place, and imagine a better future, that allows these families to live within and belong to multiple settings.

Frequent travel, communication, goods, technology, money transfers, and resources constantly strengthen the ties between homeland and host society. The families travel often to their homeland. In the case of the low-income families, if the parents cannot afford to go, they send their kids to spend time with family and friends in the homeland. During the summer break, Diana sends both her sons to Puerto Rico to spend time with the children’s father and her parents. She thinks it is important for them to spend time her relatives in Puerto Rico, and it helps her to keep the children busy while they are on summer vacation. Rodrigo, Ana, and Rosita travel once a year to Peru. This past Christmas they stayed with family for three weeks, and it gave them an opportunity to see Ana’s mother who is very ill. They feel that it is important for Rosita to practice Spanish and to get her to try new foods, although she rarely does. Marta, John, and Alex also visit Argentina once a year. John’s job as a teacher allows them time to spend all their summer vacation in Argentina. They enroll Alex in a private school and spend most of their
time with Marta’s mother. Juana has not traveled to Puerto Rico in a while. However, her fiancé Roberto sends his son Fredo once a year to visit his grandparents.

Rong’s (2006) study on Chinese immigrant children in the U.S., looks at the effects of traveling back to China. She finds that sojourning has positive effects on identity, academic and social behavior, and family relations. Similar to Rong’s findings, the Latino families’ extended visits to their home country allows the children to have close relationships with their extended family, friends, and culture in general. This experience reinforces their ethnicity and promotes a positive identity. As I have shown, these families neither have entirely cut ties with their homeland nor have assimilated completely to the American culture, choosing to live “in-between”. They belong in a continuous “here and there”, but interestingly also “not here nor there”. It is this complex sense of belonging that is at the heart of this study.

Ethnic Identity Within a Globalized World

Globalization and the rapid movement of people have created a need to reevaluate the notion of ethnic identity. Currently, migrants operate simultaneously within multiple territories. This has made previous theories that required ethnic minorities to become mainstream, such as classic assimilation theories, no longer useful in describing migrant identities (Alba & Nee, 1997). New thinking about identity, community, and belonging must take place in the realm of transnationalism. Transnationalism, as a theoretical construct of the migrant’s everyday life and identity, offers a clear understanding of the world these migrants inhabit (Brettel & Hollifield, 2000). Furthermore, transnationalism is closely linked to the concept of identity and notions of belonging. Both belonging and identity are neither fixed nor are they absolute; they are constructed through time and place by memory, imagination, history, and reminiscence (Thapan,
Furthermore, identity and belonging are both marked by gender, social class, nation, race, and ethnicity. Fitzpatrick (1987) defined identity as “points of reference whereby persons (or a group) define themselves in relation to the world and to other people: an awareness by persons (or a group) of who they are and where they belong” (p. 8). Although identity adopts a new meaning within different contexts, cultural influences from the homeland play an important role in the creation of transnational identities. Transnational migrants engage in a continuous negotiation and reconstruction of cultural identity in the homeland as well as in the host society. The emphasis on transnationalism has led my ethnographic work to focus on identity in terms of its construction and experience for Latino families. Furthermore, it looks at identity in the context of flexibility and permeability within geographies, borders, and positions.

Research on migrant populations has examined the importance of national identity. Jones’ (2008) study on Jamaican immigrants shows the importance that these immigrants allot to maintaining and expressing their national identity. By doing so, they tend to emphasize differences with other groups, including African Americans and Haitians. This appears to be the case with the Latino families in this study as well, where families emphasize differences between African American and other Latino groups. When Latino families migrate, they are no longer perceived with the same identification parameters they used in their home country, but have to learn new identity boundaries and labels. Latino families often have conflicting views between the identity formerly held in their homeland and the identity ascribed to them in the U.S. As they once identified themselves mainly in terms of social class and skin color, now in the U.S. they are perceived as Latinos regardless of their home country, social class, or skin color.

Even though Latin Americans have such diverse historical, cultural, socio-economic and political backgrounds, American society, especially the U.S. government, has grouped them into
one category: Hispanics. This is a homogenizing term accredited to all Latin Americans that migrate to the United States. The term “Latino” was developed by activists to symbolize commonalities and similar interests within the Latin American population (Calderon, 1992). While Calderon (1992) suggests that this panethnic attribute has been a necessity among the Latino population, other authors (Itzigsohn & Dore-Cabral, 2000; Torres-Saillant, 2002) assert that it does not override national identity. The concept of a Latino shared identity is in Anderson’s (2000) words, “imagined”. Anderson refers to the concept of “imagined communities” as to how group identity is constructed on a belief of common experiences. The Latino stereotype in the United States has created the idea that people from Latin America share common backgrounds, perceptions, and experiences. I believe that some social movements can benefit from a Latino shared identity. However, when conducting research, this term is considerably more problematic due to the fact that Latinos differ in factors such as race, class, national origin, and historical background (M. Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002; Torres-Saillant, 2002). Thus, one cannot generalize the Latino experience to all Latin Americans.

In order to explore the implications of movement on the ethnic identity of Latino families, it is important to take into account social class, national and historical background, networking, and reasons for migrating. The data gathered from the families in this study suggest a clear conflict between what is internally perceived and what is externally appointed as Latino panethnicity. Internally, these families view clear differences between national origin, skin color, and social class. Observations and interviews with the families indicate that they all identified themselves primarily in terms of their country of origin.

Ana and Rodrigo Denegri, both Peruvian born, have lived in the U.S. for almost seven years. In Peru, they had a very comfortable life and belonged to the upper class, or what they referred to
as “the rich”. They lived in the best neighborhoods in Lima, attended the best private schools, went to top tier universities, and their social network included politicians, professionals, and other prominent Peruvians. When they got married 12 years ago, they taught at the university, lived in a big and beautiful home, and had a live-in maid to help them with house chores. Back in Peru, they saw their identity in terms of social class first and skin color or race second. Ana explains the dynamics of identification in Peru as:

First, you see people in terms of rich or poor, and then of course because we have such a big indigenous population, then you look at their skin color. If they are short and have darker skin, we know that they are cholos [indigenous people] and that they’re poor.

For Rodrigo and Ana, coming to the U.S. has changed their perception of who they are and how they are seen. They are no longer identified as high class white Peruvians, but as Latinos. When they first came, it was hard for them to fit into the Latino mold. Finding a network of friends was also difficult. Because Peruvians in Lake City are a very small group, Rodrigo and Ana associated themselves with other Latinos. Finally, after their first year in Lake City, they created a network of friends. These consisted mainly of other university students. Although they have been living in the U.S. for a long time, they often travel to Peru and still have close connections there. Nowadays, Rodrigo and Ana identify themselves in the U.S. as Peruvian first, but they also consider themselves “Latino middle-class people”. In both cases, the Denegris self-identify in such a way that they separate themselves from other Latino groups, and mainly poor Latino groups:

RODRIGO: When I came here [to the U.S.] I was used to looking and defining people in terms of social class first, mainly rich or poor. Secondly, your race, either Indian [indigenous] or white. But I get here, and all of a sudden I am being called a Latino. It really
didn’t matter that I was from a good family [referring to his social class position] or that I was doing my Ph.D., people just saw me as a Latino. Not Peruvian, because of course the majority of people don’t know where Peru is; not white either, even though I have a very white complexion and I could pass as an American. They heard me speak Spanish and automatically I was Latino.

CATALINA: Does it bother you that Americans put you in the general Latino category?

RODRIGO: In a way, yes. At first, I didn’t understand why I was Latino before I was Peruvian. After living here for many years, I understand that people just don’t know where Peru or other Latin American countries are, so it is just easy for them to put us all into one category. I think it is just mental laziness.

Rodrigo’s previous quote reflects the Latino middle-class frustration with the American panethnic category. As social class differences in their home country are clearly defined and differentiated, migrating to the U.S. questions the very basic idea that the poor and the rich have different roles and positioning in society. Middle-class Latinos perceive this categorization as an unwelcoming and undesirable trait of American society.

What is interesting about the experience of middle-class families is that even though they have the opportunity to meet Latinos from varying social class and nationalities, they only become friends with other Latinos of their same social class. Looking at the relations and networking of middle-class families reveals that they want to approach their networks in the host country through a social class lens. Preferably, they want to relate to middle-class Latinos from their same country, but they perceive as acceptable relations with middle/upper-class Latinos from other nationalities.
Juana and her fiancé Roberto are both first generation Puerto Ricans. They have lived in Lake City almost all their lives. They met in Lake City six years ago. Their parents came to the mainland U.S. in search of a better life for their children. Both their families decided to come to Lake City’s West side because they had other family members that lived here and it was easier for them to get settled within an already-established Puerto Rican community. Juana and Roberto both grew up in a Spanish-speaking, Puerto Rican neighborhood. They attended school with Puerto Rican friends; they went to church every Sunday to the Spanish mass and played in the neighborhood with other Puerto Rican children. Juana and Roberto still maintain close connections to the Puerto Rican community here and to their other family members left in Puerto Rico. Like many of the other Puerto Rican migrants currently living in Lake City, their main social network includes other Puerto Ricans. According to Juana, “I mostly hang out with my family. My sister lives very close by so we see each other a lot. I have some friends, but they are all Puerto Rican; it just seems that we understand each other better”.

Most of Juana’s family has migrated to the U.S.; thus, in the past couple of years she has rarely gone back to Puerto Rico. Roberto still has family in the island; he is very close to his ex-wife’s parents who live there. He thinks it is important for his ten-year-old son to have a good relationship with his grandparents and visit them often. Once a year, Roberto schedules a trip to go to Puerto Rico. According to Roberto, “Fredo [his son] needs to know where he comes from. Ya know it’s good for him to see that not everyone has it as good as he does here”. When he visits Puerto Rico, Roberto says, “it’s like home, it’s so familiar”; however, he also feels he does not fully fit in.

Juana and Roberto perceive differences within the Puerto Rican population back on the island mainly in terms of social class. Roberto explains: “you are either rich or poor. If you have
money, you live in good neighborhoods, in big homes, and drive fancy cars. If you are poor, 
you’re screwed…” When asked how identity works in the U.S., Juana explains it in terms of 
etnicity, race, and class, “you are either white, black, or Latino. Then you have the rich whites, 
the middle whites, and the poor whites. The middle blacks and the poor blacks. The middle 
Latinos and the poor Latinos”. However, neither Juana nor Roberto feel comfortable with the 
Latino panethnic view.

Both Roberto and Juana have white physical traits. Juana has fair skin, green eyes, and has 
colored her hair in a reddish blond tone. Roberto’s friends have always teased him because he 
looks too white, and sometimes has been mistaken as an Italian. His friends used to call him 
*cracker*, meaning he was as white as a soda cracker. Although they both clearly have white 
physical traits, they are still viewed as Latinos. They complain that when filling out papers, they 
always have to mark the Hispanic box; they think there should be another box specifically for 
Puerto Ricans. Roberto views ethnicity and race in the U.S. as, “if you’re Puerto Rican, you’re 
Latino and that’s it, no matter how white you look, forget it. And if you’re Latino you’re poor. 
Whatever! You know people just stereotype”. Here in the U.S., similar to Rodrigo and Ana, 
Roberto and Juana also face a set of identity boundaries different from that of their homeland. 
Although when asked, Roberto and Juana identify themselves as Puerto Rican first, Latino 
second and American third. American society mainly labels them as Latinos.

The Puerto Rican historical relation to the U.S. is different from that of other Latino groups. 
Therefore, it must not be analyzed through a Latino panethnic lens, rather one that looks at the 
particular characteristics of the Puerto Rican experience. The differences between Latino self-
perceptions can be explained in terms of community density, networking, and historical 
relationship to the United States. Not only are Puerto Ricans the largest Latino population in
Lake City, but they also tend to live segregated on the West side of the city. Furthermore, the historical relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S. accounts for Puerto Rican assertion of their nationality as a form of resisting colonization (Fine & Weis, 1998). As a Commonwealth of the United States, Puerto Rican migrants adopt a dual position. They are born as American citizens, but they have a different cultural background from that of the dominant white/black discourse. Puerto Ricans are assumed citizens, but simultaneously cultural aliens. As U.S. citizens, they are able to travel back and forth from their homeland without restrictions. The possibility of traveling to and from the island without immigration hassles allows Puerto Ricans an access from which other Latinos do not benefit.

All the Puerto Rican families observed here show that they have a strong sense of their national heritage, and one that is forged and reaffirmed in relation to cultural settings generally based on community and family activities. Both the Mendoza and the Rodriguez family are active participants in community activities including the ones organized by the Catholic Church. Sunday masses in Spanish and cultural activities organized by the church were important spaces used to reaffirm their Puerto Rican heritage.

Observations, Mendoza family

December 8th, Puerto Rican celebration at church.

I was invited to attend a Puerto Rican celebration at church. Both Juliana and Daniel are participating in the event. As soon as I enter the big salon behind the church, Spanish becomes the official language. There are close to 200 people eating traditional Puerto Rican food and waiting for the show to begin. After eating some arroz con gandules (rice and beans), the ladies in charge of the food bring dessert and inform us that the show will start in 10 minutes. At around 8pm, the show starts. Young teenage girls and boys dressed in typical
Puerto Rican costumes dance traditional songs. Juliana is one of the girls dancing, and Daniel is standing on the sides holding his hat up. The spectators get up from their chairs and begin dancing and clapping. When the dance is over, the bombas start. Bombas are typical Latino short and funny rhymes that are recited in between segments of a song. At least 30 different people have a bomba they know: “Bomba, ayer pase por tu casa y me tiraste una flor, la próxima vez sin maceta por favor” (Bomba: yesterday I passed in front of your house and you threw me a flower, next time throw it without the pot!). There is a real sense of Puerto Rican community in this gathering. People are dancing, singing, and having a great time. Most importantly, they are sharing a common language beyond words.

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CATALINA: Tell me about being Puerto Rican in the U.S.

DIANA: I can't complain about being Puerto Rican. And if you see the rest of the Puerto Rican community they are all very proud to be Puerto Rican, ohhh yes…. very proud; they show it with every day things. They drive their car and have a Puerto Rico flag on the car, and they wear T-shirts with the Puerto Rican flag and many other things to show their pride.

The previous observations and quotes reaffirm the idea that Puerto Ricans feel a sense of pride regarding their national background. Addition, this constant affirmation and differentiation between them and other Latinos allows for a position of privilege between Puerto Ricans who have U.S. citizenship and other Latinos who do not necessarily have these privileges.

The fact that Puerto Ricans have well-established, community-based institutions and community networks allows Puerto Rican migrant families to have an easier transition into the host land. However, the highly segregated Puerto Rican community and neighborhood limits
contact with other groups. For this reason, the Puerto Rican experience might have stratifying and segregating effects. When the majority of community activities are country and social class specific, it makes the chasm between Puerto Ricans and other Latinos from varying social class more difficult to cross. Thus, the paths of the poor Puerto Rican families and the lives of the middle-class Latinos in this study rarely cross.

Although Puerto Ricans have social networks that permit easier access to life in the U.S., Argentinean and Peruvian middle-class families are managed and supported by numerous formal institutional affiliations and professional associations, which gives them a different type of social access. Rodrigo and Ana utilize the university as their main networking sponsor. John and Marta depend on John’s previous associations with the university and his current job as the basis of their social network. Even though they express difficulty in finding social networks of their own national background, they have been able to identify and relate with other Latinos.

MARTA: I have a couple of Argentinean friends; we aren’t that many here in Lake City. We usually meet once a month or so.

CATALINA: Is the group only made of Argentineans?

MARTA: Mainly Argentineans, but we have people from everywhere. Maria is Italian but she speaks perfect Spanish, Sonia is from Peru, Andrea from Paraguay, Ana is Chilean… We’re from everywhere in Latin America.

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ANA: When we first came here it was very hard to make friends. Where we lived there were no Latinos, and people seemed not to be too friendly. But after a while of being at the University we started to make friends from all over. Also, we would get invited to parties,
and there we would meet other Latinos…Most of our friends come from everywhere in Latin America. We do know a couple of Peruvians, but not that many.

The observations in the middle-class families reveal more specifically how the families view the relationship of their ethnicity and social class with that of other groups. As they settle into white, middle-class neighborhoods, their networking experience is more challenging than that of Puerto Ricans. This means that while Puerto Ricans have access to community-based activities, the central friendship circles for middle-class families are with other members of their professional and educational affiliations. What is interesting about middle-class families’ friendships is that their professional and educational connections open up their social network to a wider variety of Latinos.

Transnational migrants are constantly negotiating and reconstructing their identities, not only in their host society, but also in their homeland. When they return to their homeland expecting certain continuity, they are faced with a sense of loss. As they discover that their imagined homeland is no longer the place they once left, they try to make sense of the disjuncture between imagination and reality.

MARTA: For me it's very hard to go back and see how things have changed and I didn't even notice. It seems like I leave and that image of what Argentina is stays with me. And when I go back, I expect it to be exactly how it was a year or two before; now it’s all changed. There are new places; people are different, things just change so much that it’s hard for me to readapt to my culture. Last time I went I had a really hard time at the supermarket; I even started crying because I was so frustrated. I had been going to this supermarket since I was a little girl, but things had changed so much since the last time I was there. Now you need a card to swipe to be part of the supermarket and you have to make a line here and not there; it
was just very confusing. But it's also that I have gotten used to going to supermarkets here in the U.S., and it's much more organized. So when I go there and I see things so disorganized, I go crazy. Maybe I have just gotten used to the American way and it's hard for me to go back to the Argentinean way.

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DIANA: I just came back from Puerto Rico last week, and I tell you, things have sure changed since the last time I was there. They built this huge supermarket close to my parents’ home; there used to be a small market, but now it’s very big.

CATALINA: What other things have changed since you last visited?

DIANA: Well my dad is a lot sicker than I thought. Last time I saw him he was sick but not as much. I was kind of sad to see how he looked. My nephews and nieces had grown a lot; it seems like the last time I saw them they were just little kids. Luisito, my brother’s older son, was almost my height; the little one, Meli, had grown so much. It seems that every time I go back things change a lot. Sometimes I feel sad to know that I am missing all these things, but if I were in Puerto Rico, I would be missing my own grandchildren. We’ll have to wait for next year to see how things are doing.

Both Marta and Diana, regardless of their social class, live with a constant sense of loss. They re-live that loss every time they go back to their country. All of the other families also experience this loss.

Latino migrants are not a homogeneous group. Therefore, in order to comprehend the everyday living experiences of diverse Latino families we must consider their social, historical, cultural, racial, and ethnic background. Identity is not a fixed concept; it is through the
interconnections of background, space and place that Latino transnational migrant identity is constructed and continuously reconstructed. Regardless of where they are living, after leaving the homeland, there always is a sense of loss. Because of this loss, a homeland-based identity cannot quite be restored, thus creating a fractured identity in which these families feel part of both their home and host land. In some ways they belong “here and there”, but at the same time “not here nor there”. This displacement does not permit them to belong completely to either country; thus, these families become what I call *global foreigners*.

**Keeping in Touch in a Globalized World**

The advances in technology and communication have been essential in creating new forms of individual participation and influence without physical presence. Interconnectedness between the homeland and the actual living space characterizes the experience of the Latino families. They are connected, emotionally and psychologically, to their families and friends thousands of miles away. Technology plays an important role in how these families develop transnational relations. As with Rouse’s migrant communities, this connection allows them to participate simultaneously in every day experiences in the homeland as much as in the U.S.

CATALINA: Do you talk often to your family in Puerto Rico?

DIANA: Of course, I talk to them almost every day. You see my father is very sick so I call him to see how he is doing. He also worries about us, so I call to let him know that we are doing fine. Now with cell phones I always send him pictures of the kids so that he can see how fast they are growing up. He also asks me to send him pictures of Luisito and Carlitos [her grandchildren]. You see, he still has not been able to meet the little one, but he sees him in pictures all the time.
CATALINA: How do you stay in contact with your friends and family back in Argentina?

MARTA: The Internet has to be the best invention of all times. I talk to all my friends through the computer. I have messenger and video; I call people on their phone through my computer; I belong to all these networks. It is actually very easy to know what’s going on back home. Right now my friend Marisel and I are trying to set up a stand at an art festival in Argentina and trying to get into one in New York. What we do is every day we set a time at 8pm to meet online to see how things are going. And of course we end up talking not only about the festival but also about our lives.

CATALINA: When was the last time you saw your friend?

MARTA: Marisel? Oh about a year ago when I last went to Argentina. But we talk almost every day so we keep up with the gossip [she laughs]. I always talk to my friends.

CATALINA: How about with your family? Do you talk to your mom a lot?

MARTA: My family is a little bit different because my mom is older; she is close to 70 so she doesn’t know how to use computers. With her, I usually call from my computer to her home phone; I call her very often. I wish she was more comfortable with computers; that way we could be more connected and she would be able to see us on video. But I guess you can’t teach an old dog new tricks!

PACO: The other day I spoke to him [his father back in Puerto Rico] over the phone and he said he wanted to see me, so I took a picture with the phone and sent it right there. He then sent one of himself.
Marta, Diana, and Paco keep close relations to their families back home. Technology allows them to participate in everyday life in both contexts. Their interviews illustrate how families utilize technologies to communicate and keep in touch with their family and friends back in their homeland.

In spite of the distances between territories, the families in the U.S. and their friends and families in the homeland were mutually informed of each other’s lives. Each family reported using technology to stay in touch, including telephone, cell phone, the Internet, video, e-mail, chat rooms and social network sites, and picture sharing. The advances in information and communication technologies allow these families to closely follow everyday events in both places. Technological developments, such as the Internet, have created an infrastructure for the global economy and society (Kellner, 2002) that allow and promote interconnectedness. This process marks a postmodern era in which a new social environment is being created (Baudrillard, 1993). Through their every day living practices, these Latino families are active participants in the postmodern reshaping of the concept of social relations and community building.

Latino families tend to perceive technology as an essential tool in staying informed about the lives of their family and friends, and political and cultural news abroad. Although technology is used as a link to different spaces and places in all four families, patterns of usage and type of technology differs between social classes. The middle class families receive most of their homeland information concerning politics and the economy, from Internet sources such as online newspapers and different websites. On the contrary, the low-income families mainly collect their information through social networks, including community gatherings and from phone conversations with friends and family. It is clear that technology is an essential factor in keeping families and friends connected. In addition, the media, including television and newspapers, is a
powerful tool for accessing knowledge and information in all spaces. Essentially, technology and media have been able to create *spaceless communities* (Appadurai, 2002) for Latino families.

Observations, Middle-class families

**June 5th. Denegri family**

After doing homework with Rosita, Ana sat at the desk and turned on the computer to check the daily Peruvian newspaper. While reading the online newspaper *El Diario*, she commented to her husband, who was sitting on the sofa reading a book, “can you believe this? This is completely ridiculous; you see this is what happens when the people let the government get away with these injustices, they just do it again and again”.

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**November 21st. Rossi family**

Every night after dinner, Marta sits at the computer to check the Argentinean news and to chat to her friends back home. She belongs to several web networks that allow her to be up to date with what is happening in Argentina. After reading the news, she called her friend Nora, whom she talks with often. Before asking her how the project they were working on together was going, Marta discusses the latest news about a child that was found bringing a gun to school, “how can this happen? We are becoming Americans. Do you remember that school? It wasn’t far from our school. Do you remember? It was the one with the big windows. When we were young this would never have happened, I think it’s all this economic depression. People don’t have enough money so both parents are always working, and the kids are always alone”.

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Observations, low-income families

May 12th. Rodriguez family

Every day at 6:30pm Diana turns on the TV and switches to the Latino news on Univision. Although Diana’s family is Puerto Rican, she listens to a news channel that mainly gives information about Latinos in the U.S. She is well informed about issues regarding illegal immigrants, Latino vote, Latino politicians, and other issues affecting Latinos in the U.S. Interestingly enough, she gets her information on Puerto Rico’s situation through telephone conversations with her father who lives there, and from other friends that live in Lake City. Her friends in Lake City call her over the phone and tell her about the latest events in Puerto Rico, events that were told to them by their families that live on the island. Diana has a network of friends and family in both places that inform her, through the telephone, about the news affecting politics and the economy in Puerto Rico.

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December 31st. Mendoza family

After several days of watching the news with the family, I realized that the only reason why Juana watches the news [Univision in Spanish] is to wait for her horoscope. When Walter Mercado’s show [the astrologist] comes on, she immediately sits in front of the TV and shushes everyone else. Today Mima [Juana’s mother] called and they talked a while about last night’s church meeting. At the church meeting, Mima heard some information about a new marina they were building in Fajardo [a town in Puerto Rico]. This new marina would bring new jobs to the town, and maybe one of their family members living back home could get a job in construction. Juana then called her sister and told her about the possibility of a
job for their cousin, who is back in Puerto Rico. Her sister agreed to call him in Puerto Rico and tell him about the possible job.

It is clear by the observations and interviews with the families, that the use of different technologies as a mean of connection to their homeland clearly reflects disparities in social class. Social class differences between families create a digital divide that provides unequal access and resources to technology (Martin & Robinson, 2007; Warschauer, 2002). Norris (2001) looks at the digital divide and argues that access to and use of the Internet differs in rich and poor countries. Furthermore, he illustrated how “resource-based inequalities… grew in significance as Internet use diffused more widely” (p. 85).

The technology practices of Latino families affirm the notion that everyday practices cohere by social class. I believe that access to and uses of technology differ among families of varying social class. For example, in poor families, the use of and access to the Internet was non-existent or more limited than in the middle-class families. The Rodriguezes do not own a computer, nor do they have regular access to one at work or at school. In the Mendoza household, they have a computer and use dial-up to connect to the Internet; again, the parents do not have Internet access at work nor do the children have easy access at school. In middle-class Latino families, access to computers with high-speed Internet, at home and at work, is the norm. Norris (2001) argues that the main cause for differences in global access to digital technologies is lack of economic development. I argue that the digital divide goes beyond the economic possibility of being able to afford a computer and high-speed Internet. Rather, it involves a complex set of issues that create and perpetuate differences between social classes; education at home and at schools plays an essential role in teaching and allowing children to broaden their technological
experience. In chapter five of this study, I come back to the concept of digital divide, and look at how the school contributes to this division.

**Community Networks**

It is arguably the case that Puerto Rican families in the U.S. have a broader and more established community network than other Latino groups. These differences can be explained in terms of a tri-directional, causal relationship between networking, residential patterns, and social class. All the Latino families observed here are the products of migration. However, there are several issues that must be factored into the analysis: the large number of Puerto Rican families that have members already in the U.S., the different densities of Latino groups in Lake City (6% Puerto Ricans compared to only 1% for other Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)), and the evidence that there is a connection between residential segregation and economic status that affects minorities (Galster & Hill, 1992; Massey & Eggers, 1991). These characteristics affect the families in different ways. Puerto Rican historical relations to the United States have allowed large numbers of Puerto Rican migrants to establish themselves in the mainland. This has helped develop large social networks, residence patterns, etc. Under these circumstances, it is clear why Puerto Rican poor families cluster in segregated spaces and form social networks that allow them to be informed about events that occur within the community or back in Puerto Rico. In comparison, the networking experience of middle-class Latino families from Peru and Argentina is different. Some factors that influence these differences in the formation of social networks relate to the low number of Latinos from Peru and Argentina living in Lake City. In addition, their settling patterns, their social class background, and their jobs and studies allows them to form more diverse social networks.
Both Puerto Rican families settled in Lake City for the reason that they already had family and friends living here. These families belonged to community networks that allowed them the possibility to be part of and navigate within a stream of people and information within an already established local community. The Denegris and the Rossis do not possess such easy access. The Denegri family came from Peru to Lake City for educational reasons. Thus, the nature of their migration and their language limitations has restricted their social networking. In the case of the Rossi family, Marta came to the U.S. from Argentina to get married to John, an American. Although her husband has an established social network, her language limitations and her search for cultural comfort and acceptance has forced her to look for other Argentineans and Latinos.

Research suggests that social class differences are more important than ethnic differences (Gordon, 1964). Gordon’s (1964) concept of “ethclass”, illustrates how people from different ethnicities but from similar social class backgrounds share a comparable way of life, but not necessarily a sense of belonging. Conversely, people from the same ethnic background, but different social class, share a sense of belonging, but do not have similar lifestyles. Observations and conversations with Latino families suggest that social class separation is present within Latino communities. Latino middle-class families live in white middle-class neighborhoods and gather with other middle-class individuals. Due to the small numbers of Peruvians and Argentineans in Lake City, the Denegris and the Rossis also relate to middle-class Latinos from other countries. However, Puerto Rican poor families exemplify a different experience. Lake City’s large Puerto Rican community allows them to live and socialize with other Puerto Ricans of comparable social class. What is noteworthy here is how networks and technology work together to perpetuate social inequality. These inequalities exist between social classes, races,
and ethnicities, but this study demonstrates the ways in which technologies and social networks perpetuate differences amongst Latinos themselves.

Social Class in Transnational Context

Globalization has opened a world of transnational culture flows, movements of people, growing interconnectedness, and multi-territorialism that brings about social, economic, cultural, and political changes. Portes and DeWind (2007) define transnationalism as “a ceaseless back-and-forth movement, enabling migrants to sustain a presence in two societies and cultures and to exploit the economic and political opportunities created by such dual lives” (p. 9). These global changes and multiple belongings inevitably force us to rethink the dynamics of social class and mobility. The established social mobility discourse focuses on two main positions: one position looks at the geographic position of an individual including cross-national analysis (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Turner, 2001), and the other position examines structural processes such as income, education, and occupation (Blau & Duncan, 1967; MacLeod, 1987). On the margins of these two positions, transnational migrants are formed and influenced by multiple settings, thus allowing us to reformulate concepts of social class and social mobility.

Suárez-Orozco (2002) suggests that it is important to consider socioeconomic status before and after migration; she adds “[w]e cannot expect the same dynamics to be operating in an upper-middle-class Uruguayan family from Montevideo as in a poor family from a sugarcane plantation in the Dominican Republic” (p. 303). Guofang Li’s (2007) work with Vietnamese and Sudanese refugees and white working/poor families illustrates how class location is contradictory. The refugees’ multiple transitions have created a dilemma between their subjective and objective class location. While the Sudanese refugees, coming from a middle-
class background in their country, experienced downward mobility, Vietnamese refugees, who came from low socio-economic backgrounds, have experienced upward mobility. Comparable upward and downward mobility characterizes the Latino families studied here.

Class location can be seen in terms of subjective and objective location (Wright, 2003). Wright suggests that subjective location answers to the question, “How do people locate themselves and others within a social structure?” Depending on time and place, it can include parameters of lifestyle, occupation, income, ethnicity, religion, and gender. Objective class location answers the question, “How are people objectively located in distribution of material inequality?” Here, class is seen in terms of material means, which can include wealth and income. The experiences of the four transnational Latino families suggest that their class position, when entering American society, has both objective and subjective locations.

Back on the island, the two Puerto Rican families came from a poor socioeconomic background. When they migrated to the United States, they experienced a subjective upward mobility. Even though the families’ class position in the U.S. is still in the lower/poor echelon of society, the differences in material means in each country allows them to perceive a sense of upward mobility. Diana explains this subjective dynamic; she talks about growing up in both the U.S. and Puerto Rico, and explains:

When we’re here in the U.S. we are better off economically. It's not that back in Puerto Rico we didn't have enough to eat, but my parents had to work very hard so that we had basic necessities…. I didn't like Puerto Rico very much, I think it was because it was very hard to live there. During my time in Puerto Rico there was a rice shortage, and my father would have to go looking for places where they had a little bit of rice…. I remember during that time that the rice shortage was so big that the boats would not come in with any rice, and
people would have a limit to the amount of rice they could buy. At home, we always had to ration the amount of rice each of us could eat; every little bit of grain was eaten. They were very hard times. Here in the United States [the first time she lived here when she was a little girl], we were used to having everything; we had a washer and dryer. In Puerto Rico, we had to wash our clothes in the river; we would go with my mom to the river and wash our clothes there. During that time, we also moved into our new house, which was not finished. So there were no real doors; my dad had put some pieces of wood as doors and windows, and the floor was just regular cement. That was not a real house… We didn't even have running water in the house; we used to put buckets outside to get rainwater to do the dishes and drink, and we used to go to the river to take showers. By that time, I was old enough to help my mother make some extra money so I ironed people's clothes. Here [in the U.S.] we used to live in an apartment building that had everything. The apartment had three bedrooms; it was very comfortable; I still remember how well we used to live back then. I could say that we lived as rich people when we lived in the United States. I always tried to convince my parents to come back but they never wanted to.

In this interview, Diana illustrates how poverty in Puerto Rico is lived and perceived differently than poverty in the U.S. For her, being poor meant not having enough food to eat, no running water, nor a house in which to live. Thus, living in the U.S. was a step up from her poverty experience in Puerto Rico, and meant having commodities, to which her family did not have access in Puerto Rico.

The poverty that families experienced in Puerto Rico allowed them to face poverty in the U.S. with a different perspective. Although all of them are on public assistance due to low income and they live on a day-to-day basis, the contrast of being poor in Puerto Rico and being
poor in the U.S. allows them to see subjective upward mobility. The data demonstrate that Puerto Rican families show less conformity to Ogbu’s (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) involuntary minority pattern. Many of their comparative perceptions, behaviors, and beliefs, (in particular about their children’s education and economic status), follow the construction of voluntary minority status. Similar to voluntary minorities, the families portrayed here create a positive dual frame of reference, one that causes them to be satisfied with their lives in the U.S when compared to the circumstances in Puerto Rico. They believe that they enjoy more economic prosperity and opportunity for upward mobility than their families back in Puerto Rico. Thus, I argue that the Puerto Rican families’ colonial history does not necessarily lead to a conflicted or oppositional relationship to the dominant culture and does not adhere to the involuntary migrant status.

The most striking point about the Puerto Rican experience is that they compare their life in the U.S. with a poorer one in Puerto Rico. But interestingly enough, here in the U.S., they are considered to be the most economically disadvantaged minority group (Moore & Pinderhughes, 1993; Tienda, 1989b). I suggest here that migrants bring from their home country their own reference points in relation to social class belonging criteria. These reference points do not always coincide with the class belonging criteria of the host country. Many of these individuals have lived in Puerto Rico in a different form of poverty; poverty, in this case, being defined in terms of the inability to have basic necessities such as food and shelter. When they move to the U.S., they still fall under the American concept of poverty, but their own perception of poverty allows them to see themselves in a more advantaged position than when they lived in Puerto Rico. Laura clearly exemplifies this point. Her experience in the U.S. allows her to have access to material things that she would never have been able to afford while living in Puerto Rico. This makes her feel as she had moved up the social class ladder.
CATALINA: Can you describe how a poor person lives here in the United States and how a poor person lives in Puerto Rico? Is poverty the same here as it is in Puerto Rico?

LAURA: No. Poverty is much worse over there. The people that are poor here in the U.S. are poor because they want to be poor not because they can't better themselves. In Puerto Rico, poverty is real poverty. Here you don't see houses made out of zinc or pieces of wood; in Puerto Rico you see them everywhere. And rich people are rich here or there; there is no difference between rich people. Middle-classes live much better here too; poor and middle-classes live much better here in the U.S. than in Puerto Rico. They have better job opportunities, better medical opportunities, and living opportunities too. In Puerto Rico I used to live in a very small house made out of pieces of wood and zinc. I used to have a black-and-white 13-inch TV; look what I have now [referring to the 50-inch TV in the living room]. I live much, much better here. But it's also because I have proposed myself to do better. But actually, even if you lived off the government, you live much better here than over there.

CATALINA: What social class do you consider yourself in the U.S. and in Puerto Rico?

LAURA: When I was in Puerto Rico I was poor, very poor. Here I could probably say without being too vain that I would consider myself middle-class.

CATALINA: Would you say that just by coming here to United States you went up a social class?

LAURA: Yes. Opportunities here are the max you can find anywhere; it is easier to go up the social class ladder.

Because they are American citizens, Puerto Rican families have certain advantages that other Latino migrants cannot access. These advantages including, government help and minimum
wage, also differ by location; thus, even if an individual receives public assistance in Puerto Rico, the amount of money and types of services they obtain are significantly different. These differences also augment the subjective perception of class.

CATALINA: Don't you get the same benefits in Puerto Rico?

LAURA: No you don't. The amount of money you get is completely different. For example, the minimum wage here is $7.15 and the minimum wage in Puerto Rico is still $5.15. Welfare here is also very different than in Puerto Rico. They give me more money here than in Puerto Rico, much more money here. In Puerto Rico, one probably gets around $60 per month, and here you get around $400. Sure, that’s a big difference between being here and being in Puerto Rico. Here they also help you to get a house, like the one I am living in now. They gave my mom a nice house too. And we just pay very little rent…. Back there we don't really have all the benefits that Americans have in the U.S.

In the two Latino middle-class families, social mobility occurs differently. In contrast to the poor families, the Denegris come from an upper class background in their home country, but are now living as middle-class individuals. The downward mobility they experienced is mainly due to the lack of social capital when coming to the U.S. In addition, as students, the Denegris have a temporarily limited income which also has contributed to their downward mobility. Growing up in prominent political and business families in Peru, the Denegris not only enjoyed economic and cultural capital, but they also had access to an extensive and exclusive social network. When they moved to the U.S., they brought with them their cultural, and to some extent, their economic capital. Moving to a new country meant that their social capital was not useful in their new environments. Thus, Rodrigo and Ana expressed feelings of “invisibility”, which originated from
the sense of not knowing people and not being able to use their social connections to have easier social, cultural, and economic access. They explain:

ANA: It was very hard for me to move here. We were older when we moved; we had a small baby, and all my family was in Peru. We used to live in a great house [in Peru]; we had a maid, each of us had a car, we both had good jobs, and basically our standard of living was very high.

CATALINA: What social class would you consider yourself when you were back in Peru?
ANA: High class.
CATALINA: And here?
ANA: Low, middle probably.
CATALINA: Why do you think your class went down?
ANA: First, the quality of life that we have here cannot be compared to what we were used to over there. As I was telling you before, house, cars, maids, we had it all. That is how I grew up; I was used to living that way. When we came here, everything changed, you know. We moved into a small apartment, in a so-so neighborhood. I clean and work like crazy, and it’s the type of life that middle, maybe a low class person in my country has…. I was also used to having a lot of friends and family around, but here I just don’t know that many people. Yes, I have friends at the University, good friends, but they are also very busy so if it’s not in school I never see them.

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RODRIGO: I am invisible in this country.

CATALINA: Why?
RODRIGO: I don’t know a lot of people and people here are too individualistic, or maybe too busy.

CATALINA: How are things different in Peru?

RODRIGO: You probably know this from your own experience, but things in Peru, or I would even say in Latin America, are done by who you are and whom you know. What I mean is that if you know someone that knows someone then things get done. Here I’m sure things also work like that, but I just don’t know anybody, so it’s harder to get things done.

In their interviews, Ana and Rodrigo both express that they experienced downward mobility when they moved to the U.S. Contrary to poor migrants, upper class migrants, such as the Denegris, leave behind better conditions than the ones they encounter in the United States. The Denegris believe that life in Peru is much better than life in the U.S. and constantly compare their lives in the two places.

The Rossi’s social class background takes on a unique pattern. Marta, born in a poor family in Argentina, grew up with middle/upper class values. Her mother, Paca, at the age of twelve, was sent by her parents to the city to work as a nanny for a very prominent Argentinean family. The family took her in as their own and put her through school. Paca enjoyed most of the same privileges that the children of the family enjoyed; she sat down for dinner with the family and went on trips, to parties, and on vacations with them. In her mid-twenties, Paca decided to move back to her parents’ city. There, Marta was born. Since Marta could remember, her mother would always read classic literature to her, insist on table etiquette, and constantly tell her that a university education was the best option. Marta’s social class experience is unique. Even though Marta grew up within a poor household, her mother instilled middle/upper class values in her; she highly valued and pursued a university education, traveled to many different countries
around the world, and grew up going to classical music concerts, art shows, and museums. Marta had the cultural capital of middle-class families; however, her economic capital resembled that of poor families. When Marta married John and moved to the U.S., she did not have a difficult time adapting to the American middle-class way of life.

It is clear that the data regarding social class mobility should challenge how we understand the connections between social class and global migration. This study shows here that the kind of class mobility, which is embedded in the global movement of people, escapes traditional definitions of class mobility. Transnational class mobility is based on a dual framework that includes home and host land definitions and criteria on social stratification. These findings reveal the ways in which Latino transnational families are already influencing the relationship between global migration and social class.

Ethnic Identity Within Latinos

Studies on identity suggest that groups define who they are in relation to others (Fine & Weis, 1998; Hall & du Gay, 1996; Lee, 2005). In their work with African Americans, whites, and Latinos/Latinas, Fine and Weis (1998) describe how these groups look for and simultaneously discursively construct an “Other” in order to define themselves. For example, the authors illustrate how working-class white males construct an unpleasant black “Other” against which to see themselves as superior. Work by Stacy Lee (2005) with Hmong students describes how race dynamics occur in the United States. She explains how discussions on race are based on a white and black dichotomy, in which whiteness is seen as the normative “good” and blackness as the undesirable “Other”. Thus, poor immigrants, who want to achieve the American Dream and aspire towards upward mobility, “often interpret the racial conditions to mean that
they must simultaneously embrace whiteness and reject blackness” (p. 4). Jones’ (2008) study on Jamaican immigrants in South Florida found that they construct their identity by reinforcing their Jamaican-ness, and separating themselves from African Americans and Haitians. Middle-class Jamaicans, in particular, emphasized differences between African Americans and themselves. In all these studies, there is an attempt by each group to create its own space within American society -a space that is shaped by defining a distinction between themselves and “Others”. In addition, some migrant groups, in the midst of adapting to American society, are socially perceived and/or associate themselves with either the dominant black or white discourse. Such spaces set the stage for racial, ethnic, and class struggles within a society highly influenced by migration.

Comparable distinctions characterize the Latino families’ experiences. They draw on their skin color, social class, and national origin to set differences. The dynamics of identity within the poor and middle-class families are significantly different. Not only do they define themselves in contradiction to African Americans, but they also form and define their identities in opposition to each other. The focus on intra-ethnic differences between Puerto Rican and other Latin Americans reflects their understanding that American society tends to see Latinos as a homogeneous group, a fact that all families resist. A common point within all the families was the rejection of blackness and the recognition of white privilege. Just as there was the white working class males’ perception of African Americans in Fine and Weis’ (1998) study, Latino families perceive African Americans as the “viral ‘other,’ the discursive dumping ground, so to speak, for all that is bad in American society” (p. 36). The families explain,

ROBERTO: Blacks…The blacks, they always see it as a racial thing. It’s not racial it’s because you guys are lazy. They’re always complaining they don’t get jobs, they always
bring up the race card, “I’m black.”. I’ll give you a perfect example; I know people that work at the auto industry. The blacks, they come to work three days out of five, and they complain they want more money. And when you write them up they say, “I’m black.” Puerto Ricans, they don’t give a shit. You know what I mean. They’ll come to work, they don’t care. If they get fired they ain’t gonna say, “Why’d you fire me ‘cause I’m Puerto Rican?” They ain’t gonna bring that card up. They just, “See you later”, they leave. White people they’re the same way; they don’t care, you don’t see them bringing up that they are white. That’s why they say minority jobs for people it’s wrong because the minorities are Puerto Rican. There’s black minority too but how can you give….Say they’re hiring for 30 people and you give 25 black people a job, two Puerto Ricans and three whites; that’s not fair, right? But you gotta do it because of laws, that’s how it is; that’s how I see it.

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LAURA: Here I cannot let my child play alone outside; I have to go out with them. Because if I let them go outside alone and the black people that live in front start fighting and a bullet escapes, it could hurt my babies.

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CATALINA: Would you like your kids to marry Latinos, whites, or blacks?

JUANA: I would like Crystal to marry…It doesn't matter. My mom, of course, doesn't want a black person in our family. I mean I'm not raising my kids like that. I just need her to grow and make sure she's gonna pick the right one 'cause I hear blacks are abusive; they like to be violent all the time. If she gets a black, he has to be good to her. And then a white, she can have him; he probably got money. And Puerto Ricans, it would be nice to have him in the
same race, but it doesn't really matter. I guess it's between the whites and the Puerto Ricans right now.

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ANA: In Peru, the people with darker skin, the *cholos* are usually Indians and mostly poor. Here in the States, skin color is also important. Black people are usually considered violent and poor. I have never had a bad encounter with a black person, but when we moved here, one of the things we were looking for was a neighborhood that didn’t have many black people.

Even though perceptions of African Americans seem to be consistent throughout all the families, perceptions of other Latinos are by and large different. Puerto Rican poor families clearly separate themselves from Mexicans and Dominicans; Dominicans are perceived as violent and amoral, and Mexicans are seen as illegal aliens. Puerto Ricans try to distance themselves from these Latinos in order to avoid being connected to such negative terms and stereotypes.

JULIANA: The other day at school, one of the kids called me Mexican. I turned around and yelled at him “I’m no Mexican, I’m Puerto Rican”. I was so mad.

CATALINA: Why was it such an insult to be called a Mexican?

JULIANA: I am sure they said it as an insult, as if I was some illegal person. I don’t think anything bad about Mexicans; it’s just that I am Puerto Rican.

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Observations

May 14th. Rodriguez family
It was late afternoon around six o’clock. All the family, including Laura and her husband, was watching T.V. After a news special on illegal aliens, Laura’s husband in a loud voice yelled, “take them all back”. Laura looked at him and in a strong manner started fighting with him about how cruel he was. When things cooled down in the living room, Laura turned towards me, apologized, and said, “I am sorry about his behavior; he is really racist against Mexicans, he thinks they take jobs away from him”.

The strained relations between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans should be approached with a historical and geographical focus. There has been a long history of illegal migration from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico. This has caused numerous political and social strains within the two countries. In Puerto Rico, xenophobia and racism towards Dominicans has increased in the last three decades. In addition, Dominicans in Puerto Rico have been segregated in terms of skin color, nationality, and class (Duany, 1998). Thus, it is clear that Puerto Ricans and Dominicans have a long history of strained relations, which is also expressed here in the United States. Diana illustrates the ethnic relations between Latinos from diverse nationalities; more specifically, she explains the negative perceptions towards Dominicans:

DIANA: The only difference [with other Latinos] is that they need papers to be here in the U.S., and we don't. They [other poor Latinos] are also a lot harder working than we are, extremely hard working. But apart from that, we are the same. Apart from a lot of Puerto Ricans here, there are also a lot of Dominicans. But they are the worst of the entire Latino race. The Dominican man and the Cuban man are the worst type of people you can ever encounter. Because they are really bad in their heart, they just don't care about anything; they have no morals. The Dominican men are abusive with their women and Cuban men too. Mexican men are chauvinist, but at the same time, they're considerate with their women.
CATALINA: Why do you think that Dominicans and Cubans are so bad?

DIANA: The problem is that Dominicans are known to be wife beaters, and are very violent. We don’t really like them in our neighborhoods.

CATALINA: If you could choose, apart from other Puerto Ricans, which other Latino would you live next to?

DIANA: If I couldn’t chose Puerto Ricans, I would probably chose, uhhh… probably any other Latino except for Dominicans.

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DIANA: Dominicans in Puerto Rico are like fleas on dogs; we have millions of them.

CATALINA: Is it a problem to have so many Dominicans in Puerto Rico?

DIANA: Yes, they come to take jobs from us. They are usually very poor so they do any type of job. One of the worst things that we have with Dominicans is prostitution; there are Dominican prostitutes everywhere, and they just come to our country to spread diseases.

With respect to middle-class Latino families, it is important to acknowledge their nationality and class background, which in turn affects how they define their identities and perceive others within American society. As I previously mentioned, all Latino families construct a rejection to Blackness and recognize white advantage. What is interesting in the middle-class Latino families, who are not Puerto Rican, is that they identify both African Americans and Puerto Ricans as negative “Others”. As both middle-class families perceive being Puerto Rican as what they have described as “low class”, they are careful to distance themselves from Puerto Ricans, and thus identify themselves with their country of origin, as Peruvian or Argentinean.
MARTA: One of the problems that I have [with her son’s school] is that because some of the kids in the class are Puerto Rican, he comes home with a Spanish vocabulary from Puerto Rico, which is very different from where I come from. For example the other day he came to me and said, “hey mommy, did you know that an orange is called china and not naranja”… I had to explain to him that the word china was only used by Puerto Ricans; we call oranges naranjas. And that is the correct way to pronounce it. The word China is what we use for the country. “Well mom I like saying china more” [she laughs]. And of course those are the things that I don’t like about the program, but I guess there is not much I can do.

This is my conflict here, the Puerto Rican community here is so, so big, and the majority of the people here in the U.S. just don’t know how to differentiate between Latin Americans. They just think that we are all Latinos; they should know that we are not all Puerto Ricans.

CATALINA: How does that make you feel, that you are being clustered as a Latino with people from different nations?

MARTA: Well they think that only because I speak Spanish, I am Puerto Rican, and it just hurts [she laughs]. I have to tell them that I am not Puerto Rican, that I am Argentinean, from South America, and that it is very different. People from the Caribbean, from the islands are very different from the continent [mainland Latin America].

CATALINA: What do you think about Puerto Ricans?

MARTA: Hummm, well, they are definitely better adapted [to the U.S.] than the rest of us. But they also have many years of being a colony. I don’t even know if they know they are a colony; I think they don’t even know what their reality is. What I do admire is that they keep their language and they are very proud to be Boricuas [indigenous name that Puerto Ricans call themselves].
CATALINA: What do you think about Alex’s teacher being Puerto Rican?

MARTA: I would have liked her to be from another Latin American country, and not Puerto Rican, mainly because of the language, the Puerto Rican slang. But I guess because the Puerto Rican community is so big here there was no other choice for the teacher [of the Spanish immersion program] to be Puerto Rican. So well, you can’t have everything.

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RODRIGO: It seems that the majority of Latinos in Lake City are Puerto Rican, and yes, definitely they are mostly poor. If one goes downtown where the Puerto Rican community lives, you can tell that their neighborhoods are very poor.

CATALINA: Can you tell me more about what it means to be Latino in the U.S.?

RODRIGO: If you speak Spanish you are either Mexican or Puerto Rican. Because of where we are [Lake City], people automatically think we are Puerto Rican. I guess I wouldn’t mind so much, but the problem is that then people think we are lazy and living off welfare. That does bother me, because I am neither poor nor living of welfare.

CATALINA: When people ask you where are you from, what do you answer?

RODRIGO: I usually say I am from Peru.

CATALINA: Do you ever say you are Latino?

RODRIGO: No, why should I?

When families describe themselves in terms of their country of origin, they are saying as much or more about who they are not than about who they are. These families are not rejecting all values associated with being Latino. Rather, they are rejecting the negative stigmas, such as being illegal, violent, and government dependent. In fact, these families embrace certain aspects
associated with being Latino (e.g., Spanish language and familism) and consider them important characteristics of their culture.

By describing their identity in terms of their nationality, Latino families reclaim pride in their background. They are resisting the dominant group stereotyping of Latino culture as unfavorable and otherwise problematic. Like many other immigrant groups, Latinos from various nationalities have to deal with the Latino panethnic discourse that is widely present in American society. By emphasizing their own nationality and differentiating themselves from African Americans and other Latino groups, the families in this study are strategically developing an identity separate from what they construct as the “viral other”.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed the stories of Latino families from varying nationality and social class. Using a postmodern framework, I analyzed the relationship between belonging and identity within place and space, and with other forms of social agencies such as technology and networking.

The analysis suggests that the sense of belonging for Latino families goes far beyond geographical location. Their everyday living experiences within multiple territories have a profound effect on the way they understand their belonging in the world. As demonstrated, Latino families belong both “here and there” while simultaneously sensing that they belong “neither here nor there”, which makes their belonging experience so unique. Due to the nature of their mobility, Latino families in this study come in contact with many different social, cultural, ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds. These contacts influence their perspective of the world and allow them to continuously recreate and redefine their identity.
The stories of the four Latino families indicate that they experience a sense of dislocation, as their *Latinoness* is partly accepted as a panethnic concept, but contested in terms of their geographic, historical, and social background. Although they are perceived by American society through a panethnic lens, I suggest that heterogeneity within Latino groups has a significant effect on community building and networking. In addition, I have shown how technology, as a tool for communication, is essential in keeping and building borderless relationships. All four families engage in different types of communication techniques to keep in touch with friends, family, and events in the homeland. The Denegri and the Rossi families use the Internet to keep them informed of the news in Peru and Argentina. Telephones and cell phones allow the Mendoza and the Rodriguez families to stay in touch with their relatives in Puerto Rico.

It is this situating and re-situating within a globalized economy and the movement of peoples that is at issue here. By capturing the complex interconnections between home and host country, this chapter looks at the ways in which social mobility occurs within a transnational context. More specifically, the chapter details the ways in which social class signifiers from the homeland are adapted and transformed inside the American stratification system. I suggest that Latinos bring from their homeland the structures and perceptions of racial and social privilege, including class signifiers. The findings reflect the unequal conditions of Latino families. Clearly, the data suggest that there are inter- and intra-group differences among Latinos that question the concept of a panethnic identity.

This chapter also shows how Latino families negotiate identities in response to race, class, and ethnicity. Puerto Rican poor families respond to messages about race and ethnicity by emphasizing their cultural distinctiveness in relation to blacks, Dominicans, and Mexicans. Peruvian and Argentinean middle-class families include class in the equation and highlight their
uniqueness amongst African Americans and poor Puerto Ricans. By presenting themselves as citizens of a specific country and not as Latinos, they hope to gain acceptance and access to white society.

The breath of this ethnographic work offers, through an analysis of “the intersection between everyday life and the structures of power that impinge upon it”(Herzfeld, 1997), a scope for imagining social formations within a new world order.
CHAPTER FOUR

SO CLOSE BUT SO FAR: LATINO FAMILIES, SOCIAL CLASS, AND EVERYDAY LIVING PRACTICES

“Living in borders and in margins, keeping intact one’s shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an ‘alien’ element”. (Anzaldúa, 1999)

The reproduction of society is one of the most discussed and argumentative areas of study in the social sciences. There are many different theories that define and describe how class is formed and reproduced. In the previous chapter, I explored the connections among movement, identity, and social class, and how these relations, through complex networks, create contemporary transnational individuals. In this next chapter, I use Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of capital to explain the differences among Latino families of varying social class. In addition, I examine how transnationalism influences the families’ everyday living practices. By comparing the experiences of Latino families from varying social class, I illustrate how everyday living practices, spending behavior, kinship and neighborhood, and home literacy provides children with advantages and/or disadvantages.

Heterogeneity shapes the modern concept of family, community, and nation. In addition, a transnational perspective provides novel insight into social inequality. I argue that families’ current experiences are a reflection of their experiences and practices in their homeland. As their cultural heritage and historical background differ from mainstream Americans, both middle-class and poor-class Latino families expand the discussion on social class-belonging criteria. Thus,
transnational Latino families fall into the cracks of the classic explanations of social class in America.


Previous studies of social class and families reveal that differences in resources allow for advantages and/or disadvantages in groups of different social class, which ultimately reinforces the status quo. The most noticeable characteristic of the middle-class families in Unequal Childhoods (Lareau, 2003), for example, is the “concerted cultivation” approach adopted by parents. Busy schedules controlled by parents and a developed sense of entitlement and competitiveness are constitutive of this approach. Middle-class parents teach their children how to reason verbally and make decisions. Unlike the working-class and poor families who follow a “natural growth approach”, so named because of their parent’s laissez-faire attitude toward child rearing, middle-class children receive training on how to pressure organizations to be responsive to their needs. Thus, “concerted cultivation had the potential to offer more payoff in the world of institutions than did the …natural growth” (p. 81).

Guofang Li’s (2008) study of a middle-class Sudanese immigrant family living in a low income inner-city neighborhood in the U.S. illustrates the class dynamics in a mobile world. She concludes that parenting practices in immigrant families are a result of current class location, homeland class location, cultural practices, neighborhood location, and school conditions. Chin and Phillips (2004) also look at the influence of parent’s resources and values in child-rearing practices in relation to summer experiences. Their results show that although most parents wanted to develop their children’s talents and skills, children’s summer experiences were
differentiated by social class. For example, middle-class parent’s resources and flexible schedules provided their children with more stimulating summers than did those of the poor-working class parents.

Work by Li (2008) and by Chin and Phillips (2004) affirms Lareau’s findings in relation to class position and the transmission of advantages and/or disadvantages to their children. A common thought runs through these studies: the need for a multidimensional approach to social class. In addition to childrearing, there are structural barriers from social institutions and differential access to resources that hinder or facilitate children’s education and development. These studies share a common understanding that “parent’s cultural capital establishes the intellectual climate for children’s educational aspirations, motivation to achieve, and performance in schools” (Li, 2002, p. 138). Comparable resource accessibility and barriers characterize the Latino families in this study. As with Lareau’s concerted cultivation families, hectic and busy lifestyles seem to be the norm for middle-class Latino families.

Observation notes, June 6, 2006 – Denegri family

On a typical weekday, Rosita wakes up at around 7:00am to get ready to go to school. Her mom walks her to school, which is only five minutes away. After dropping her off, Ana and Rodrigo have breakfast together and then leave to the university. In the afternoons, Rosita stays in the after-school program until 5:30pm. Twice a week she stays at school for the Science and Art clubs. In addition, on Tuesdays Rosita goes to ballet lessons and on Thursdays to swimming. The family usually comes home late in the evening. Ana makes a fast dinner and later sits in the living room to help Rosita with her homework. Between 9:00 and 9:30pm, Rosita takes a shower and gets her things ready for school. At 10:00pm,Ana reads a nighttime story to Rosita and puts her to bed.
CATALINA: Can you tell me about Alex’s schedule?

MARTA: Yeah sure. He goes to swimming lessons once a week, he goes to soccer practice once a week and a game over the weekend, and he is starting an art class. I like to keep him busy. I think he has a very interesting artistic ability. I'm an artist and he always tells me that he likes the things I make, and then starts doing what I'm making. He is very creative, not only with the language because he makes many jokes, but he's visually very creative. Last year I had him in music class, which he liked very much. We've tried to promote Alex’s musical ability. When he was a year old we took him to baby music class. He would go twice a week to play with instruments and sing with other kids and their parents. Also, John’s sister is married to a musician; he plays the drums in a band and teaches him [Alex] a couple of things.

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Observation notes, November 22, 2006 – Rossi family

John and Marta think it is important that Alex has as many activities as possible; he plays soccer, goes to swimming and art lessons. On Fridays, the family goes to the local art gallery to participate in children activities. His schedule is very tight; the little free time he has he spends reading books with his father or playing with the dogs.

In addition to organizing schedules, driving children back and forth and getting snacks and uniforms ready, the parents feel the obligation to participate by watching, playing, helping, and teaching their children. Most articulate in this point is Lareau (2003), but others have noted the parental sense of responsibility to motivate and stimulate their children. Middle-class parents
transmit advantages to their children through the overt and sometimes hidden objectives behind an assortment of organized activities. Lareau suggests that middle-class parents are aware of the advantages that participating in diverse extracurricular activities bring to their children. Organized sport activities, for example, bring benefits to their children and “develop the ability to perform in public…performance-based assessment gradually becomes routine…. Also, exposure to public scrutiny is self graduated” (Lareau, 2003, p. 61). Not only are the parents engaging their children in multiple activities, but also “feel an obligation to cultivate their children’s talents” (p. 97).

Latino middle-class families exhibit the same engagement and obligation to their children’s activities. They believe that taking part in certain activities and events ultimately has the purpose of motivating and developing future skills. Both Rodrigo and Ana believe that the extracurricular activities Rosita participates in are worth their time and effort and that they will eventually teach her much more than the activity itself. They strongly believe that the objective of sports such as ballet and swimming goes far beyond the sport itself; rather, it will allow Rosita to have exposure and learn teamwork, competitiveness, camaraderie, and to feel comfortable in the spotlight. Ana illustrates this point,

It’s important that she learns to dance in front of all the parents. Maybe someday, she will have to give an important speech or present at a conference; this will train her not to be afraid and to be confident in public.

Furthermore, Latino middle-class families perceive their children as projects, where parents are managers in charge of developing and stimulating the children in such a way that they can provide enough tools for future success.

CATALINA: Did you see any changes since Alex started music lessons?
JOHN: Yes, it was funny because whenever he was driving in the car he started to sing the songs that he heard in class; his memory was so good. It definitely helped his memory and language skills. He also seemed more calm after the music class.

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CATALINA: What was the main reason for taking Alex to these lessons?

MARTA: To stimulate his learning. Even when I was pregnant we bought some classical music CDs especially for babies. I used to put it on my belly so that Alex would listen to it in the womb. You see I believe that one should stimulate one’s children.

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CATALINA: Why do you have Rosita in all these different lessons?

ANA: I think it’s very important for her to have a life outside her school. We want her to fully develop all her abilities. She is in ballet because she asked us to, and we decided it was a good sport for her. She not only exercises but it teaches her discipline, grace, and how to behave in front of people. During her ballet presentations, she has to be in front of many people so she has to learn to be composed, to behave well, and to get over her nervousness. After a couple of presentations, I can see how she is becoming more secure in public. You never know what kind of a job she will be doing in the future and this is teaching her to be in the spotlight.

The Denegris and the Rossis not only articulate the need to enroll their children in multiple extracurricular activities, but express the importance of teaching “culture” to their children. Bourdieu (1984) recognizes cultural capital as an indicator and basis of social class position. He asserts that children born in middle-class families achieve a natural familiarity with social and
cultural cues valued by institutions. In addition, Lamont and Lareau (1988) assert that high status cultural signals (e.g. interest in art and classical music, attending theater and museums, and reading literature) are used for social and cultural exclusion. Contrary to Latino poor families, middle-class families participate in such high status activities.

In the Denegri family, activities are mostly educationally-oriented. For example, on Sundays, they go out to dinner and afterwards to the bookstore, Barnes and Noble. Sometimes, they use the bookstore as a socialization activity and go with other friends to the bookstore’s coffee shop. Rosita feels very comfortable and at ease here; she looks at picture books, plays with toys, and with other children. Both parents perceive reading as an important part of their life and think that it should also be an important part of Rosita’s life. Going to Barnes and Noble thus exposes Rosita to a positive literary environment. Other activities such as going to museums and art galleries are also part of their everyday lives. When they travel, museums are always in their sightseeing plans, and sometimes even the main reason for visiting a place.

ANA: We have some friends that have been telling us about the museums in Washington [DC]. They told us they were not only great, but also free. So last year we decided to visit the museums there. We took Rosita to all these museums and monuments. It was so much fun, we loved it!

CATALINA: Have you taken Rosita to other museums?

ANA: Oh yes. Here in Lake City we have gone to the Science Museum several times. We have been to the local art gallery; she [Rosita] thinks it’s a bit boring, but we still take her because we think it’s important that she knows about art and famous artists. We have also gone to the children’s museum in Long Lake [a city 1 hour away]; she really likes that one. We sometimes go to Canada and go to some of the museums there.
The public library plays an important role in both middle-class families. Once a week the Denegri family goes to the public library and takes out movies, books, and CDs. Rodrigo is a devoted fan of *The Lord of the Rings*, thus he often rents the same movies repeatedly. He not only owns the entire *Lord of the Rings* book collection, but also, an array of *Lord of the Rings* reference books. He likes to sit with Rosita to watch the movies and gives her specific details that are not in the movie. He shows her maps, chronological descriptions, and goes into detail about clothes and weapons. This has become a father-daughter educational bonding activity. From the public library, they also bring home several classical music CDs, which they listen to after dinner. Both Rosita’s parents enjoy classical music; thus, she has been exposed to it since she was a baby. Rosita explains,

> My mommy and daddy both like classical music; they tell me the name of the owner of the song [composer], but I can’t tell the difference of who it is. They say their names are Mozart and Beethoven; he has the same name from a dog in a movie. My dad told me he couldn’t hear, but how can he make a song if he can’t hear?

It is clear that middle-class families transmit advantages to their children through participation in highbrow activities. Middle-class parents’ behavior towards cultural tastes and preferences allows their children to have preferential access in society. As American society rewards highbrow elements of family life such as certain behaviors, tastes, and attitudes (Lareau & Horvat, 1999), families that do not exhibit these elements are excluded from the middle-upper class realm. I argue here that transnational Latino middle-class families bring from their home country and activate in their new setting the highbrow elements necessary to be included into the American upper-middle-class way of life.
Spending Behavior

I spent an average of three months with each family. Between three and four days a week, I accompanied them through their daily activities. Parents in both middle-class families either worked full-time or were full-time university students. Although they had busy schedules, they found time to enroll in, prepare for, and drive their children to extracurricular classes. These classes had priority over other activities, including grocery shopping, visiting friends, and studying. What is interesting about these middle-class families is that although they had many expenses and money was not always abundant, their children’s educational expenses took priority over many other expenses. Rodrigo and Ana Denegri are both Ph.D. students; thus, their current financial resources are not in accordance to the income parameters of other middle-class families. Despite the Denegris’ temporarily low student income, they still manage to provide their daughter with quality educational opportunities. They explain,

RODRIGO: The problem we have right now is that we are students. Of course as students we don’t have a lot of money and that is stressful.

CATALINA: If money is tight right now, why do you spend money on Rosita’s classes?

RODRIGO: What can I say? We are investing in her future.

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ANA: Having Rosita in ballet and swimming is very important for us. As I said, we are students now and even if our income is not as good as it was in Peru, we still spend money in important things; Rosita’s education is one of those important things.

CATALINA: Why is it so important to have Rosita in different classes?
ANA: Well it’s good for her to get some exercise, but also to make new friends. She has made new friends, especially in ballet…. We love that she goes to ballet lessons.

In contrast to these families, Latino poor families, which in some cases would have an income comparable to that of the Denegrés, would not spend the money in educational activities for their children. In this sense, Latino middle-class families embody a moment of critique of the perception of social class as an exclusively economic phenomena, in which economic factors are determinants of social class (Marx, 1963, 1970). The Denegrés understand, to the point of being able to articulate the fact that advantages not only come through economic means but through a combination of economic, cultural, and social capital.

Spending habits and money organization were also key points of difference between class positions. Middle-class families spend their money on basic necessities (e.g.: groceries, electricity, gas, rent/mortgage, etc.), children’s extracurricular activities, travel, dinning out, and keeping savings accounts. On the other hand, Latino poor families pay for basic necessities by navigating several different government programs, including food stamps, temporary assistance, home energy assistance, and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplemental Food Program. Additionally, poor families spend their income, for instance, on family gatherings, monthly installments for previously bought items, and clothing for the family. In poor families, however, saving money for the future has a very low priority. While poor families showed no interest when it came to saving for the future, middle-class families articulated the importance of saving money. The different perceptions on money saving reflects Martineau’s (1958) observations on saving behavior between classes. He found that “the higher the individual’s class position, the more likely is he to express some saving aspirations. Conversely, the lower his class position, the more likely is he to mention spending only” (p. 128).
John and Marta are both schoolteachers. John is an English as a Second Language elementary teacher and Marta is a substitute teacher. They receive a combined income of approximately $60,000 per year. They live in a self-owned three-story restored old house in an affluent largely white, middle-class neighborhood in Lake City. They own one car and also have access to their in-laws’ car. Their main expenses include: mortgage, food, gas, electricity, cable, phone, and automobile related expenses. They also spend part of their income in Alex’s extracurricular classes including soccer, art, swimming, and music lessons. John and Marta, as well, enjoy eating out; they take Alex out to lunch at least once a week, and go out for dinner with their own friends at least twice a month. John and Marta have several different saving accounts: a college savings account for Alex’s future, a retirement fund, and a travel fund.

CATALINA: Can you tell me more about the role money plays in your life?

MARTA: Oh it is very important so that we can travel around and travel back home [she laughs]. Of course, it’s very important. I am usually very frugal with money because I want to spend it traveling. I would rather have money to travel than to spend it in expensive clothes or things.

Every one to two years, the family takes a two to three month vacation in Argentina. During their vacation, they enroll Alex in a nearby school and in other activities, including puppet making. Marta likes to spend time with her friends and family and takes different art courses at the university. John likes to relax around the house and take day trips to the city. They believe spending money on traveling allows Alex to be in contact with Argentinean culture, to Marta’s family, and it reinforces his Spanish language. John explains,

I think it is important for Alex to travel and to see the world. Off course going back to Argentina is a plus for us and for him. I really want my son to grow up fully bilingual and to
know the two cultures very well. He also learns to deal with different people, you see, people in Argentina are very different from the kids in his [school] class. And I think that exposing him to different environments is a good thing for him.

Surely, as Martineau (1958) points out, middle-class spending is “experienced-centered”, where one is left mainly with memories. As such, this type of spending offers cultural and social growth, but little in the form of “artifact-centered” return, which is often associated with the poor-class. As we see here, Latino middle-class families do their part to keep this form of spending behavior characteristic of middle-class groups.

**Kinship, Community, and Neighborhood**

It is arguably the case that middle-class families, regardless of their ethnic, cultural or national background, tend to resemble one another in the organization of their daily lives. The lives of Lareau’s (2003) middle-class families, as well as the Latino middle-class families in this study, revolve around their children’s organized activities. What is noteworthy in all the Latino families is that in spite of busy and chaotic schedules, they still manage to set time aside for their extended family, thus maintaining strong kinship ties. The strong connection with extended kin among Latino families of varying social class contrasts sharply with data collected in previous investigations of middle-class families. Schneider and Smith (1973) assert that middle-class families give primacy to the nuclear model and are more distant from kin. In addition, Lareau (2003) suggests that close kinship ties are characteristic of working class and poor families and not of middle-class families. She explains that,
Such attenuated kinship ties [in middle-class families] contrast dramatically with the patterns we observed in working-class and poor families, where extremely strong social ties with immediate and extended family members are common.

In contrast to Lareau’s findings, both middle and poor-class Latino parents have strong ties and communicate daily with their parents and siblings. Moreover, all the families keep close contact with cousins, nephews, grandparents, and other extended family members in their home country. However, they differ in the instruments they utilize and the ways they make use of them in order to communicate with their friends and family back home. As I have illustrated in the previous chapter, middle-class families had the latest computers at home, utilized the Internet with high-speed connection, and in general, were more knowledgeable about the uses of Internet research and software applications. In addition, children were being taught technology skills that helped them with their schoolwork and allowed them to communicate with family in their home country. Both Rosita and Alex knew how to operate the computer and call their families using the Internet. In contrast, poor-class families had limited or no access to computers and the Internet; their main form of communicating back home was through cell phones, cell phone cameras, and telephones.

It is clear that the digital divide between families is not only a problem of access but also a divide of the skills necessary to utilize the diverse communication technologies. What is noteworthy here is how families are contributing to the digital divide. By either providing or not providing access and opportunities to relate to technology, these families themselves are reproducing social inequalities. We should also consider that not having access to technology in some cases could be related to economic restrictions. However, in this study, limited access to computers and the Internet in poor families was mainly related to the parent’s idea that
technology at home is not as important; rather, it is the school’s job to provide these learning opportunities. Despite these differences, all families find ways to incorporate communication technologies in their everyday lives; these uses provide transnational families with a continuous pattern of interaction regardless of space, allowing boundaries of time and space to become blurred.

There is a sizable literature on the importance of family networks in migrant communities. In chapter two, I illustrated how Latino migrants utilized social networks to adapt to the U.S. I compare the experiences of middle-class and poor-class families in relation to kinship. Studies on immigrant families, such as that of Li’s (2002), suggest that despite differences in educational attainment, academic and entrepreneurial Chinese families placed strong emphasis on their relationship to their extended family. Researchers studying Latino families find that regardless of national origin and acculturation levels (Blank & Torrencilha, 1998; Hurtado, 1995), Latino cultural tradition places strong emphasis on familism (Beca Zinn, 1994). In addition, Blank and Torrencilha (1998) make a similar point with respect to their findings, and assert that socioeconomic status has no impact on the likelihood of extended living arrangements in Latino families. Although it can be argued that close-knit, Latino family values may cross class and national boundaries, I suggest that they do not cross such boundaries in the same way or for the same reasons. It is interesting that although these families all have close relationships with extended family, these relationships are lived differently depending on the social class background. For middle-class families, kinship is viewed as a source of support; in poor families, extended family is both a source of survival and a responsibility.

Middle-class families state that having family members come from their home country helps them with home/family/work responsibilities. These families have family members come from
their homeland to help with household and childrearing responsibilities. For example, every year the Rossi’s bring Marta’s mother to stay with them. As a foreigner, Paca has visa restrictions; therefore, she comes either once a year for no more than six months or twice a year for periods of two to three months each. Paca is a 68-year-old woman; she is retired, and she likes to come to the U.S. to spend time with her only grandson, Alex. When she visits, she helps with household chores and picks up Alex from the bus stop. Both Marta and John enjoy having her at home. They explain:

   JOHN: She helps us so much; it seems that when she is here we have more time to do our own things. I don’t have to be worried about who is home when Alex gets here or what we are having for dinner. She is a great help for us.

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   MARTA: I love having my mother here. When she is here, I don’t feel so homesick. She cooks all the food I like; I just feel so at home. I also like that she helps us with Alex’s Spanish. Because she doesn’t speak any English, he can’t do any Spanglish with her.

Latino poor-class families also place a strong emphasis on familism. What is noteworthy here is the unique role that extended family plays in each social class. Rubin’s (1992) study on white working-class families, identifies families as major constraining forces in people’s lives. Conversely, Stack’s (1997) study with poor African Americans shows the importance of family networks for survival. In the poor Latino families studied here, kinship networks are both a support system and a form of constraint. Whereas Latino middle-class families migrate away from their relatives, poor families migrate towards kin, friends, and other Puerto Rican communities. In these poor families, there is a sense of economic, social, and psychological
responsibility with other family members and close friends. For example, when family or friends of the Mendozas or the Rodriguezes, or they themselves are in need of economic, material, or social support, there is a large number of kin and friends upon whom they can rely. At the same time, relationships with extended family members can be perceived as problematic, and economically and psychologically draining. Diana explains:

DIANA: I don’t know what is wrong with her [Laura]. She is back into drugs; doesn’t she know that they [the government] can take their children away? The other day the police came to her house because she was fighting with her husband and the neighbors called the police. CATALINA: What happened? DIANA: She gets really crazy when she drinks, well, when they both drink. They got into a fight and she started to hit her husband. The police came and they called some social services to make sure the kids were fine. If things keep on going as they are, they will take the kids away from her. And you know what that means, that I will have to take care of them.

When looking at Latino poor families, it is important to understand the distinctive living conditions and constraints that these families encounter. Stack (1997) looks at poor African American families and shows that the families adapt to their poverty conditions by forming large, resilient, lifelong support networks based on friendship and family. She argues that these kin networks are major supportive systems that enable poor African Americans to survive. In addition, she acknowledges the contradictory role of these families and states, “survival demands the sacrifice of upward mobility and geographic movement.…” (p. 125).

Comparable living conditions characterize poor Latino families. Their decision to settle in Lake City’s West side, mainly a Puerto Rican poor neighborhood, was based on having access to networks of family and friends. Although these networks provide Puerto Rican migrants with
multiple forms of support, including job opportunities, help with children, and companionship, they can also be a burden. Diana, for example, has to go to work, take care of her two younger kids, and, several times a week, she takes care of her grandchildren. Her paycheck not only is used for her children’s needs, but she also helps pay for her older grandson’s psychological and medical needs. When her daughter is out of work, she also helps her with rent. It is clear that middle-class Latino families do not live under these strenuous circumstances; their income is spent for their own and their children’s expenses.

Transnational families live in a somewhat borderless world that allows them to simultaneously belong to different societies. While American society promotes individualism, their homeland society encourages collectivity and familism. Thus, transnational Latino families, regardless of class, live in a constant duality of expectations, cultural understandings, and meanings within multiple contexts. This cultural and social duality accounts for an important difference between Latino and American families. The experiences of these families corroborate Li’s (2008) assertion “that traditional socio-economic indicators may not have the same meaning for immigrant families as they do for American-born families” (p. 150). The duality these families experience is also present in their settling patterns. For example, middle-class families want to settle in middle-class neighborhoods; however, these neighborhoods are primarily non-Latino. On the other hand, Latino neighborhoods in Lake City are poor and mainly populated by Puerto Ricans. Thus, when looking for a neighborhood, these middle-class families have to choose between ethnicity and social class as their main selection criteria.

Middle and poor-class Latino families differ in their settling patterns. Latino middle-class families generally migrate away from kin and settle in middle-class neighborhoods (Alba, Logan, & Stults, 2000). Work on the influence of neighborhood context on families has been
increasingly popular in the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century (Ainsworth, September 2002; Burton, Price-Spratlen, & Beale Spenser, 1997; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). These studies conclude that family and neighborhood characteristics have a significant effect on children’s outcome. According to Fisher and Kmec (2004), there are three key findings about the ways neighborhoods influence youth development and educational attainment processes: exposure to social networks, existence of sources of social control to monitor and control behaviors, and as providers of contacts with institutional resources such as schools, centers, and churches. Furthermore, Fustenberg and Hughes (1997) argue that “social class differences mark the character of neighborhood organization and culture” (p. 28). An essential component of Latino families’ move to the host land is to find a neighborhood with similar social characteristics as where they lived back home. Furthermore, one of the main objectives when middle-class Latino families choose a place to live is to find a good school for their children. The Denegris and the Rossis selected their neighborhood based on racial and economic composition, and school quality. Middle-class families explain their choice of neighborhood:

CATALINA: How did you find a place to live when you came to the U.S.?

RODRIGO: We wanted a place that was close to the University, but in a nice neighborhood too. It was difficult to find a place that we liked, especially because of the prices. We were used to living in a really nice house back in Peru so we didn’t want our quality of life to change much. But it did.

CATALINA: How did it change?

RODRIGO: We now live in a small apartment close to the university, which had a very good school for Rosita and it wasn’t that expensive. It was also in an ok neighborhood.

CATALINA: How is the neighborhood here different from where you lived in back home?
RODRIGO: We used to live in a good neighborhood; the people that lived close to us were all politicians and owners of companies. Here I would say it’s a middle, middle-low class neighborhood. As students we couldn’t afford to live in expensive homes, we also didn’t want to buy a house. We looked into living in Winterville, where my professor said the schools were one of the best in Main Town, but renting an apartment there wasn’t so easy, and it wasn’t that close to the university.

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CATALINA: How did you choose the house you are in right now?

MARTA: We wanted to buy a house in a good neighborhood with good schools. We looked for a long time for a house that we loved…I like it [referring to their home]. It’s ok…You see my in-laws live very close by and they had some friends that were selling their house; we got it at a great price.

The neighborhood selection process reflects one of the main points of difference between the social classes of the families studied here. Previous studies (Furstenberg & Hughes, 1997; Tienda, 1991) have also recognized the importance of how parents select their neighborhood of residence and networks of interaction to maximize their child’s well being. Whereas poor Puerto Rican families prefer neighborhoods with established social networks and ethnic and national composition resembling their own, middle-class families look for factors such as quality of schools, neighborhood safety, socioeconomic characteristics, and ethnic and racial structure.

Although both poor- and middle-class families are interested in the neighborhood’s ethnic and racial characteristics, they perceive it in very different terms. Poor families look for other Latino communities and in particular, their own nationality, which will allow them to have a
support network. Conversely, Latino middle-class families look at ethnic and racial composition as a descriptor of “where not to live”. For example, Marta explains the importance of race: “we also didn’t want a neighborhood where there were a lot of black people or Puerto Ricans. It’s not that I’m racist; it’s just the reality of things. Black and Latino neighborhoods are dangerous and very poor; we don’t want to live there”. Rodrigo and Ana’s neighborhood has 4.1% African American and only 1.5% Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), compared to 39% and 8.9% respectively in Diana’s neighborhood. Racial differences also translate to average household income disparities of $59,472 for middle-upper class neighborhoods and $27,850 for working-class and poor neighborhoods. Ana comments and compares to back home on the importance of race, income, and neighborhoods:

In the majority of cases if you are white, it means that you come from a good social class; not necessarily upper class, but you will never be in the low class…. Usually upper class neighborhoods are safer, cleaner, and just in general nicer…. When we moved here we wanted the same type of neighborhood….we mainly looked for good schools, safety, and although it sounds bad, we wanted the majority of the people that lived there to be sort of white.

These families are settling in neighborhoods based on social class and ethnicity. However, social class and ethnicity is prioritized differently between the families. Middle-class families prioritize social class; thus, they are moving into middle-class neighborhoods, which ultimately affect their children’s education and opportunities. However, a secondary concern deals with ethnic and racial characteristics. They reject black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods because of stereotypes ascribed to them. Poor families, as I will further discuss, settle in neighborhoods based on ethnic support systems. For example, all poor families explained that when they first
came to Lake City they did not want to live in black neighborhoods. As I previously discussed in chapter three, Latinos construct a “viral other” that influences their living patterns.

In addition, an important factor to consider when comparing family’s settling patterns and social class is their motive for moving to a new country (Portes & DeWind, 2007). Latino families in this study migrated to the U.S. in search for better opportunities. Middle-class families’ motives for moving were generally associated with education and, in the Rossi’s case, marriage. In contrast, Latino poor families moved for security, economic, and kinship purposes. Rodrigo and Ana, for example, moved to pursue graduate studies that would allow them to access better opportunities. Diana wanted to live close to her daughter and grandchildren, but also, she was looking for a job, better opportunities, and safer living conditions.

I look at the ways in which class and culture both operate and are newly articulated inside ethnic transnational communities. Looking at how families settle in a new country suggests that understanding the ways in which people form communities, are granted or denied access to those communities, and people’s own self regulating membership attitudes, are essential to understanding social class formation and access. Under this formulation, Latinos can be understood in terms of their differences based on national origin, social class, race, culture, and motives for migrating. The differences amongst the families studied here clearly challenge the Latino panethnic notion.
Home Literacy

As discussed above, social class is an influential factor in families’ everyday lives. When analyzing the interactions between social class, everyday lives, and children’s education, it is important to consider the educational practices within the transnational home milieu. Furthermore, it is essential to understand how literacy practices are developed and experienced within the transnational family, and how culture, language, and class influence these practices. Most articulate on this point is Li (2002), but others have noted this influence as well. Li suggests that literacy practices are a reflection of the literacy experience families had in their home country, and differ upon the family’s socio-cultural background. In addition, she concludes, “oral communication in the families is the means of preserving the first language and culture” (p. 136).

Latino middle-class families exhibit comparable influence of socio-cultural factors in their home literacy practices. However, middle-class Latino families influence their children’s language learning not only by oral communication through parent-child story telling, but also through book reading. The Denegri family maintains standard Peruvian traditions at home. They strongly believe that their daughter Rosita should be fluent in both Spanish and English. Ana explains,

I want her [Rosita] to be as fluent as possible in both languages. One of my biggest accomplishments is that my daughter can speak both languages very well. Usually kids lose their language, but I have been very persistent on that. I believe we are benefiting her. Wherever she ends up living, here or in Peru, this will help her make a better living; she can work as a translator.
Ana complains that Rosita sometimes has a difficult time with Spanish vocabulary and sentence structure, and converts sentences into what she calls “Spanglish”. Both parents make an effort to correct Rosita’s misuse of Spanish and constantly ask her to translate what she says in English into Spanish. Her mother proudly comments: “you see how she knows both languages…my mother in law said that she was going to lose her Spanish; we make sure that she doesn’t.” When Rosita says something grammatically wrong, her mother corrects her and then explains “you should use the subjunctive in this sentence.” She not only corrects Rosita’s oral speech, but also explains to her the correct grammar rules. In addition to oral communication, the Denegris read numerous books to Rosita. They have brought a large number of Spanish children’s books from Peru. Rosita enjoys listening to stories in Spanish and she always asks her mom to translate English storybooks into Spanish. Every night before going to sleep, Ana reads a story to Rosita. Ana describes their reading routine:

Yes, we both read to her. At night, I usually read to her, but when I am tired or busy Rodrigo reads to her. We always read to her in Spanish. She asks us to read to her in Spanish. Even if it is an English book, I usually translate it to her. She also watches the movies we rent in Spanish.

Although John is not a Spanish native speaker, he has a good command of the language; thus, Spanish is the main language used in their home. Both John and Marta believe that Alex should be fluent in both languages. They think fluency in both languages helps transmit their cultural heritage and enhances Alex’s future opportunities. John explains,

CATALINA: What do you think about Alex’s language ability in Spanish and in English?
JOHN: I think he’s perfect in both for his age. I mean, I’m sure there are things that he does in Spanish and things that he does in English, more in Spanish than in English that he can
certainly attribute to language interference, but they’re minimal. And like I’m sure he’s at or above whatever developmental stage in both languages.

CATALINA: I’m curious, how did both of you decide that Spanish was going to be spoken at home? Especially with you not being a native Spanish speaker?

JOHN: Well, actually, you know I’ve read about language acquisition and I’ve seen that the most important thing for raising a child bilingually is consistency with language; that can be achieved in different ways. Two years ago, we all went to Argentina; Marta and Alex went to Argentina a month before I did… During this time when we were there, we agreed that…we would continue speaking Spanish when we returned [to the U.S.]… my thinking was simply that I don’t have to be a perfect model of language for him…I thought it was more important to give him, I suppose to reinforce the Spanish at home, and I give him the effect of readiness to accept the Spanish…

CATALINA: What do you think this ability of knowing two languages will give Alex?

JOHN: Well, facility in learning a third language; help his thinking processes, perhaps. Have his brain develop in a different way. Maybe give him a little bit insight into cultural, linguistic, cultural differences, I don’t know. Knowing two is better.

In addition to Spanish oral communication at home, the Rossis use storytelling to stimulate language learning. Marta often tells Alex stories about her life in Argentina; she tells him about growing up there, when she used to spend time with her grandfather, the school she attended, and about her favorite food. She also teaches Alex folk tales she learned when she was a little girl. In addition, both John and Marta believe that it is important for their son to read books in Spanish. Around the Rossi’s home there are numerous children books, mainly in Spanish. During the
afternoons, after John comes home from work, Alex selects a couple of books from his own bookshelf and spends some time reading with his father on the living room couch.

Turning to oral communication and storytelling, these families prove that there is a strong commitment from middle-class parents to not only instill in their children literacy practices that enhance their English language skills, but most importantly, they believe that keeping their Spanish language alive should be an important result of home literacy. As a result, these Latino middle-class families are committed to home literacy through a bilingual lens.

Both groups of Latino families in this study follow literacy practices established during their own childhood. What and how they pass on these practices also follows the way in which they were taught. For example, middle-class parents, contrary to poor-class parents, came from homes where reading was considered the norm; thus, their children are being raised in homes where reading is also the norm.

RODRIGO: In my home, my father used to buy books, but he didn’t read them, he only read the newspaper. As for my mother, she did read, but only novels. She tried to be an example for us… My father would always buy encyclopedias for us.

CATALINA: Did your parents read to you?

ANA: I can’t remember my parents reading to us. Some cousins that came to live with us for a while did read with us. I read mostly alone. I would go to the library and the bookstore and read books there. I used to read a lot of children’s books. In my house, there were always many books everywhere.

CATALINA: Did your parents like to read?
ANA: Yes very much. My dad was a lawyer, and he was always reading. He would say that reading kept him up to date. My mother was a very educated woman, and she used to read a lot of classic literature.

***

CATALINA: Tell me about reading in your house. Did you see your parents read many books?

JOHN: Yeah. My dad was always reading some kind of novel, my mom too. My dad always had a book to read. Yeah.

CATALINA: Did they used to read to you guys?

JOHN: When we were little?…You know, I don't remember. I'm sure both of them. I think maybe my mom more than my dad did. My dad used to tell us many stories, not reading, but sort of making them up. He used to tell us many stories when we went to bed.

Middle-class parents teach their children a set of literacy practices closer to mainstream middle-class American practices. In this context Latino middle-class homes encourage practices and attitudes that have been found to be related to school literacy (Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2003; Leseman & de Jong, 1998). To some extent, literacy practices brought by Latino middle-class families from their homeland resemble the literacy practices experienced by other middle-class American families. These similarities allow middle-class Latino children to have a smoother transition into American schools.
Struggling To Make Ends Meet: Everyday Living Practices in Transnational Poor-class Latino Families

Like the middle-class children in my study, poor-class children experience a transnational way of life that shapes their experiences in and understandings of American society. Transnational children live within a dual reality that molds their contexts, histories, memories, experiences, and practices. While these children share a transnational existence, they differ in social class background, which affects their social and educational development. Studies by Lareau (2002; 2003) in particular, have been important in explaining the ways in which these processes work through the intersection of class and race. Lareau shows that poor and working class families follow “the accomplishment of natural growth” approach to childrearing. This approach constructs a poor/working class identity that serves, ultimately to perceive and enact “children’s development as spontaneously unfolding” (p. 773). Lareau (2003) points out that contrary to middle-class families, working-class and poor families follow a more informal and less adult-controlled schedule. A comparably relaxed outlook characterizes the Latino poor-class families in my study. Diana Rodriguez is a single mother of three children: Laura 25 years old, Paco 13, and Oscar 9. However, she only lives with her two younger sons; Laura lives close by with her husband and two children. After moving from Puerto Rico over two years ago, Diana has had a difficult time finding a job; thus, her first year in the U.S. she went on public assistance. Government aid has provided the Rodriguez’ with a newly built home in a government housing project, food through the use of food stamps, free educational training, home energy assistance, and unemployment benefits. By the time the family observations took place, Diana had found a job in a factory and worked twelve-hour shifts five times a week. As a single parent who works full time, Diana is not able to spend a lot of time with her children.
Furthermore, she depends on her older son Paco to take care of the household chores and help Oscar with his homework. Diana explains,

I have to work long hours. You know, it’s harder for single moms. He is [Paco] a good boy, and he has no other choice; he has to help. When I leave early in the morning I always call to make sure they are ok…I tell them never to open the door to anybody; if they do, they know they’ll get a spanking… I tell them that they should be quiet…when they come back from school they know they have to do homework and then they can watch TV; they can never go outside. Sometimes the neighborhood kids knock on the door, but they know they should be quiet and never open the door.

In line with Annette Lareau’s observation on how working class families’ daily life is much more labor intensive and creates more frustration than that of their middle-class counterparts, the Rodriguez’ story is shaped by the repeated difficulties everyday tasks represent. Diana gets up at 4am in order to be able to get the 5am bus. She starts work at 6am, and calls her children at 6:30 am to wake them up. At 7am she calls again to make sure they are up and having breakfast. At 7:30am, she gives them one last call to ensure they are not late to catch the school bus. Every afternoon after school, Paco and Oscar come home, eat a late lunch that their mother previously prepared, do their homework, and watch TV until their mother comes back from work. Despite the difficulty involved, the children never complain, and follow the house rules without hesitation. Neither of the two boys participates in extracurricular activities, and most of their time at home is spent watching TV.

The Mendozas, like the Rodriguez family, also follow a less adult controlled agenda. Juana, a Puerto Rican single mother, lives in a small apartment in Lake City with her two children, Juliana who is 15 years-old and Daniel, 9; her fiancé Roberto also lives with them. Once a week,
Roberto’s 10-year-old son Fredo comes over to visit. Juana never finished high school and, in her early twenties, enrolled in beauty school. Due to a mental disorder, she received unemployment benefits for several years. However, she is currently working as a teacher’s assistant at a day care center. Her low income places her under the state’s income poverty line; thus, she receives public assistance. Puerto Rican women, such as Diana and Juana, corroborate Fine and Weis’ (1998) description of them as “resource strategists”. The authors state that “poor and working-class Latinas were committed to the strategic use of welfare, and the appropriation of educational and employment opportunities, to the extent that such services enable them to maintain and advance the standings of their families” (p. 223).

Juana’s outlook follows Fine and Weis’ description. She works long hours; she has to be at work at 7am and usually does not get home until after 5:30pm. In the meantime, Daniel and Juliana get home from school at 3pm. Juliana is in charge of helping her younger brother with his schoolwork. After finishing their homework, they watch TV or play video games until their mother comes back from work. When Juana comes home, she watches TV until 7pm when she prepares dinner. Dinnertime at the Mendozas is very informal. Juana prepares something fast and they all eat watching TV. The family’s busy schedule and limited resources do not permit the children to participate in extracurricular activities.

It is important to note that both poor families discussed their willingness to give better opportunities to their children, a motivation that is nullified by economic and time constraints. Although families tend to differ by class as to how they bring up their children, they do not differ at all with respect to their desire to give their children the best opportunities possible. The expression of “I wish…” is often used by poor-class parents when addressing the limited opportunities their children currently have. The parents explain,
DIANA: I wish I had more money to take the kids on vacation…. I wish I had more time to spend with them…. I wish I could afford having Oscar in different sports…. I wish I could move to a better neighborhood; I don’t like my kids to see all the crazy people that live here; all the drugs. You know girl, in both corners they’re selling drugs; what kind of a place is this to raise kids?

***

LAURA: I wish my kids would live in a more peaceful place and that they didn’t have to see the drunk blacks that live in front. I wish I could move to the suburbs…. I wish I didn’t have to be on Welfare and that I could get a really good job that pays really well…

***

ROBERTO: I want my son to be respected when he grows up; I wish he could do everything that I couldn’t; I wish he could go to private school.

CATALINA: Why private school?

ROBERTO: Cause when you’re in a private school, you get more attention from people.

CATALINA: What do you mean “more attention?”

ROBERTO: Because if you go to a private school people automatically think that you know what you’re doing. You come out of there with respect; you know what I mean? You come out of there wanting to accomplish your goals, not come out of school and like go hang out. You’re all dressed up, you know what I mean? Like, “Man, I’m gonna get a job now, education, gonna go to high school”. In a private school you’re not gonna come out of there to go hang out on the corner. Because they teach you to look straight. That’s why I think it’s better in a private school.
Latino poor families strongly believe that economic factors are the major obstacles in allowing them and their children to have better opportunities. Clearly, the conditions of their own lives mediate their response to everyday living practices and the expectations for their children’s future.

In chapter three, I illustrated the Latino intra group perceptions. Here I look at how families perceive their own national identity. Clearly there are important differences between families of varying social class. Nevertheless, all the Latino families who participated in the study perceive the Latino panethnic concept as problematic. As the American government and the media have built a negative image of Latinos as illegal, uneducated, violent, and poor, the families studied here try to break away from the stereotype by embracing their own nationality. All families, including each one of the children, regardless of their social class, articulate pride in their national heritage. Juliana for example, states, “I am Puerto Rican and proud of it”; Daniel affirmed, “I like being Puerto Rican”; Paco in a proudful manner concurred, “You know, we are Puerto Rican and that’s where I come from”. The middle-class children also commented positively on their country of origin; Rosita comments, “Do you like speaking Spanish? I do. My mommy says that two is better than one…in Peru we speak Spanish”; Alex affirms, “my mom is from Argentina, also my grandma, that makes me from Argentina. I like Argentina, it has big mountains…”. By stressing their country of origin, Puerto Ricans assert their American citizenship. The Peruvian and Argentinean families also try to break way from the Latino category by embracing their own nationality. The families illustrate how Latinos are viewed:

CATALINA: If you could put in a pyramid and order culture and race, who would go first?

Who are the people that are the owners or the ones that have all the power?

ROBERTO: The Irish.
CATALINA: The Irish? Okay. I hear you. And after them?

ROBERTO: Italians.

CATALINA: So like the whites first. And then? Who has more power, the blacks, Latinos, who?

ROBERTO: Blacks, the Puerto Ricans are last.

CATALINA: Puerto Ricans are last?

ROBERTO: Yeah, they don’t care….

CATALINA: And whites; what do you think about whites?

ROBERTO: White power. I tell my kid, “You’re Latino; when you got friends, you can have your Puerto Rican friends, black friends. But when you make friends with white people, stay friends with them because you never know who they know and they can help you out later in life; and that’s how it is. Because white people, they know a lot of people, and if you know one white guy that knows somebody, and he knows somebody…. You know a guy but your friends don’t, who do you think is gonna get the job?

***

LAURA: … I would have to admit that wherever there is a big group of Latinos that means that there's always a big group of problems. That's true. You could say that 50% percent of Latinos are good people that want to make progress and there is another 50% that are worthless….Even though my English is not that good… I would definitely move to a quieter and more peaceful neighborhood, less noisy. I would move into a whiter neighborhood, no Latinos, no blacks. In the Westside, where I live right now, it is not a good place to raise my kids. If I had a better economic situation, I would not stay here.
MARTA: I think that the majority of Latinos who come here are very hard working; the problem is that they lack education and academic preparation…The majority of people that come here, of Latinos that come here are very poor.

CATALINA: How are Latinos perceived?

JOHN: Stereotypically?

CATALINA: Yes.

JOHN: Like cheap laborers, dirty, thieves, illegally crossing the borders.

CATALINA: Do you think Americans look at Latinos as being only one group?

JOHN: Yes, if you speak Spanish, they think they are all the same.

It is important to note that while both middle-class families in this study come from South America—Peru and Argentina—and poor-class families are from Puerto Rico, I am not affirming that all South Americans are middle-class nor all poor families are Puerto Rican. However, I suggest that class position and national origin, tied to their country’s historical relation to the U.S., are essential factors in understanding their experience. Beyond social class, the situation for Puerto Rican poor families is markedly different from that of the South American families. Despite the fact that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, numerous differences influence their identity, adaptation to the U.S., and perception of Americans and vice versa. Significant differences between Puerto Rican families and other Latino groups include economic and educational disadvantages. They are considered to be the most economically disadvantaged minority group in the U.S., continuously facing problems such as growing poverty (Fitzpatrick,
1987; Rodriguez, 1989), disadvantages in education (Tienda, 1989a), and the question of identity (Fitzpatrick, 1987). In addition, contrary to Latino middle-class families, Puerto Rican poor families undergo high levels of residential segregation from whites (Santiago & Galster, 1995). Santiago and Galster (1995) assert that non-Puerto Rican Latinos have a higher acceptance by whites than Puerto Ricans.

The types of activities in which families participate differ by social class. As I previously described, the activities of the middle class families are mostly educationally-oriented. In contrast, Latino poor families’ activities are mainly entertainment-based, and family- and friend-oriented. On weekends, the Rodriguez’s usually invite people over. For example, during one of my Saturday visits, they had friends and family over for a picnic. They set up an inflatable pool, some plastic chairs, and spend the afternoon listening to music and dancing. The neighborhood children were also invited. On Sundays, it is customary for the Mendozas to go out for lunch with friends and family after church. These gatherings allow children the opportunity to play with their friends while the adults keep up with the latest community gossip. The Mendoza children are big fans of wrestling; thus, when the World Wide Wrestling Federation show comes to town, they get tickets to watch the show.

Unlike Alex and Rosita, however, the children in the poor families do not participate in any extracurricular activities; they have never visited a museum, nor attended a classical music concert. Furthermore, none of the parents had participated in any of these activities themselves either. The differences in choice and participation in diverse activities in relation to the families’ social class supports Bourdieu’s assertion that class is largely defined with reference to culture, education, and status. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1984) perceives social class as a classification, where groups occupy a similar position, have similar conditions, and dispositions. I argue here
that Latino families tend to group with other families with similar activities, educational background, and economic conditions, thus cohering by social class.

The Influence of Kinship Ties and Neighborhoods

Comparable to middle-class families, Latino poor-class families maintain strong kinship relationships. As I previously explained, in the Latino context social class is not a significant determinant of kinship ties. Rather, comparable closeness to relatives characterizes both middle and poor-class families in my study. However, as previously explained in the middle-class families’ description, poor and middle-class families differ in the ways they relate to and the role that kinship plays in their lives. Juana Mendoza speaks on the phone every day with her mother and sister. Once a week, after church, they get together in her mom’s house and have lunch with all the family. Juana’s extended family still lives in Puerto Rico, although she does not speak to them on a daily basis, she communicates with them at least once a month. Diana Rodriguez keeps close relationships with her parents and other family members back in Puerto Rico. She talks everyday over the phone with her parents and constantly sends them cards and family pictures. Her older daughter Laura, son-in-law Felipe, and two grandsons, Felipito and Julio, live five minutes away. Mother and daughter have a close relationship. When Diana is off work, she helps by taking care of her grandchildren. In addition, it is common to see Laura and her family over at Diana’s house for dinner.


At least once or twice a week, Laura and her family come over for dinner. They bring something with them so that Diana doesn’t have to cook, or, Diana cooks one of their favorite dishes. Today, Laura came by with her two children and husband Juan. They brought
frozen lasagna and soda. The adults sat at the kitchen table, and the children went to the living room to watch TV and eat their dinner.

These interviews demonstrate how that poor-class families’ relations to kin take on a dual role. While kin are essential for their survival, they can also drain already scarce resources.

Unlike kinship relations, Latino middle and poor families differ significantly in their settling patterns. Whereas middle-class families migrate to white, middle-class neighborhoods, poor families settle in inner city, racially segregated neighborhoods. Brooks-Gunn et al. (1997) assert that inequalities in families’ social class are transmitted through various processes including neighborhood of residence. In understanding the effects of neighborhoods on children and family, I take into account Burton et al.’s (1997) multidimensional approach. This approach allows for an encompassing framework in which to examine neighborhoods as sites, perceptions, networks, and cultures. The physical site and neighborhood characteristics where Latino poor families reside are significantly different from those of middle-class families (see Table 1.1). It is clear that differences in economic, housing, and racial characteristics between middle and poor-class family’s location are significantly but not exclusively responsible for differences in children’s development and opportunities. Many authors have described Lake City as a city in decline. The lack of job opportunities has created rapid decrease in population from 328,123 inhabitants in 1990 to 276,059 inhabitants in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). In comparison to Latino middle class families, neighborhood characteristics also situate Latino poor families within higher concentrations poverty rates, lower household income, and even higher than the National average of African Americans and Latino populations.

The neighborhood is mainly Latino. Very few African Americans live here. The majority of black people in the neighborhood are Latinos. Diana explained that this is the Puerto Rican side of town and that the blacks live on the other side. When I walk around, I can hear people speaking Spanish with Puerto Rican accent. There are also some billboards with Spanish advertisements. Diana lives in a newly built government-housing unit. Around the block, you can still see old, abandoned, and boarded-up houses. It is common to see police cars drive by; Diana explained that there are some people selling drugs in one of the abandoned houses. There are also many small convenience stores in the neighborhood; some owned by Puerto Ricans, but most are owned by people whom the Puerto Ricans call “the Arabs”.

Table 1.1
2006 Neighborhood characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood characteristics</th>
<th>Sub-characteristic</th>
<th>Lake City</th>
<th>Main Town</th>
<th>U.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic characteristics</td>
<td>In labor force (population 16 years and over)</td>
<td>57.0 %</td>
<td>58.8 %</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median household income (in 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars)</td>
<td>$ 27,850</td>
<td>$ 59,472</td>
<td>$ 48,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Families below poverty level</td>
<td>23.8 %</td>
<td>4.3 %</td>
<td>9.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing characteristics</td>
<td>Owner-occupied housing units</td>
<td>44.2 %</td>
<td>71.4 %</td>
<td>67.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Renter-occupied housing units</td>
<td>55.8 %</td>
<td>28.6 %</td>
<td>32.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home Median value (dollars)</td>
<td>$ 60,900</td>
<td>$ 148,600</td>
<td>$ 185,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial characteristics</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>51.0 %</td>
<td>87.6 %</td>
<td>73.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>39.7 %</td>
<td>4.1 %</td>
<td>12.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>8.9 %</td>
<td>1.5 %</td>
<td>14.8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal perception of the neighborhood is an important element in evaluating the geographical area of these families. The perceptions of Latino family members reflect how the families construct insights about the place where they live. The families explain,

CATALINA: Can you tell me more about your neighborhood?

LAURA: Well there are a lot of people with addictions here, like drugs and alcohol. Over there [in white neighborhoods], the area is cleaner and quieter. If you are a person that likes to make progress, they [the whites] are people that like to progress, that like to live well. They don't really pay much attention to you; most of the time they keep to themselves. Here in the Latino area, if you buy a new car and you want to live well, everybody is always in your business and then they start gossiping …I just want to live in a place where people leave me alone, where they just let me work and live my life. Not here.

CATALINA: How safe is your neighborhood?

LAURA: Here I cannot let my child play alone outside; I have to go out with them…I don't have a secure and safe place where my kids can play. I want a place where I can have a nice backyard where I can feel safe, a more peaceful place.

***

DIANA: When I moved here, a lot of people told me that this was not a good place to live in, that there were a lot of drugs. I have to be thankful to God that it is safer than I thought. The police are always driving around making sure that the drug dealers leave here. The police are everywhere. Everybody who lives around here is Latino, the majority Puerto Rican, although there are a couple of African refugees living here too.

CATALINA: So are you happy living here? Would you change anything?
DIANA: I like it here, I have a beautiful house now; all my friends live close by. My daughter and my babies [grandchildren] are close. I feel like in Puerto Rico, except for the weather [she laughs]. The only thing I would change is being able to go out at night without being afraid that I’m going to see the drug dealers.

***

JUANA: There’s too much violence and stuff going on out there to hang out at the corners and stuff, I don't need that.

CATALINA: Can you tell me more about the neighborhood?

JUANA: There is a lot of crime, and violence, and drug trafficking.

CATALINA: Do you think there is more violence where Latinos live?

JUANA: Yeah. Well, when I was, well, it's probably worse now. When I was a teenager, yeah…I was locked up in the house all the time. Then when you finally let go from your parents, it's like crazy. You hang out with crazy people.

Neighborhoods are places where networks arise. Contrary to middle-class families, Puerto Rican poor families have an extensive Latino network that includes friends and family. As I previously explained, their choice of location allows them to have and belong to a wider social network. In opposition to middle-class families’ reason for choosing their residential setting, Latino poor families when they migrate, settle in neighborhoods where they have family and friend support. This social support generally translates into racially segregated and disadvantaged neighborhoods. When Diana migrated from Puerto Rico to the U.S., she decided on Lake City because she already had some friends here who offered to help her with the transition. In
addition, Laura, Diana’s twenty-five year daughter moved here in 2001. Laura explains how her neighborhood choice was based on family:

I moved here because my family was here. My dad has been living here for the last 35 years. It was just an easier place to come to, where my family allowed me to come in. If my economic situation would change, would I move out of here? Yes, of course that’s what I’d do.

Neighborhood perceptions differ between adults and children. The adults agreed that their neighborhood is unsafe, while the children viewed it as safe. In the case of Oscar and Paco, they perceive their current neighborhood to be safer than the one they lived in back in Puerto Rico. Burton et al. (1997) state that “children’s appraisal of their environments, as distinct from adult’s appraisals, are an important factor to address when studying the relationship between neighborhood context and child development” (p. 140). Children’s perceptions are a function of their developmental stages. This difference allows us to see how adult assessment differs from child opinion. What causes adults to see their neighborhood as unsafe (drugs, violence, etc), is not what their children are seeing. Although children constantly hear their parents talking about how dangerous it is, it is clear that they do not use adult information to develop opinions concerning overall neighborhood quality. The children explain:

CATALINA: Paco can you tell me about living in Puerto Rico and here? What are the differences?

PACO: The weather first, Puerto Rico is hot and Lake City is cold. I like to live in Puerto Rico but where we used to live in Arancillo was kind of dangerous. It was a boring town; there was a lot of people and they were shooting each other all the time. Also in Puerto Rico, I used to have bad grades and when I came here I got a lot of help and passed fifth-grade.
CATALINA: Do you like it better here?

PACO: Yes.

CATALINA: What is it that you like here?

PACO: That it is safe.

CATALINA: What do you mean it is safe?

PACO: It is safe. I can go out, play with my friends and take the bus alone.

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CATALINA: Do you like living here in Lake City?

OSCAR: A little, I miss my dad.

CATALINA: How about the new house, do you like it?

OSCAR: Very much it’s very cool and I have my own room.

CATALINA: Can you tell me about the neighborhood?

OSCAR: I have friends; I go out and play with them.

CATALINA: Do you think it’s safe?

OSCAR: Yes, very much, as long as I don’t go to the corner I am safe.

CATALINA: To the corner?

OSCAR: There are some drug people.

CATALINA: Are you afraid of them?

OSCAR: No. If I stay here I am safe, they won’t do anything to me.

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JULIANA: I like it here. I have good friends; one of my best friends lives upstairs from us. I like it.
CATALINA: Your mom says that the neighborhood is dangerous and she would like to move. Do you think it’s dangerous?

JULIANA: My mom says it’s dangerous but I don’t think so. My friends and me are always hanging out outside; we are not afraid. We are still here and nothing ever happened to us. You know my mom exaggerates a little.

It is clear that children have a different view of their neighborhood. Although there are differences between parent and child perceptions, all parents agree that they live in unsafe neighborhoods, and if they had the chance, they would move out.

While middle-class neighborhoods are more individualistic in their social relations, poor neighborhoods support and encourage social networks based on ethnicity and culture. Whereas the Rossi and the Denegri families mainly relate to a white community, the Rodriguezes and the Mendozas relate in particular to other Latinos, especially Puerto Ricans. It is through this expression of neighborhood culture that poor families support each other. Latino culture, traditions, and language make up the character of poor families’ neighborhoods in this study. This cultural approach allows for the existence of an imaginary and culturally separate neighborhood within the city’s limits. Imaginary in the sense that even in a different country, the Puerto Rican community reproduces numerous cultural conditions that appear to recreate a small country within another; in this case, it is a replica of Puerto Rico within the mainland United States. The neighborhoods where middle-class families reside permit these Latino families to access white-middle-class culture; however, if these families want to relate to other Latinos, they have to go to other neighborhoods, and sometimes even to other cities.
Home Literacy and Language Use

Several authors have documented the large differences in the home literacy practices and language use provided by families of varying social class (Lareau, 2003; Li, 2002). It is through the subconscious acquisition of literacy that families expose their children to the functions and uses of language (Gee, 1991). In addition, Gee asserts that children from different socioeconomic backgrounds experience language differently. Lareau’s (2003) observations about the differences in home literacy environment reflects, to some extent, the differences between the Latino families portrayed here. However, Lareau is talking about black and white working and middle-class American families who, unlike these Latino families, have not experienced firsthand the challenges of migrating to a new country with a completely new set of cultural and social rules and expectations. Nor did they have to experience simultaneous belongings.

In her study, Lareau (2003) suggests that social class shapes the use of language. For example, middle-class children develop exceptional verbal skills that allow them to negotiate and reason with adults. This kind of education develops in children a sense of entitlement in interactions with other adults. In contrast to the children studied by Lareau, Latino middle-class children have a different set of cultural and social expectations that allows for a different use of the language. What is interesting about Latino culture, regardless of their social class, is that the language code of respect towards adults is embedded in Latino cultural tradition. The adoption and expression of this respect code is more reminiscent of Lareau’s poor and working class families than that of middle-class families. This leaves open the question on how should middle-class Latinos be socio-economically classified.

regarding “culture as learned behavior and on language habits as part of that shared learning” (p. 11). A common thread runs through these studies: the need for a multidimensional approach in studying home literacy. In all these studies, there is an attempt to look at family literacy practices in several different terms including class, race, ethnicity, nation of origin, culture, and historical background. Such an encompassing approach prepares for a discussion of home literacy practices during times of constant global movement of people and transnational belongings.

Comparable influences characterize Latino families’ home literacy practices. As with Li’s families, Latino families, regardless of their social class background, bring with them the literacy values learned from their parents in their homeland. These values, not always in accordance with mainstream practices, often result in cultural clashes between the home country and host society.

Latino poor families have significantly different literacy practices than those of middle-class families. These include differences in availability of print material and technological literacy sources in their home. The Mendoza’s live in a small three-bedroom apartment. The living room has a thirty-inch TV, which they watch regularly, and a second hand computer that only Juliana uses to go on the Internet. Excluding schoolbooks, the Mendozas do not have any printed material at home. They explain their reading habits,

CATALINA: Do you like to read? Magazines, newspapers, or …?

ROBERTO: I read once in a while.

CATALINA: What kind of stuff?

ROBERTO: I read the newspaper a little… I won’t say I come home and read a book, a Harry Potter book or something.

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CATALINA: Do you like to get or buy books for the kids?
JUANA: I haven’t thought about that.

CATALINA: How about books from school? Do they bring books from there?

JUANA: No, I don’t think so. Just the ones they have to read.

CATALINA: How about reading for pleasure?

JUANA: I am not very good at reading. Schools should teach that.

As with the Mendozas, the Rodriguez' home also has little or no printed material around the house, nor do they own a computer. The children do not have access to books outside of school, nor do the parents read to them. Diana believes that children should be self-motivated to read, and if they do not have good reading habits, it is because of their own lack of interest: “they never read; they are very lazy. But I try to motivate them to read. I usually offer them money for them to read to me, but they have to read to me.”

As I previously mentioned, parents’ own childhood literacy experiences have a significant effect on how they themselves pass on these practices to their children. As I illustrated in the previous section, middle-class parents grew up in homes where books were available and reading was highly regarded. Conversely, the findings show that poor-class parents came from homes where reading was not the norm. It is clear that these parents are reproducing their own past experience. Juan explains,

CATALINA: Did you ever see any of your parents reading? Did they read the newspaper, magazines, encyclopedias?

JUANA: Not then [when I was little]. Now that my mother is a little older she reads novels, stuff like that. But back then she didn't read.

CATALINA: And your dad, any magazines?

JUANA: I don't recall in the little time that I spent with him.
CATALINA: Do you read the newspaper, magazines or any other things that you might like?

JUANA: No.

CATALINA: Do you read to your kids?

JUANA: No, sorry.

The literacy practices experienced today in the poor homes are a reflection of generation after generation of similar practices. Juana’s experience illustrates this point: she grew up in a home where reading was not the norm, now, her children are also growing up in a household where having books and reading is not a common practice. Scholars (Lareau, 2003; Li, 2006; Li & Christ, 2007) agree that literacy practices within the family can either give advantages or hinder a child’s experience in school. It is clear that the literacy practices employed by Latino poor families are different from what schools expect and teach. The lack of reading materials and reading role models at home explains the limited opportunities for the children to expand their vocabulary and skills necessary to excel in school. As a result, the literacy skills obtained in these poor homes do not translate into the same school advantages as those that middle class children acquire within their homes.

Conclusions

Despite the differences in demographics and social class background, Latinos are nevertheless seen as a homogeneous entity; a group that is uniformly poor, lacking education, and in general, perceived with hostility by American society. Explanations for this perception have historically focused on a cultural argument emphasizing panethnic values in education, work ethic, family, and legal status (Tienda, 1989a; Zambrana, 1995; Zayas & Palleja, 1988). While this cultural dimension is undoubtedly significant, it misses crucial differences between
different Latino groups. As the findings suggest, the Latino community is definitely not a homogeneous group. In this chapter, I affirm that in order to understand their experiences, it is necessary to take on a multidimensional approach that includes social class, reasons for migrating, settling patterns, children’s activities, spending behavior, literacy practices, parents’ education, historical background, and country of origin.

I am suggesting here that there is a strong relationship between social class, race, and ethnicity in America. While there are middle-class Latino families living among us, they have been ascribed with invisibility. As middle-class Latino families insert themselves into American society, they take on white/middle-class characteristics. This accommodation results in middle-class Latino families being invisible to American society. Poor-class Latino families often live in highly segregated and poor neighborhoods; these concentrations of Latinos in one place make them more perceptible by society.

Like Lareau (2003), I am affirming that families’ class position influences the transmission of advantages and/or disadvantages to their children. Looking at Latino middle-class families, we see that parents prepare their children to be more educationally oriented. Through extracurricular classes, literacy practices, educationally aimed activities, and expectations, these parents make sure that their children stay within their social class borders. Class reproduction within Latino poor-class families takes on a different path. The reproduction of disadvantage, generation after generation, catches poor families within a socially forced and self-imposed poverty cycle.
CHAPTER FIVE
EDUCATING TRANSNATIONAL LATINO CHILDREN

Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today”.

(Malcolm X)

In the last chapter, I examined how social class, diversity in nationality, culture, race, ethnicity, and reasons for moving shapes the ways in which families pass on advantages and/or disadvantages to their children. In this sense, families play an important role in how their children learn to use resources. In this chapter, I take into account the role of the school as an additional important factor in children’s lives. Here, I explore the schools Latino children attend and how they differ by social class. Taking into account globalization, specifically the global movement of people, I include in my analysis important dynamics such as culture, national origin, reasons for moving, and experiences in the home country. Under the greater umbrella of social stratification, these dynamics allow a more encompassing understanding of how the forces of race, ethnicity, and class influence schooling in America. I am not suggesting that gender is not critical to this understanding; quite the contrary. But to the effects of this research, gender is not part of the analysis. Previous studies of schools suggest that social class, race, and ethnicity are important factors that play into the politics of education (Anyon, 1980; Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 1989; MacLeod, 1987; Willis, 1977). Therefore, it is important to examine how schools may either inhibit or promote access to resources. In doing so, I examine the influence of school location and neighborhood selection, parental involvement at school, school procedures, class structure, and teachers as key issues.
By comparing the public schooling experiences of poor- and middle-class Latino students, this section illustrates how academic achievement greatly depends on the specific characteristics of the school; that is, the ability to provide their students with the essential resources and support to access cultural, economic, and social capital. In this chapter, I probe varying ways in which Latino children differ in their schooling experience. The data gathered enable me to question the relationship between social class, schools, and how the family’s experience in their homeland affects their understanding and practices in a new context.

Quality vs. Kinship: Accessing Opportunities through School Selection and Location

As I explained in the previous chapter, there is a difference in the settling patterns of Latino families. These patterns ultimately affect the type of education Latino children obtain. It is where Latino families live that allows or prevents their children from accessing better institutional resources, including community centers and recreation centers. As I previously explained in chapter four, transnational families bring from their home country their own reference and check points that translate into how they choose their neighborhood. In this sense, middle-class families settle in neighborhoods based on racial and ethnic composition, quality of their schools, and perceived safety. Poor families establish themselves in communities close to support networks of friends and family.

The neighborhoods in which middle-class Latino children’s schools are located are economically better off than their counterpart’s neighborhoods. Even the neighborhood surrounding is different. For example, middle-class neighborhood streets are lined with trees, and during the spring and summer time, there are many flower beds throughout. Houses here are single-family homes and usually larger. School buildings are better maintained; Rosita’s school
has been recently renovated. Contrary to poor-class schools, both middle-class schools have newly built playgrounds, central air, and noise-free environments. Furthermore, the teachers have white, middle-class backgrounds, live in the same neighborhoods, and their children attend the same school district. These schools, in contrast to poor schools, have considerable activity surrounding school events, including science fairs, school carnivals, family nights, sport events, and art festivals.

Previous studies of race and schools suggest that there is a trend to resegregation in public schools. Orfield’s (2001) report on schools and segregation contends that neighborhoods and schools are becoming more and more segregated by race. Furthermore, he asserts that Latino children are the most segregated group in the U.S., not only by race and ethnicity, but also by poverty and language. He concludes that segregated black and/or Latino schools experience more poverty than segregated white schools. Comparable findings characterize the schools of poor Latino children in this study. As with Orfield’s findings, poor Latino children attend schools populated by mainly black and/or Latino children, while middle-class Latino children go to schools where the majority of children are white. Furthermore, as shown in Table 2.1, poverty rates, illustrated by the percentage of children eligible for free lunch, are much higher in schools where minority segregation occurs.
Rosita Denegri and Alex Rossi both attend middle-class schools within middle-class neighborhoods. Rosita, a first grade student, goes to a school that her parents consider somewhat equal to the school she would be attending back in Peru. When they came to the U.S., their main concern was finding a place to live within a good school district and where most of the people were white. Thus, they settled in a middle-class neighborhood close to the university. The Rossis wanted to live in the city. They chose their neighborhood based on two main criteria: closeness to John’s parents and racial and economic composition. Alex, also a first grade student, currently goes to a school where they have a Spanish immersion pilot program. Before coming to his current school, he had attended a private Montessori pre-school. After learning about the new Spanish immersion program, John and Marta thought it was important to stimulate Alex’s Spanish and enrolled him in the public school. Mainly middle-class white students, who are immersed in a school culture that fosters academic achievement and excellence, surround both Rosita and Alex. Thus, Latino middle-class children are likely to associate with peers of similar academic expectations, and cultural, social, and economic capital.
CATALINA: What social class and race are the kids in Alex’s school?

MARTA: I think there's a little bit of everything. In Alex's class, because it is a new program, actually the only program in the whole school, and the parents had to choose if they wanted their kids to go into that specific program; many of the parents are professionals. I would say that some are Puerto Rican kids who don't speak any English at home and that this was a good program for them. The rest are mostly white kids with middle-class parents. These parents, just like us, want to have their kids in that class specifically because of the possibility to give our kids another language. Now they told us that Alex was chosen to be part of the gifted program. So next year he will start in that program.

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ANA: Most of Rosita’s class is white. I mean most of the kids are white. She is the only Latina in her class and I think the only one in the whole school. I’m not sure though. I know there are a couple of black children, but not that many.

CATALINA: How about the parents, can you tell me what they do?

ANA: I only relate to some of them—to the parents of the girls that Rosita is friends. Some are university professors and students. Rosita’s best friend’s mom, she is a stay at home mom but her husband is a lawyer.

The schooling experience for Latino poor children is markedly different. Daniel Mendoza and Oscar Rodriguez both attend poor-class, inner-city schools. Daniel is a fourth grade student at an inner-city school. When Daniel’s family moved to Lake City, they settled close to their support networks of family members and friends. Oscar, a third grade student, came to the U.S. two years ago. Influenced by family connections and networks, Oscar’s family also settled in the
Latino neighborhood, and Oscar attends the school that corresponds to his residential location. Because of the families’ settling patterns, they have access to essential support networks, but are also trapped into poor racially and ethnically segregated schools. In the past few years, Lake City has been investing in new housing projects in the downtown area; thus, new single homes are sporadically found. Still, many of the homes surrounding the schools are run-down and abandoned. Most homes are multifamily units with small front porches and no front yards. Both poor schools are located in old, multilevel buildings. The classrooms are overcrowded with furniture, with no air conditioning during the hot months, and the teachers have to buy extra fans from their own pocket money. All middle-class and poor schools have loud speakers in the classrooms. While middle-class schools use loudspeakers exclusively for morning announcements and afternoon dismissal, in poor-class schools, constant interruptions during the day are the norm. Poor schools tended to be noisier than middle-class schools; street noise was common. The student population in Daniel’s school is mainly black, and in Oscar’s school it is primarily Latino.

The majority of teachers in these inner-city schools live outside of the city. One teacher identified the school as “not the place I would have my own children in”; the same teacher described the school as a “dangerous place after hours”, and she explained that she would not stay working late at school. School violence in the poor schools is significantly higher than in middle-class schools. Table 2.1 shows that student suspensions in middle-class schools are low, compared to almost 20% in poor schools.

Both Daniel’s and Oscar’s schools are populated mainly by minority students (see Table 1.2). These observations corroborate Orfield’s (2001) findings in regard to the patterns between city schools, poverty, and race. Teachers comment on race and poverty,
MRS. D: The majority of children in my class are black. I also have a large number of Latinos and as you can see, only a few whites. I treat them all the same.

CATALINA: Can you tell me what most of their parents do?

MRS. D: Most of them are unemployed; this year I have a large number of single moms on welfare, which as you know, makes things more difficult.

CATALINA: Is it more difficult because they don’t have time to help their children?

MRS. D: Well it’s not only that, but it’s that they don’t know how to help them. There is also a lot of domestic violence and sometimes the children don’t have a good night rest. Do you remember the child right next to my desk whom I had to tell several times to wake up?

CATALINA: Yes.

MRS. D: Well, he comes from a violent home, and I am sure that his father hits his mom, so sometimes he comes to school and falls asleep in class. I feel bad for most of their situations but you know, this world belongs to the strongest; they need discipline, and to learn to follow directions.

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CATALINA: Tell me about your students, do they all speak Spanish?

MRS. K: Yes they all do. Well, a couple of them have Spanish as their second language, but for most of them Spanish is their first language.

CATALINA: So all your kids are Latinos then?

MRS. K: Yes, even a couple of kids that usually people think they are African American but they are black-Latinos.

CATALINA: What do most of their parents do?
MRS. K: Some work as janitors; I have a couple that work in factories, and a lot of them are on welfare.

CATALINA: Would you consider your students as poor?

MRS. K: Definitely.

CATALINA: How does that affect their academic achievement?

MRS. K: It depends on how much help they have from their parents. For example, Oscar has a hard time reading, but if I send him extra work or ask his mother to talk to him she responds very well; that is helpful. Many kids spend a lot of time alone at home and their parents don’t help. I have kids that are repeating the year, and it is because they don’t have help at home. For me it’s very hard to spend individual time with the kids, I have all these kids and I just don’t have the time to help them individually. If their parents don’t help, well, their kids will fail. I feel bad and I wish I had an aide to help me; but I don’t; I have to do the best with what I have.

The interviews with the poor school’s teachers show that they perceive the children’s home lives as problematic and, in many cases, the reason for the child’s problems in school. What is interesting about the Latino families in this study is that contrary to poor Latino students, middle-class Latino children attend schools populated primarily by white students. The schooling experience of the children I observe reveals that social class is an essential factor in determining their schooling experience. Although both ethnicity and social class background play an important role in their home education, social class will determine the type of school these children attend. This finding supports the argument I am making throughout the study, which is that there is a need to look at specific differences between Latino groups.
Investment vs. Obligation: Parental Involvement

A second element of school success noted by previous researchers of family-school relations is that of parental involvement in school. The most articulate on this point is Epstein, but other investigators have noted the topic as well. Epstein (2002) recognizes six types of involvement reflecting relations between homes and schools. Type 1, *parenting*, reflects the need to create a positive home environment that promotes and supports learning. Type 2, *communicating*, suggests a clear and direct communication between schools and homes. Type 3, *volunteering*, recommends that parents participate in school activities and programs. Type 4, *learning at home*, proposes that families participate in learning activities at home that relate to their children’s classwork. Type 5, *decision-making*, includes parent’s participation in school policies. Type 6, *collaborating with the community*, looks at the need to identify and integrate community resources and services with existing school programs, family child-rearing practices, and student learning. This chapter section shows how types 2, 3, and 4 of Epstein’s framework are lived differently by Latino families of varied social class.

Lareau’s (2003) study looks at the link between social class and parental involvement. She argues that social class provides parents with unequal resources to respond to school’s requests for participation. For example, in her study, educational values did not differ between working class and middle-class parents, but the ways in which they promoted educational success did. In Lareau’s working class families, education was the teacher’s responsibility; in middle-class families education was a shared endeavor between parents and teachers.

In terms of how parents promote educational success, Latino families exhibit the same differences uncovered in previous studies with American families. This is particularly striking in light of the cultural and national differences between American and Latino families. Essentially,
with regards to attitudes towards their children’s education, poor Latino families have similar approaches to that of other low socioeconomic groups of American society. As with Lareau’s working class parents, Latino parents had a limited educational background, lower occupational status than teachers, and time and resource constraints all of which hindered participation in their children’s schooling. For example, in this study, both the Mendoza and the Rodriguez families, aside from attending mandatory teacher conferences, rarely had the time to attend school activities. They explain,

   CATALINA: Do you go to school activities, like when they have bingo night or any other presentations that parents are invited to?
   
   JUANA: Like in their school?
   
   CATALINA: Yes.
   
   JUANA: No. I don't go to any of their activities.
   
   CATALINA: Parent-teacher conferences?
   
   JUANA: Teacher conferences, yes I do go to those; that's about the only thing or, sometimes open house. Other than that, they won't see me because I'm working. I'm working and usually they want to do things while the kids are at school or…Even if they had something after I get out of work, but I don't. If I can, I'll go. But I have to say no; I haven't attended them; no functions, no activities.
   
   CATALINA: If I were to ask you how involved you are in your kids' education, how would you respond to that?
   
   JUANA: Very little; very, very little.
   
   CATALINA: What do you think is keeping you from being more involved?
JUANA: My job. I work all day and when I come home, I am too tired to go to school activities.

CATALINA: Do you feel comfortable going to the school and talking to the teachers?

JUANA: Yeah, I guess.

***

CATALINA: Do you go to school activities? I don’t know, bingo night…

ROBERTO: Nah. I went to a few of his plays and stuff, but that was a while ago.

CATALINA: Any other activities?

ROBERTO: That’s about it.

CATALINA: And parent-teacher conferences?

ROBERTO: I haven’t gone; his mother usually goes because they send everything over there, so she goes.

CATALINA: How involved would you consider yourself to be in Fredo’s education?

ROBERTO: I only get involved if he starts messing up in school or if he ever comes not knowing what he’s doing, that’s when I get involved. But right now, I might talk to the teachers only once in a while. I don’t know if that’s involved, but I’m involved because I think if it wasn’t for me, my kid would not be where he is now. When he was younger, his ma used to work night shift. Before, I had my kid all the time when he was a baby so I was raising him. I was home, bottles, diapers; that’s the kind of dad I am anyway. I’m the one that put it in him, you know what I mean? That’s how I see it.

***

DIANA: I go when I have to.
CATALINA: What do you mean when you have to?

DIANA: Well, when the teacher calls me in. When he is misbehaving and she wants to talk to me.

CATALINA: Usually what happens in those meetings?

DIANA: She sends me a note to come to school for a meeting; of course I go when she calls because that usually means that he is in big trouble. And then she tells me what is going on. The last time she called me was because he was not paying attention in class and was fooling around all the time, then I told her that I would talk to him. When I got home, of course he knew I was furious; he got grounded for an entire week. No TV, no Playstation, nothing, I told him he did not deserve anything until he changed his attitude in school.

CATALINA: Did it help?

DIANA: For a while it did.

CATALINA: Are there other times you go to school, for example field trips or other activities that the school organizes with parents?

DIANA: No, I don’t have time for that.

CATALINA: How about when they do it at night?

DIANA: I wish I could go, but sometimes I have the twelve-hour shift and I am too tired to sit and listen to the principal.

Poor parents have limited resources and time constraints, which affect how they relate to their children’s schools. On the other hand, middle-class Latinos share the attitudes of American middle-class white families. Latino middle-class families have an educational background and occupational status that equals or in some cases surpasses that of the teachers. Furthermore, they
have the necessary economic and cultural resources and time to participate in their children’s schooling.

CATALINA: Do you go to any of Rosita’s school activities?

RODRIGO: Sure, we go to as many as we can.

CATALINA: Can you give me some examples?

RODRIGO: If she has a field trip one of us always goes. We sometimes take turns or whoever has more time goes.

CATALINA: What other activities do you attend?

RODRIGO: Rosita’s teacher sometimes does these art presentations, or if they have some sort of project, that they have been working on and are supposed to present it in front of the class; the teacher usually invites the parents and we go.

CATALINA: How about parent-teacher conferences?

RODRIGO: Yes, both of us go to those.

CATALINA: Tell me about your language barriers with the teachers; is it sometimes hard to communicate with them, or intimidating?

RODRIGO: Not for me, I don’t really have a problem with my English; I know it’s not the best but as long as people understand me, that’s enough. But I know that Ana is mortified about that, you know, she is a language instructor, and she is also a perfectionist and I know it bothers her not to be able to communicate accurately.

***

CATALINA: Is it easy for you to take time off to go to Alex’s school activities?

MARTA: Right now I am only working as a substitute [teacher]; most of the time I’m home. If I can’t go, John can always ask for a couple of hours off.
CATALINA: How important is to go to Alex’s different school activities?

MARTA: It depends on what activities. If there is a presentation, or if he is showing his artwork or singing a song, or those kinds of things, we make an effort to go. But if they have like bingo night, we don’t go.

CATALINA: Do you go to parent-teacher conferences?

MARTA: Sure. Usually the teacher wants to meet with us during open house and when they give out report cards. Once a month we get a letter from the teacher telling us what they will be doing in class for that month for us to reinforce the topics they are learning in school.

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CATALINA: Do you go to school activities?

ANA: We go to as many things as we can.

CATALINA: What kind of things?

ANA: Field trips, presentations, science fairs, school picnics.

CATALINA: Parent-teacher conferences?

ANA: Yes, those too.

Contrary to poor families, middle-class families’ interviews show that they have the necessary resources and flexible schedules to participate in their children’s school activities. Here, I argue that social class regardless of national and cultural background will determine the level of parental involvement in school activities. In addition, these social class differences also have an effect in parent’s involvement with homework. Middle-class families’ educational background allows parents to feel more comfortable helping their children through homework.
Even when parents are not sure what the homework is about, they utilize different resources to get the work done (e.g. calling the teacher or other students, and using the Internet).

CATALINA: Do either of you help Rosita with her homework?

ANA: I am usually the one that sits with her to do homework. I do think that she does not have enough homework; it is actually very little homework. I do recognize that these kids still don’t have a large enough concentration level. I have seen that she has learned a lot this year.

***

CATALINA: Who does the homework with Alex?

JOHN: He’s had very little homework so far. He has homework on Fridays and we do it together. I made a copy of his homework because I wanted him to do his own work. I didn’t want to write on his homework. The teacher wrote this note [he shows me the note] and she said that we should help them. So I figured the best way to help him was to make a photocopy of it …. So I just did it on one side and we had fun talking about the mouse getting to the cheese… I did it on my paper and he did it on his paper. Previously he had another assignment where he was to bring in objects from home that begin with I, O, E, U…. We went around the house [looking for things and then] he brought them to school. Last year when he was in Montessori, he didn’t have homework himself but the teacher sent home family homework and we did some of the activities.

Unlike their middle-class counterparts, poor-class parents were less likely to help their children with homework. Not only did they have time constraints, but also their educational
background did not allow them to guide their children with their schoolwork. Poor parents illustrate this situation,

CATALINA: Who helps your kids with homework?

JUANA: My daughter helps my son and my daughter does it on her own.

CATALINA: Why?

JUANA: With Juliana, she has always been responsible and I don’t have to help her. With Daniel, I used to help him before but Juliana is more patient with him.

CATALINA: Is their homework hard?

JUANA: Juliana’s yes, I don’t even understand what she has to do.

CATALINA: How about Daniel’s homework?

JUANA: Like his math is difficult for me to understand, I just don’t remember. It’s just easier if Juliana helps him.

***

CATALINA: Who helps Fredo with his homework?

ROBERTO: Nobody.

CATALINA: He does it alone?

ROBERTO: If he needs help he’ll ask, but he doesn’t ask too much.

***

CATALINA: Who helps the kids with homework?

DIANA: If I am working, then Paco helps Oscar. When I am home I make him sit at the kitchen table and if he has questions he can always ask me.
Studies (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Rossi & Montgomery, 1994) have found that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds generally achieve less in schools. In this study, where I look at four Latino families from varied socio-economic background, the findings show a variation between the levels of parental involvement more related to the socio-economic position of the family than to their ethnic background. It is clear that the Latino middle-class families observed here have the cultural, social, and economic resources to interact more often with schools and teachers. Furthermore, these families provide their children with a home environment that promotes learning valued in schools. In contrast, poor Latino families’ have a social and cultural capital not valued by schools. These limitations, coupled with multiple economic constraints, restrict parental involvement. In many of my observations, poor parents just did not know how to help their children.

An important aspect to be considered when discussing parental involvement is the role that schools and teachers adopt in promoting home involvement. As I discuss in the next sections, the schools that middle and poor-class children attend differ significantly in the ways teachers relate to children and parents, the type of materials to which they have access to, and the school procedures and class structure. These are also contributing factors in parental involvement.

**Questions vs. Directives: School Procedures and Class Structure**

Previous studies on schools suggest that they are places where social inequalities are created (Anyon, 1980; Olson, 1981). Anyon’s (1980) study on social class and school knowledge, in particular, has been important in terms of our understanding of the ways in which schools are influenced by class. By differentiating schools in terms of income level and the type of occupation of the majority of parents, Anyon divided the schools into working class, middle-
class, affluent professional, and executive elite. By doing so, the author illustrates how knowledge is socially stratified, thus allowing schools to reproduce the tensions and conflicts of society. Comparable class differences characterize the schools of Latino families. While poor Latino children go to schools with similar attributes to those of Anyon’s working class schools, middle-class Latino children attend middle-class schools.

A common feature in Oscar’s and Daniel’s poor-class schools is that of procedures in school and in the classroom. During a large portion of the school day, the children are asked to follow strict instructions and schedules. Teachers constantly give directions; children are never given choices, and they are not encouraged to question the teacher’s demands. Teachers persistently emphasize the importance of following rules and keeping quiet. For example, during a spelling lesson at Daniel’s fourth grade class, one of the students did not correctly answer the teacher’s question. The teacher then followed to address him in a loud voice and said, “It is your responsibility to follow directions. I asked you to speak not to read; you are being graded on this, so, Xavier you know what this means [referring to him getting a bad grade]”. At this point the rest of the class was, as the majority of the time, completely quiet. After correcting the homework, the teacher introduces the theme of “time zones”. She gives a brief explanation of the differences in time zones and asks them, “do you think Puerto Rico has the same time as us?” She answers herself by saying “no, it depends if you go East or West; time might be off by one hour”. Subsequently, the teacher goes to the back of the room, where there are some old maps hanging on the wall, points out to where Puerto Rico and the U.S. are and explains, “time is different depending on where you are.” Without further explanation, or asking if students had any questions, she directs them to do page 51 of the workbook. Her only instructions during the exercise were, “be quiet”, “you are being too loud”, “shush”, “do it quietly”, “hurry up.”
As with Anyon’s working class schools, teacher control of students is a high priority in these schools. Teachers use several different forms of control, including public ridicule, timing their work, intimidation, and threats. For example, the first thing Mrs. K., Oscar’s teacher, does in the morning is to announce which students did not do their homework. She does the announcement using their corresponding number instead of their names, “person number 6 didn’t do time tables, person 18 didn’t finish their words, person 21 no time tables...” After a description of what they were missing, she follows to tell the entire class that the students who did not do their homework will not go to “specials” (e.g. art, music, etc). Later that same morning, when one of the students was not paying attention, the teacher stopped the lesson and asked her in front of the class if she had eaten breakfast that morning; the student responded no. While the teacher takes a banana from her purse, she says to the class, “you see children, this is what happens if your parents don’t feed you well, you come to school and do not pay attention; I can’t teach. You need to have a nutritious breakfast.” She gives the girl a banana and keeps teaching the lesson. Ms. K. always carries a timer hanging on her neck; she says it allows her to keep the children in line. During reading time, Ms. K. puts the timer to twenty minutes and then follows to explain “you have 20 minutes to do your reading and answer the questions. When the beep goes off everybody should be done, so time yourself. Ready? Start.”

Daniel’s school also emphasizes physical control. Children sit for long periods of time; they are not allowed to go to the bathroom alone; they cannot speak to other children in the class. When the children do not follow directions, Ms. D. intimidates and ridicules them in front of the class to correct their behavior. For example, while working on new vocabulary, children were asked to take out their workbook and write the definitions in their book. After writing the definitions on the board she approached a student and in a loud voice said, “I am working with
you because you have problems on your tests…” After several interruptions from the same student, the teacher bursts out and screams, “stop, you are not in charge here, stop it.”

Nolan and Anyon (2004) argue that urban public schools have become increasingly connected to the criminal justice system and that many of their practices have led a flow of students into the criminal justice system. The authors describe how this new school culture, based on policies including zero tolerance, expresses the repressive nature of schools. In addition, the authors suggest that this type of setting, where teachers and students use prison metaphors and schools overreact to minor offenses, generates a perception of the school as a hostile environment. A comparable school environment characterizes the poor schools studied here. For example, in both poor schools, bathroom time was scheduled and highly supervised. After snack and lunchtime, students line up, quietly walk through the halls, stop at the bathroom door, and wait for the teacher’s command. In complete silence, children are timed and sent in groups of two. Usually children are well behaved and quiet.

While observing Daniel’s schools, I followed them to a bathroom break. During this bathroom break, two boys were talking and giggling in the line; the teacher angrily responded to them, “kids you are not in a police line up, so please look forward”. Comments in regards to violence and police are common throughout the school day. This finding allows us to expose fundamental differences between poor and middle schools. For example, not once did I observe teachers in the middle-class schools insult or refer to their students as if in a prison. In contrast, as I previously described, teachers in poor schools heavily controlled student’s actions and generally addressed their students in a demeaning manner.

Lessons in poor-class schools were based mainly on lectures, repetition, and memorization. For example, in Oscar’s fourth grade class during social studies, students copied from the board
the information on the Old West. Then the teacher drew a carriage and told the students to draw and color it in their notebooks. After reading from the board the names and descriptions of the different jobs and artifacts, the teacher then asks the children to repeat what she had said and to answer the questions from the textbook. Children are rarely asked critical thinking questions, nor to predict, discuss, or give their opinion about a topic. Hands on activities are narrowed down to coloring or cutting, and the lack of materials, including computers, does not allow the students to have the same advantages that middle-class schools give their students.

Attitudes toward discipline differ between middle and poor schools. In the middle-class schools, the children I observed had more flexibility to move freely. For example, going to the bathroom was on an individual need basis; children only needed to ask permission from the teacher; no passes were required. In contrast to poor schools’ reprimanding practices, teachers in middle-class schools emphasize appropriate behavior and explain to each individual child, in private, why their behavior is wrong and how to improve it. In both Alex’s and Rosita’s school, teachers encouraged students to ask questions, to talk about their own experience and opinions, and to imagine different possibilities. For example, during reading time, Mrs. S. asked the class if they have ever ridden a horse before. Four children raised their hands and told the class about their experience riding horses. The students who have never been on a horse were asked, “how would you get on a horse, would you use a chair?”, “would you like to ride fast or to gallop?” After using the students’ experiences in several examples, the teacher introduces their new book, a story about horses. After reading the first chapter, the teacher asks the students to share their opinions about the character’s actions, to imagine alternate plots, and predict character’s future behaviors. Students in middle-class schools are encouraged to speak, to give their opinion, and to explain their choice and behavior.
Lessons in middle-class schools are a combination of Anyon’s (1980) middle-class and affluent professional practices. Teacher lectures, hands-on activity, and class discussions are the teaching norm. Furthermore, schools have an array of resources that children can use, including new computers in the classroom and multiple hands-on materials (e.g. beads, games, experiments) for math and science. In these schools, children have access to state-of-the-art computers and the Internet. Middle-class schools use technology as important learning tools.

The overall atmosphere of the middle-class school is more relaxed. Teachers seem to be more flexible and at times even adopt a jokingly and funny manner about learning. For example, Rosita’s teacher, Mrs. S, while teaching a lesson on telling time, jokingly answered a student’s question by saying, “I also sometimes have a difficult time trying to figure out the time, especially when the little hand is on the middle of the two numbers”. As in their home environments, middle-class schools teach children to negotiate. For example, during a birthday party in Alex’s class, a boy received a chocolate cupcake he did not want. As there were no vanilla cupcakes left, the teacher explained to the students, “you can trade cakes with someone else if you don’t want the one you have, but you have to be polite when you ask”. She then asks the boy to go in front of the class and offer to exchange his cupcake. Children in middle-class schools are encouraged to speak in public, to address adults without feeling intimidated, to negotiate, and to express their needs. These learning experiences undoubtedly replicate the type of environment these children will encounter in their future. The structure and procedures in these middle-class schools reproduce a certain type of knowledge that is valued in white collar and professional positions.
Access vs. Limited Access: The Digital Divide

Differences in access to and uses of technology are crucial in understanding inequalities between schools. In this globalized era, it is commonly believed that digital technologies provide numerous opportunities for development (Norris, 2001; Servon, 2002). Computers and the Internet have revolutionized global information, knowledge, and communication. As these technologies become part of everyday life, it is important to understand how access or lack thereof, results in inequalities that create a digital divide. Unequal resources, access, and education create a digital divide between people, communities, and countries. Education plays an important role in developing skills, practices, and experiences that help communities learn and adapt to these changes (Norris, 2001). When schools differ in access, resources, and digital education, the digital divide transforms into social class inequalities.

Servon’s (2002) research on the digital divide illustrates how low income children and children of color have less access to the Internet than their white counterparts. In addition, she describes how wealthier schools have better resources for technology, while poor schools have less access to technology. Becker’s (2000) study looks at children’s differential access to computers and suggests that lower income students use computers more often than higher income students. However, how computers are used differs between groups. Low-income students use computers for repetitive tasks, and high-income students use them for more complex purposes.

The issue of widening technological disparities is also present in the schools studied here. As I previously mentioned, poor schools had no computers in their classrooms, nor did the students have easy access to school computers. In contrast, middle-class schools had somewhere between four to six computers in each classroom. In addition to the availability of computers, middle-
class children use computers to develop research skills. For example, in Rosita’s school, during a reading class, when students finished reading the book on horses, the teacher allowed the first students who finished to go on the computers and look up different types of horses. Poor schools did not have the infrastructure to develop digital knowledge.

The observations in poor and middle-class schools confirm that access to digital technologies differed significantly between the schools. Thus, I argue that differences between students in middle-class schools who have access to digital technologies, and students in poor schools who have little or no contact to technology, produce important social class differences that relate to global changes. As technology plays a growing role in today’s global world, technological access, knowledge, and skills are increasingly important to compete globally. Thus, those who are trained in these elements will have advantage over the ones who are not.

What Do You Think? vs. Shut Up and Listen: Teacher Behavior

As illustrated, poor Latino children have a different schooling experience than middle-class Latino children. Differences in teacher’s perceptions, interactions, and expectations of children and parents are no exception. Previous studies have looked at teacher differences within socioeconomic and ethnically diverse schools. Krei’s (1998) and Langfor et al’s (2002) research on urban schools assert that low-income and minority students attend schools with more inexperienced and less qualified teachers. A comparison of teacher preparation within the schools studied here show that teachers in both middle- and poor-class schools are equally qualified (see table 2.2). Although poor schools have a higher percentage of core classes not taught by qualified teachers and individuals teaching out of certification, on average, poor schools have more teachers with Masters degrees plus thirty hours or a doctorate. Significantly,
unlike Krei’s (1998) findings, all teachers had at least ten plus years of experience levels. This brings us to ask, if teachers are equally prepared and have comparable experience, then what is happening in these schools so that students are treated differently?

Table 2.2
2005-2006 Teacher Qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Qualifications</th>
<th>Middle-class schools</th>
<th>Poor-class schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alex’s School</td>
<td>Rosita’s School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oscar’s School</td>
<td>Daniel’s School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of classes Not Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals Teaching Out of Certification</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Teachers with Master’s Degree Plus 30 Hours or Doctorate</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is important to note that although measured teacher education and experience are not significant factors of difference between the schools observed here, other factors such as teacher behavior and expectations are. Rist (1970) examines the effects of teacher behavior and expectations of student’s achievement, and finds that teachers classify and group children differently; they create a system of segregation in which,

In the one group were all the children who appeared clean and interested, sought interactions with adults, displayed leadership within the class, and came from homes which displayed various status criteria valued in the middle-class. In the other were children who were dirty,
smelled of urine, did not actively participate in class, spoke a linguistic dialect other than the
spoken by the teacher and students at Table 1, did not display leadership behavior, and came
from poor homes often supported by public welfare. (p. 444)

Comparable experiences characterize Latino children’s schooling. Teacher’s perceptions and
expectations varied significantly depending on the school. Middle-class schoolteachers perceived
the students as capable, willing, and having the necessary skills to learn. Middle-class
schoolteachers also view parents as a resource and as good examples for their children:

  MRS. J: I have a great group this year. Most of them are very smart kids; also, their parents
help a lot. I do have a couple that will be going to the gifted program next year, and as
always, I have some that need an extra push.

  CATALINA: How do you deal with the ones that need extra help?

  MRS. J: It depends on what type of help they need. If it is reading, I have a teacher that takes
them out for something called Janco Café and the kids go there to strengthen their reading
skills. I also have an aide that comes and helps me out with children that need the extra
attention. Also, parents help a lot; usually I talk to them and tell them what I need help with
and they respond fairly quickly.

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  MRS. S: You wouldn’t believe how many children I have on free lunch. It’s mainly because
we are close to the university and many of my parents are students so they have low incomes.
Being on free lunch here doesn’t necessarily mean that they are poor; quite the opposite,
many of my parents here are getting their masters or doctorates.

  CATALINA: Are parents helpful?
MRS. S: Oh yes. One of my parents is the PTA president and she helps a lot; others come and help with reading, and whenever I ask any of them to help in the classroom or their child with an activity, they immediately respond.

***

CATALINA: What do you think about your student’s future? What kind of jobs do you see them doing? Do you think they will be successful?

MRS. S: I think they will have bright futures, I can see them all going to college. I don’t know what kind of jobs they will have but I am sure they will be good ones. Some say they want to be university professors, others lawyers, doctors, who knows.

Contrary to the perceptions and expectations of teachers in middle-class schools, teachers in poor-class schools express little hope for their students’ futures, and they described parents as unhelpful and unstable. The teachers describe their students:

MRS. D: The kids I have are so diverse. I do not know much about Federico [a student], but I know his mom is remarrying someone who is not his father. His mother is raising Juan and she is not doing very well economically. Sergio’s parents were stuck in a nasty divorce a couple of years ago. The mother pretty much allowed them [the children] to do anything they wanted; the father was very strict. She lost custody; the father has custody now. Daniel has the most stable life of all of them, but as you already might know, his mother lives with a man that is not his father and they also have their issues.

CATALINA: Do you have many single parents?

MRS. D: I have single, unmarried, or living with grandparents. I guess that is society right now. I would say that half of them do not live with both their parents.
CATALINA: Do you think this lack of stability affects their learning?

MRS. D: Yes, of course. It is hard for children to concentrate in school when their homes are falling apart and they haven’t had a good night sleep.

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MRS. K: I think that the main problem in my class is that, as you can see, the majority of students are boys and a lot of them have learning disabilities. Also, the lack of interest from parents. Well maybe I shouldn’t always call it lack of interest, it’s just that their lives are so complicated that they don’t have the time or they don’t know how to help their children. For example, do you remember the girl with the pink dress? She was held back last year, and this year she is not doing much better either; she is repeating the grade and she still cannot make it. I know her mom is a single mom and she works very hard, but what can I do? I don’t even know if she can pass this year without help.

CATALINA: Can you tell me more about your students?

MRS. K: They are a great group of kids; it’s just that it is hard for them.

CATALINA: What do you mean by hard for them?

MRS. K: I have a couple that do well in class; those are the advanced readers. As you can see yourself, the majority of them are not at grade level. There is a lot of work that needs to be done with these kids.

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MRS. K: Most of my students are on free lunch. They come from very poor homes where their parents either work two jobs or are on welfare. Most of the parents do not have a
college education and some haven’t even finished high school. I also have many parents that
do not speak English, which makes things harder for them.

CATALINA: Do you think that affects their learning?

MRS. K: Yes, very much. That means that I can never expect parents to help with
homework, they sometimes don’t know what their children are learning so they can’t help
them.

CATALINA: What do you think these kids will be doing when they are adults? Do you think
they will all graduate from high school and go to college?

MRS. K: I hope they do.

CATALINA: Realistically what do you expect they will be doing?

MRS. K: Realistically, I know some won’t finish high school or barely finish. They just don’t
have what it takes. Others will graduate and get a job; I think most of them will do that.

There might be a couple of them that go to college; but not that many.

The teachers I observed differed in the ways they addressed their students. Teachers in
middle-class schools used terms such as “Mr. Smith”, “please”, “excuse me sir, what do you
think about your behavior?” to address the students. Teachers in poor schools ridiculed and used
strong language when addressing their students. For example, “you were so busy trying to make
me look stupid that you didn’t answer my question, did you?”; “shush, I was not talking to you, I
was talking to Daniel.” In addition, teacher satisfaction with working conditions was a point of
discrepancy between middle- and poor-class schools. Contrary to teachers in middle-class
schools, teachers in poor schools show a much higher rate of teacher dissatisfaction with
working conditions. For example, both Daniel’s and Oscar’s teachers expressed their discontent
with their working environment. They explain,
CATALINA: Can you tell me about working here?

MRS. D: I am one of the oldest teachers here. I have been working here for a long time and I have gotten used to it.

CATALINA: What would be your ideal working place?

MRS. D: Ideally, I would be working close to my home. I live out in the suburbs, my children went to school there, so I am more familiar and more comfortable there; I don’t have to drive as long either.

CATALINA: What are the things that you don’t like about working here?

MRS. D: There is a lot of violence in the school, especially in junior high…also, resources are very limited; I wish I had more things to use with my children. The first couple of years as a teacher I used to buy a lot of materials, but after a while I stopped using my salary and just tried to use whatever the school gave me.

CATALINA: Do you think it would be easier working in a school where the kids were mainly white and middle-class?

MRS. D: Yes. It’s not that I do not like teaching African Americans and Latinos, or poor children, it is just that schools with limited resources and children with little help at home make things much more difficult for us teachers.

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MRS. K: I first worked three years in a Catholic school. I liked it there, but the pay is not as good as working in public schools. I then applied and was sent here.

CATALINA: Did you want to go somewhere else?

MRS. K: I would have preferred to work close to home; now it takes me almost 45 minutes to get here. Also the schools close to where I live are easier to teach in.
CATALINA: What do you mean by easier?

MRS. K: Teachers have more support from the administration, from the parents, and children seem to be better prepared.

On the contrary, teachers in middle-class schools expressed their contentment with the school they worked at.

CATALINA: Do you like working here?

MRS. S: Yes, very much. I have a good relationship with other teachers and with the principal. The parents are usually helpful, and in general, it’s a good place to work at.

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CATALINA: Tell me about working here?

MRS. J: I have been here for over fifteen years. I love my class and I just like the school in general. Teachers help each other; the principal is there for whatever question or help we need. The kids are great. It’s close to my house, which is good too. My son and daughter both have been in this school; my daughter still is here. In general, I can’t say anything bad about it.

The distinction I am drawing here between teachers in middle and poor schools is not one of teacher preparation, but one of teacher perception and expectation. Teachers in poor schools tend to have negative perceptions about the student’s home environment, student’s capabilities, and their own working conditions. Teachers in middle-class schools have a tendency to view children as talented and having parental support; in addition, they are generally more satisfied with their working environment.
Conclusions

Many factors affect student achievement; here, I have described how the interrelation between school selection, parental involvement, school procedures, teachers, and social class influence children’s education. I observed each school between one and four days, I sat in the classes, I followed the children through their daily activities, listened to the teachers give their lesson, had lunch in the lunchroom, went on field trips, interviewed teachers, observed the neighborhoods surrounding the schools, and talked to parents about school selection. Observational data support Bourdieu’s (1971) reflection that the school “does not merely provide reference marks: it also maps out itineraries…methods (in the etymological sense) or programmes of thought” (p. 196). Furthermore, the findings re-asserted the notion that “schools are places where social inequalities are created and not just reproduced” (Olson, 1981, p.2). It is also significant that the way in which teachers in poor schools presented and evaluated knowledge, and how they heavily controlled the children’s activities prepared children for the types of jobs that are systematic and that primarily carry out the orders and plans of others. In the case of middle-class schools, flexibility and the school’s overall attitude towards allowing children to be active participants in their learning process, prepared children for jobs in which critical thinking and personal development are the norm. Teacher perceptions and expectations also played an important role in Latino children’s education.

The observations in schools affirm Anyon’s (1980) findings with regards to differences in schools based on social class. What is noteworthy here is that Anyon’s (1980) study still has validity in describing numerous inequalities between schools. However, as the world shrinks, it becomes more important for students to be exposed to diverse literacies. The poor schools are
falling behind in teaching new technologies, thus widening the gap between middle-class and poor schools.

The most striking point about schooling transnational Latino children is that there is, unlike the case in numerous previous studies, little evidence of a panethnic identity within these families. I agree with Norma Fuentes (2007) that “immigration type, race, and ethnic networks as well as household structures differentially affect the resources available” (p. 95-96); furthermore, social class background is also a significant determinant of educational resources and opportunities. Latino families, in fact, school their children depending on their own socioeconomic background. In addition, their neighborhood of residence, school, and social networks are also direct or indirect participants in their children’s upbringing. Critically examining how Latino families from varying social class participate in their children’s schooling allows us to begin to understand the living experiences of transnational individuals within the stratification of American society.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusions

I began by telling the stories of four Latino migrant families, the Dengris, Rossis, Rodriguezes, and the Mendozas. From the perspective of an outsider, these families look very similar. They are all Latinos; are migrants; and speak Spanish. Yet, in spite of many similarities, the families have different social backgrounds and ways of living their everyday life that affect how they relate to the United States and their home country.

Through studying the everyday living practices among Latino migrant families from varying social class, I found that transnational migration allows migrants to have a dual framework of reference, and varies in terms of nationality, social class, and historical background. This study shows how Latino families are immersed in an ongoing process of reshaping complex processes of identity, belonging, and class. In addition, it demonstrates that the family’s background is essential to how families adapt to their transnational lives in both the host country and homeland.

In responding to issues regarding ethnic identity, I have uncovered the complex processes by which Latinos relate to other races and Latinos themselves. Latinos of diverse social class differ in the ways they establish themselves within American society; a space that is shaped by defining a distinction between themselves and “Others”. My data confirm that ethnicity and race cannot be examined without accounting for social class. This is because social class, as articulated by my subjects, cuts across race and ethnicity from different points. This adds to the complexity of how personal and social components come together in the construction of a transnational identity; such construction is influenced by both home and host country. In this
study, all families created a new identity in the United States by rejecting blackness and perceiving whiteness as privilege; they also defined themselves by drawing class and nationality distinctions with other Latinos.

The data in this study reinforce the notion previously emphasized by other authors (Beca Zinn, 1994; Zambrana, 1995), that Latino families have strong kinship ties. However, closer scrutiny of the social routines of the everyday living practices of these families reveal that Latino kinship relations are unique to the family’s social class. For example, Latino middle class families’ migration patterns physically distances them from their relatives, while poor families migrate towards family and friends in search for economic and psychological support. I suggest that transnational Latino kinship relations can be understood and fully theorized only when a cultural and social stratification framework is utilized.

The effects of social class in a globalized world can also be understood in terms of access and uses of technology at home and in school. As advances in technology radically alter communication, spaces, and relations, differences in access and uses of technologies becomes a dividing mechanism between classes. The digital divide experienced between the children studied here, was contingent upon their particular position in society. For example, middle class families communicated with their family and friends back home utilizing the Internet. In these middle class families, their children had continuous access to computers, the Internet, and a variety of educational software at school and in homes. Poor Latino families communicated with their home country through telephones and cell phones; computers were not frequently used in homes or at schools. My point is that technology based practices in homes and schools have an important bearing on the kind of future these children are being prepared for. I suggest that
differences in technology practices in both home and school settings ultimately reproduce class inequalities.

The families studied here came from different nations and social backgrounds. Their experiences back home, social class being one of them, undoubtedly influences many of their current perceptions. The families’ perception of social class reflects the ideas of class cultivated and lived in their home country. These class perceptions do not always coincide with the class concepts of the host country. Therefore, middle and poor class Latino families experience social class mobility through a different lens. This study shows that social class sets its own references that are subjective to ones’ location and background. These references are usually in line with specific contexts affected by the socio-political atmosphere, and economic and racial relationships. At the same time, different class positions invoke various psychological, intellectual, and behavioral states in relation to the available material conditions. When individuals migrate, they experience a change in the material and social environment, these changes might include expectations, behavioral patterns, and definitions of social phenomena. The shift in material and social conditions also enforces other practices that one needs to comply with or adapt to in order to fit into the new society. This creates the illusion that social class is something that one feels and many of my respondents took the issue from the emotional perspective. For example, Latino poor families, although considered poor in both their home and host country, feel that coming to the U.S. allowed them to experience upward mobility. They compare their life in the U.S. with a poorer one back home, and consider their economic conditions to be better in the U.S.

It is not surprising that people find themselves in different class positions when they move to another country, as social class is a concept that is constantly reproduced and re-defined in
reference to social, geographical, economical, and discursive boundaries. However, my data indicate that there are mechanisms that people utilize to gain their previous class location if migration causes them to step down in the social class hierarchy. Or else, if their class position shifted upwards, they still employ certain mechanisms to make sense of this shift. For the former one, education has been perceived as the major mobilizer while the latter group believes in the necessity of pushing opportunities toward making more money. Likewise, people who are trying to gain more power through education recognized the importance of “acting white”, although not in the sense that African Americans use as a derogatory term for the people who are following the white rule, but as following the footsteps of power and success. This has a lot to do with class-consciousness levels; they are trying to introduce themselves into the middle class by moving into their neighborhoods and attending their schools. As reference to my point about construction of racial and ethnic identity in relation to social class, middle class Latinos prefer to stay away from poorer Latinos regardless of their nationality as their life styles and behaviors are associated with criminalized identities (i.e., as these people mostly live in “bad” urban neighborhoods in which the “criminal activities” are statistically higher). They believe that these habits are contagious, so to speak, and one needs to keep his/her own children and family away from them. This holds true for the middle class and the poor class families.

Reforming Social Class Within a Transnational Context

A contemporary theoretical challenge to the understanding of social stratification is the way in which class and class structure are being re-formed in host nations by virtue of transnational migration patterns. In fact, class is being re-constituted all over the world given economic dynamics as well as patterns of the movement of peoples. By describing the patterns of
construction of social class within these Latino families, this dissertation offers a template for how to study the re-structuring of class with a focus on transnational migration.

*Embracing or Rejecting the Host Culture’s Mainstream/Dominant Identity with its Geographical, Discursive, Educational, and Artistic Connotations.*

Latino families depending on their social class background embrace or reject the dominant black/white discourse. Although all the Latino families studied here reject blackness, middle class families are keener in adopting the white middle class way of living. These middle class families move into white neighborhoods, their children attend schools mainly populated by white students, and attend events including concerts and art expositions where the majority of participants are white. When middle class Latino families come to the U.S., they try to broaden their social network by relating to white middle class Americans. In contrast, poor class Latinos embrace neither blackness nor whiteness. These families are gathering around other Latinos of the same nationality and/or social class; this closeness to other Latinos gives them support and allows for survival. For example, poor families move into Latino neighborhoods, attend schools mainly populated by Latinos, and their social networks are limited to other Latinos. In addition, when they move to the U.S. their friends and family already living here help them settle and find a job.

This pattern shows how social class is essential when looking at how families from diverse backgrounds adapt to the dominant discourse, in this case, a racialized discourse. Whereas middle class families dissipate within the white middle class mainstream identity, poor families tend to segregate themselves from both whites and blacks. Thus, this pattern explains to some
extent the invisibility of middle class Latinos and the overt exposure of poor Latinos in American society.

*Defining New Reference Points Based on the Ones From Their Homeland.*

Latino transnationals come from countries where their everyday lives are markedly different from the way of life in the United States. When analyzing social class in a transnational context it is important to understand the reference points developed in the migrant’s home country and how they inform the new reference points established in the host country. For example, poor families come from countries where references to poverty are lived and thought to be in terms of lack of material possessions including a home, a car, and a television. Families use reference points originating from their home country in order to make sense of their experience in the new setting. When they move to the U.S., easy access to material things allows these families to create new social class reference points based on their past experiences, thus making them feel as if they do not belong to the poor class, even though reference points in American society situate these families within the poor class.

*Locating Oneself as Oppositional to the Unsuccessful Examples of the Same/Similar Origin.*

This research shows fundamental differences between Latinos of varying nationalities and social classes. Latino transnationals handle these differences by creating a hierarchy within the Latino community. This classification is structured differently depending on nationality, social class, and immigration status. For example, middle class Latinos locate themselves oppositionally in relation to low class Latinos, regardless of nationality. Poor class Latinos create their hierarchy system based on nationality and immigration status. In the specific case of the
poor Puerto Ricans studied here, they draw a clear difference between themselves, Dominicans, and illegal Mexicans. This hierarchy creates a sense of entitlement for some Latino groups, while discriminating against others, differentiating the experience within the Latino community.

*Setting Up New Political Grounds In Terms Of Belonging, Patriotism, and the Critique of both Home and Host Societies.*

I argue that transnational individuals escape the traditional definition of citizen, and thus are at the forefront or redefining what it means to be part of multiple societies. The attachments to the home country and the desire to someday go back are strongly articulated; however, families are rarely determined to do so. This behavior might be related to the fear of not being able to fully readapt to their original society. In addition, criticizing both their home and host country becomes an important element of their discourse. This action is closely related to justification purposes; through criticism, they try to justify their choice to migrate and remain in the host country. Once these families leave their home country and settle somewhere else, they experience a new society that brings different challenges and forms of living every day life. In the new society they are perceived as foreigners; however, in their home country they are also perceived as foreigners. Transnationals become what I have called *global foreigners*, where they belong both “here and there”, but also, “not here nor there”.

I do not claim that the particular set of patterns detailed above apply to settings other than the Latino transnational families explored in this study. The construction of social class patterns are apt be quite different for other ethnic migrant groups. My point here is that the actual patterns of social class within a transnational framework can be understood and fully theorized only when a form of comparative ethnography is utilized. This work should not be seen as a definition for
social class development for all transnational families, but as a template for future study of the relationships between the global economic dynamics, the contemporary patterns of the movement of peoples, and the production of new ethnic and social identities.

Theoretical Contributions

In this study, I have provided substantial empirical findings that suggest new theoretical possibilities for the connections between families, migration, social stratification, and ethnicity. Scholars generally study migration from individual disciplines, regions, and ideologies (Massey et al., 1994). As a result, research in this area is narrowly focused. Rarely, however, do such studies explain how migration and differences in nationality and social class influence the construction of identities. As I have explained, the findings of my research bring us one step closer to such an understanding.

In particular, this research adds complexity to the debate over whether identities are individually constructed or largely primordial-socially structured by forces outside the individual. In addition, it looks at the influence of home and host country in the construction of these identities. In one sense, structural locations provide preconceived panethnic identity categories of Latinos. However, and more importantly, I have shown that Latinos use cultural, national, and social class schema to reinterpret these categories and create their own identities.

While scholars often leave the study of identity at the formation of abstract categories that describe individuals or groups, identities also matter for practical issues. The interpretative frameworks Latinos use to determine social belonging indicate particular sets of practices. For Peruvian and Argentinean middle class families, believing that Puerto Ricans are often economically and educationally disadvantaged creates boundaries between Latinos. For Puerto
Rican poor families, believing that Mexican and Dominicans are “illegal” and violent also creates boundaries within Latinos.

For those concerned with the future of Latinos in the United States, this research shows the importance of considering differences between nationality, social class, and reasons for migrating. Work that considers and compares diverse types of backgrounds within the Latino community will help scholars gain a fuller understanding of the influence migrants and their children are having on broader American life.

Specifically, by comparing poor and middle class Latino migrant families from varying nationalities, I discovered that ethnic identity overlaps with other identities and has the potential to vary from Latinos of diverse backgrounds. Some theorists reason that as new Americans become part of the mainstream economy, they will also adopt more cohesive identities as Americans, becoming more uniformly integrated into American society (Gordon, 1964; Park & Burgess, 1969). However, families utilize certain types of identities, such as national, cultural, racial, and social class differently. Such a finding challenges the unitary model of Latino panethnicity.

The specific findings about social class identity and mobility should challenge how we think about the connection of social class and global migration. Most scholars study social class within a specific geography. I show here that the kind of class mobility that is embedded in the global movement of people escapes the classical definitions of mobility. Transnational class mobility is based on a dual framework, one that includes home and host land definitions and criteria of social stratification. For example, middle class Latino families, who come from upper/middle class backgrounds in their home country, arrive in the United States and move down the social class ladder. The downward mobility experienced by these families is clearly explained by the
lack of social capital. Poor families, considered poor by host and homeland definitions, find themselves under relatively better economic conditions in the United States, thus, experiencing subjective upward mobility. The findings I have presented here reveal the ways that Latino transnational families are already influencing the relationship between global migration and social class.

As we think about the future role of Latino migrants in American society, my findings are particularly significant in the implications about how children are educated in their homes and at schools. The differences in home education and schooling between middle class and poor class children have implications for larger issues facing Latino migrants. During my observations in the homes and schools of poor Latino families, it was clear that they face issues of neighborhood and school segregation that middle class Latinos do not. Whereas poor class Latinos live in Latino neighborhoods and their children attend schools mainly populated by Latinos and African Americans, Latino middle class families reside in white neighborhoods and their children attend schools with a majority of white students. I have shown here that the educational experiences of poor class Latinos are significantly different from those of middle class Latino families. It is also important, to look beyond class and ethnicity to explain these differences. I have discussed throughout this study the need to look at other factors that influence these differences; factors that include reasons for migrating, country of origin, historical background, and race relations in the homeland.

The findings bring a broader understanding of schools within the 21st century, more specifically how technology plays a role in differences in social class and education. Much of the research on education and social class in the United States examines the differences between races and ethnicities, asking to what extent minority schooling contributes to social inequalities.
To focus exclusively on these aspects of inequalities misses the global changes that we are experiencing. The digital divide, in many ways related to race, ethnicity and social class, is part of a global phenomenon. In short, the digital divide matters for social class analysis.

Qualitative studies of immigrant communities are always valuable for understanding their experiences and perceptions. However, comparative studies, such as this one, promote an even greater understanding of their experiences by looking at different contexts. Comparing immigrant families of the same ethnic background, who come from diverse national and social class background allows for a more in depth understanding of the diversity of experiences and practices. I have shown that even in spite of the ethnic similarities between the families, their differences produce discrepancies in their socioeconomic mobility, migration and adaptation process, and in their children’s education.

This study contributes to the body of literature on migration in several ways. It advances comparative studies of immigrants, especially of Latinos, as encouraged by scholars such as Suárez-Orozco & Páez (2002), Torres-Saillant (2002), and Saldaña-Portillo (2007). By comparing immigrant families within different social and educational contexts, this study also shifts the focus away from the panethnic idea of Latinos, and shows that diversity in Latino backgrounds affects their migratory experience. This study has examined questions that explore transnational Latinos in a new light. Despite the wealth of research on Latinos, no other study has compared the transnational experiences of Latinos from diverse nationalities and social class within multiple settings.
Implications of the Study

In this section, I present implications for education and policy-makers. This study suggests that there is a need for teachers and schools to look at the culture and the home environment of their students, as these have important effects on the learning process. Furthermore, it suggests the need for schools to be active participants in the development of parental involvement programs. For poor Latino families, their culture and limited educational background is often a barrier in helping their children to be successful in school. It is not that poor parents do not want their children to be successful; rather it is lack of skills and know-how that limits them. By providing parents with guidance on the school’s expectations and how to achieve them, parents can provide the resources and practices needed to help their children in school. In addition, there is a need to develop programs that help teachers and school personnel to learn to be more sensitive to cultural and social differences. Finally, this study suggests that schools need to look more closely at the digital divide. Providing children and teachers with the resources, including access and instruction on uses of technology needed to compete in this globalized world is essential in addressing local and global inequalities.

For policy-makers, this study suggests that a new type of nation building is occurring, one based on multiple belongings and loyalties. Thus, the creation of citizens goes beyond legalities, assimilation theories (Basch et al., 2003), or multicultural approaches; rather, the United States should adopt a migration agenda based on the possibility of having double loyalty, where migrants living in the U.S. are allowed to feel a sense of responsibility and duty to several countries. As Latinos currently are the largest minority in the U.S., and the Asian population is on the rise, the white/black discourse is loosing ground in describing race and ethnic relations in
the U.S. In addition, the transnational relations that these minority populations engage in also question the nation building apparatus. This study suggests that transnational migrants’ voices and experiences have created global connections. These connections are shaping a new kind of citizen, a global citizen, and one that works for the well-being and progress of several societies simultaneously. The main concern is how can local governments and communities benefit from this perspective? Until now, caring for family and friends in the home country has mostly been an individual/family task. However, the creation of grass-roots programs that involve the community, including migrants, and allows these groups to contribute to the well-being, directly or indirectly, of their “people” back home, can create a sense of community and loyalty to the nation that allows for these improvements in a global society.

**Future Research Directions**

A major theme in Latino studies is the socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by many Latino communities (Fine & Weis, 1998; A. Miles, 2004; Rouse, 2002). In addition, a large number of researchers have concentrated on low socioeconomic Latino communities (Fitzpatrick, 1987; Fuentes, 2007; Goldenberg, 1987; Moore & Pinderhughes, 1993). A neglected area of study has been the growing Latino middle and upper class, and their experiences in the United States (Massey, Zambrana, & Alonzo Bell, 1995). One exception is the research on Cuban migrants (G. Bernal & Shapiro, 2005; Stepick & Dutton Stepick, 2002) that has looked at the predominantly middle and upper class Cuban population in the United States. We know relatively little about the experiences of other Latino middle and upper class migrants.

Scholars have acknowledged the diversity in the Latino population (Bean & Tienda, 1987; M. Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002). Many have studied Latinos from specific nationalities (Blank,
1998; Courtney Smith, 2006; Fine & Weis, 1998; Stepick & Dutton Stepick, 2002). However, for scholars interested in Latino ethnic relations, there is a need to conduct comparative research on how Latinos of different nationalities and social class perceive other Latinos. Studies should therefore develop comparative frameworks that embrace the distinctive features of the Latino population.

Finally, the ongoing global changes and the increasing movement of people have created a need to reformulate classic concepts of social class mobility and social class more generally. Thus, what is urgently needed is in-depth qualitative and quantitative research on how social class works in a transnational context.
Appendix A

Interview Questions for Children

1. Could you tell me a short story about a typical day in your school?
2. How do you like school? What are the things that you like the most?
3. What are some things that you don’t like?
4. Can you tell me about your teachers? What do you think about them?
5. Do you have extracurricular activities? Which do you like the most?
6. How do you think of life at home and at school? How are they different?
7. What do you want to do when you grow up?
8. Does anyone help you with homework? Who?
9. What do your parents say about school?
10. Do you think school is important for your future? Why?
11. What do your parents say about going to the university?
12. What language do you speak at home?
13. What language do your parents speak to you in?
14. What language do they speak to each other in?
15. Do you know how to speak Spanish?
16. What language do you prefer to speak at home? Why?
17. Have you ever gone to [insert homecountry]? Do you like it?
18. Do you have family there? Do you know them?
19. What do you think about being Latino or [homecountry]?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Thank you for helping me.
Appendix B

Interview Questions for Parents

Background Questions:
1. Where were you born?
2. What do you work in?
3. Tell me how you or your family came to the U.S.
4. How long have you been living in the U.S.?
5. Tell me about growing up in the US or in [home county]?
6. How different is it from growing up in the US or in [home county]?
7. Tell me about your family
8. What did your parents do?
9. What language did you use with your parents at home?
10. What does it mean to you to be [home county]?
11. What do you do in your free time?

Questions related to own education

1. Tell me about your education
2. Where did you go to school? Which country?
3. What were your parent’s beliefs towards education?
4. What kind of things did your parents tell you about school?
5. Were they involved in your schoolwork? And or school activities?
6. Did your parents used to help you with homework? Who?
7. Did they used to read with you? Who and when?
8. Did you like school? What things did you like and didn’t like about school?
9. What did you want to be when you were younger? Where you able to attain what you wanted? If not why? If yes, how?
10. Tell me about your teachers. Did you like your teachers? Why or why not?
11. What did your parents tell you about teachers?
12. Was there a close relationship between parents and teachers?
13. What kind of reading do you do at home and at work?
14. What do you do in your free time?

Questions related to their children’s education

1. What do you think about the value of education for your child’s future?
2. How is your child’s schooling different from yours?
3. What do you think about their school? Do you like the school your child is in?
4. How could it be better?
5. Do you help your child with homework?
6. Do you read to your child? What do you read to them?
7. Do you take them to extracurricular activities? Which ones?
8. What do you think about your child’s language ability both in Spanish and English?
9. What are your opinions about reading and writing, how should they be taught?
10. What do you think about their teachers?
11. Do you attend school activities and teacher conferences? Why or why not?
12. Describe your involvement in your child’s education?
13. Do you think your child could ever be president of either country?

Questions about family life

1. Tell me how [home county] culture is reflected in your home.
2. How do you feel about raising your children in the U.S.?
3. How important is extended family? How often do you speak or see them?
4. Do you visit [home county] often? When was the last time you were there?
5. What are important values and morals you want your child to have? Why?
6. Can you tell me about house rules? (TV time, chores, etc.)
7. How do you discipline your children?
8. What are your priorities in life?
9. Do you educate your children differently?
10. Can you tell me more about gender roles in your family?

Questions about living in the U.S.

1. How do you see Latinos in the U.S.?
2. How do you think others see Latinos?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
Thank you
Appendix C

*Interview Questions for Parents # 2*

**Questions about living in the U.S.**

1. What does it feel like to be born in another country living in the U.S.?
2. How do Americans treat people from other countries?
3. How does it feel like to be living in the U.S. and then going back to your country?
4. How do people react when they hear you speaking Spanish? Do they treat you differently?
5. Was it hard for you to adapt to living in the U.S.? What was the most difficult thing and the easiest?
6. How do you identify yourself? Do you see yourself as American, Latino or from your home country?
7. How do you think your children are going to grow up as? Will they identify themselves as American, Latinos, or from [home country]?

**Questions about social class**

1. How are social classes in the U.S. divided by? And in [home country]?
2. What social class do you consider yourself? In your home country? And in the U.S.?
3. Do you think that the social class standards are different in the U.S. and in [home country]? For example, does the middle-class live the same in the U.S. as they do in [home country]?
4. Where is it easier to go up the social class ladder, to change social class?
5. What does one need to go up a social class? Is it different in each one of the countries?
6. How do the poor people live in the U.S. and in [home country]? How about the middle-class and the upper class? Can you give me some examples.
7. Do you think that in the U.S., ones race, ethnicity, or national origin influences the social class you belong to?
8. Can you describe the people that belong to the upper class in the U.S. and in [home country]?
9. What do upper class people have that you don’t have? What would you need to have to be in the upper class?
10. In which social class do you think people are happier in?
11. In which social class do you think people get more support? For example economic, family support, support from the government.
12. Can you tell me more about working in the U.S. and in [home country]? Where is it easier to find a job? In which country are the salaries better?
13. Tell me about your job, would you get paid better for the same job in the U.S. or in [home country]?
14. In what things do you spend your money?
15. Do you have debts? For example, credit card debt, mortgage, etc.
Appendix D

*Interview Questions for Teachers*

1. Do you contact parents? How often?
2. How have you used parents in your classroom?
3. How do you include parents in their child's education?
4. Describe your personal and educational background.
5. How do you interact with parents of the students you teach?
6. What is the most difficult aspect of teaching today?
7. What qualities make a "superior" teacher?
8. Do you believe schools are sensitive to various cultures?
9. Do you find that parental involvement is different from immigrant Families? If yes, explain how.
10. During your educational training, did you take any specialized courses focusing on cultural diversity and possible differences?
11. Do you believe that specialized courses such as these would enable educators to understand multicultural children better?
12. What are some things that you consider important for parent to do with their children?
13. Tell me about (child’s name).
14. Tell me about their family? Are his/her parents involved in school?
15. Do you think their culture influences the way they are involved in their child’s education?
16. What recommendations would you give them?
18. Do you have children in school? What school do they go to? Why? Would you have your children in this school? Explain.

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Thank you
Appendix E

Code Listing

1 Race relations
2 Race relations/Comparing races
3 Schools
4 Schools/Schools in the US
5 Schools/Schools back home
6 Schools/teachers
7 Schools/parents and schools
8 Expectations
9 Expectations/own expectations
10 Expectations/parental expectations
11 Expectations/teacher expectations
12 transnationalism
13 transnationalism/traveling back home
14 transnationalism/connections in home country
15 transnationalism/wanting to go back home
16 transnationalism/belonging
17 gender roles
18 Language
19 Language/Language in school
20 Language/Language at home
21 Differences
22 Differences/Differences in culture
23 Differences/Differences between countries
24 Differences/Differences between Latinos
25 Middle-class
26 Middle-class/Discrimination
27 Middle-class/home language
28 Middle-class/Free time~ hobbies
29 Middle-class/parental involvement in school
30 Middle-class/expectations for children
31 Middle-class/Discipline
32 Middle-class/reason to come to US
33 Middle-class/Money
34 Middle-class/Money/Income
35 Middle-class/Money/Gov help
36 Middle-class/Money/spending habits
37 Middle-class/Education
38 Middle-class/Education/Own education
39 Middle-class/Education/children's education
40 Middle-class/Education/Family's education
41 Middle-class/Education/Homework
Poor-class/Discipline
Poor-class/perceptions
Poor-class/perceptions/perceptions of Latinos
Poor-class/perceptions/perceptions of whites
Poor-class/perceptions/perceptions of blacks
Poor-class/perceptions/perception of home country
Poor-class/perceptions/perception of the US
Poor-class/perceptions/perceptions of teachers
Poor-class/perceptions/Identity
Poor-class/perceptions/perceptions of Americans
Poor-class/perceptions/perceptions of schools
Poor-class/Money
Poor-class/Money/Income
Poor-class/Money/Gov help
Poor-class/Money/spending habits
Poor-class/Education
Poor-class/Education/own education
Poor-class/Education/children's education
Poor-class/Education/family's education
Poor-class/Education/Homework
Poor-class/Education/school subject preferences
Poor-class/Education/TV, computer & electronic games
Poor-class/Education/Extracurricular activities
Poor-class/Education/Cultural act~ Museums, concerts
Poor-class/Education/parental involvement
Poor-class/social class
Poor-class/social class/social class back home
Poor-class/social class/Own social class perception
Poor-class/social class/social class US
Poor-class/social class/poor-classes in HC & US
Poor-class/social class/upper classes in HC & US
Poor-class/social class/social class, race & ethnicity
Poor-class/social class/social class boundaries
Poor-class/social class/Middle-classes
Poor-class/Reason for coming to US
Poor-class/Future plans
Poor-class/Background
Poor-class/Background/Racial background
Poor-class/Background/Parent's occupation
Poor-class/Background/Neighborhood
Poor-class/Background/Religious background
Poor-class/Background/Current job
Poor-class/Background/family background
Poor-class/Violence
Poor-class/Adaptation
Poor-class/Adaptation/Adaptation to home country
Poor-class/Adaptation/Adaptation to the US

Poor-class/Priorities

Poor-class/literacy

Poor-class/literacy/children's reading

Poor-class/literacy/school reading

Poor-class/literacy/parental reading

Poor-class/3 Wishes

Poor-class/3 Wishes/children's wishes

Poor-class/3 Wishes/Parent's wishes
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