

2013

# Embodied cartographies of Mexican-Canadian transnationalism

Maria Frances Cachon

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EMBODIED CARTOGRAPHIES OF MEXICAN-CANADIAN  
TRANSNATIONALISM

BY

MARIA FRANCES CACHON

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through Sociology, Anthropology & Criminology  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2013

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(02-07-2013)

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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## ABSTRACT

Given that processes of globalization now significantly trouble the ‘natural’ boundaries of geographic territories, questions of spatiality—space and place, boundaries and mobility, flows and interconnections—have become foundational to contemporary migration research. In this context, scholars now generally acknowledge that many migrants organize their daily lives across the borders of nation states. This dissertation explores the under researched transnational lives of Mexican migrants in Canada—lives lived here and there. The study corroborates the widely perceived need to ‘ground’ the study of transnationalism, by advancing *embodied transnationalism* which explores the intimate, material and corporeal social-spatial relations from which the practices of transnational engagement are produced. The research highlights the importance of attending to *affective transnationalism* by demonstrating the emotive, intimate and subjective geographies of Mexican transnationalism in Canada, as well as their importance in shaping transnational practices. Findings document the existence of rich transnational social spaces, as well as the ways in which migrants are embedded in localities which are powerfully mediated by gender and class. Research participants’ stories of migration reflect the struggle of leading lives ‘in-between’ and a strong sense of belonging to place, or emotional embeddedness in Mexico. In this way, the research speaks to both: the fluid reconfigurative potential of transnationalism and the solid ‘multiple hegemonies’ that underpin Mexican migrants’ struggles to produce locality in an increasingly globalized world.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to:

*My parents—Nancy Pfeifer and Antonio Cachón*



*“Team Smith”—Jeff, Ellie and Alec (all my love, all my life)*

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## CHAPTER 1

### LOCATING MEXICAN TRANSNATIONALISM IN 'ESTE LADO' ('THIS SIDE'—CANADA)

#### INTRODUCTION

Alejandra, a 46 year-old Mexican immigrant who has lived in Canada for eight years, goes on-line every week night to watch the current *telenovela* (extremely popular limited-run Spanish serial dramatic television programs). After viewing the program she ritualistically places a call to her sister Magda, in Mexico, in order to discuss the latest plot and character developments. Alejandra admits to being '*a little obsessed*' with this summer's hit show *Un Refugio para el Amor*. This '*obsession*' is equally apparent in the Serrano household, where Reyna subscribes to the cable channel TLN (the Telelatino network) in order to religiously watch *telenovelas* with her teenage daughters Gracie and Aissa. Having lived in Canada for twelve years, the Serranos describe their lives '*as quite settled*'; but admit that most of their entertainment centers around Mexican content, while the vast majority of their social networking is concentrated around family and friends in Mexico. It is this longing for connection to '*home*' that keeps Mexican migrant farm workers Angel, Memo and Raul adjusting and readjusting the rabbit ears on the television each week night at 7pm to watch *Un Refugio*. They tell me, '*with just a hint of wind and the right amount of aluminum foil, Televisa—channel 61 out of Cleveland Ohio comes in really good. We're always trying to get the soccer games too. When you watch, for that little bit of time you feel like you're home.*'

The concept of transnationalism 'is generally used to describe people who feel that they belong to and/or organize their daily lives around more than one nation-state' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 5). The examples above illustrate just one of the many transnational practices I encountered in my research on Mexican migration to Canada, demonstrating the dual

orientation or transnational ‘bifocality’ (Rouse, 1992) underpinning the lives of Mexican im/migrants<sup>1</sup> in Southwestern Ontario Canada—*lives lived here and there*.

In this introduction, I present the concept of transnationalism and trace the conceptual evolution of the transnational optic in migration scholarship. I then frame the central organizing theme and principal contribution of this dissertation, namely, *embodied transnationalism* (Dunn, 2010)—an approach that underscores the material and/or corporeal localities of transnational practices and engagement. Embodiment is explored in my work by foregrounding the intimate, affective and emotional aspects of migrants’ experiences, revealing the everyday localities from which transnationalism is negotiated, articulated and enacted. Next I contextualize the topic of Mexican migration to Canada and explain why and how I chose to explore Mexican migrants’ transnational experiences. I also reflect on how my own transnational condition, as the child of a ‘mixed marriage’ with a Mexican father and American mother, who emigrated from Mexico to the United States and then Canada, has shaped my research. Finally, I provide a summary of my study.

## TRANSNATIONALISM AND MIGRATION STUDIES

Transnationalism, which broadly explores ‘how people and places are interconnected across space and time’ (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 1), has significantly altered the landscape of migration scholarship. Troubling the ‘natural’ boundaries of geographic territories, the transnational practices and identities of migrant and ethnic communities have made questions of spatiality—space and time, boundaries and mobilities, flows and interconnections—essential for scholars wishing to understand the lives of contemporary migrants. In the span of two and a half decades, the transnational literature has thoroughly recast

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of coherence, I employ the concept migrant, to refer to both Mexican immigrants, (who are Canadian citizens or are seeking permanent resident status in Canada), and temporary migrant workers, (who migrate to Canada annually for seasonal employment).

and reconceptualized migration, from the assumption of linear and bi-local movement between unitary nation-states inherent in the classic model of migration, to a contingent, dynamic and contested process. In this section I do not assume the overwhelming task of reviewing the now mammoth interdisciplinary scholarship of transnationalism, nor do I intend to provide a comprehensive review of the transnational migration scholarship. Instead I present a genealogy of the analytic of transnationalism in migration studies. I begin by offering a sketch of influential and/or parallel developments in social theory. Second, I discuss the emergence of two distinct 'schools' within transnational migration studies. Finally, I address contemporary efforts aimed at 'unbinding' (Collins, 2009) conceptualizations of transnationalism and situate my research in relation to these emerging areas of research.

Processes of globalization, which broadly reference 'a shift from focusing on particular nation-states to considering the ways that nations are enmeshed in webs of social, economic, and cultural interdependence' (Seidman, 2004: 270), have appreciably destabilized the 'natural' embeddness of geographic space. Over the past three decades we have witnessed a fundamental change in the form of economic and social relations, and in the way that diverse organizations, groups and states are linked. A defining feature of these changes is the growth of global migration (Castels, 2000), the global extension of capitalist relations, the increased flow of goods, services, and capital; and the development of information and communication networks on a global scale (Veltmeyer & Tellez, 2001: 67). Such significant shifts in the boundaries of social life precipitated a 'spatial turn' within social theory (e.g. Bauman, 2000, 2004; Beck, 1999, 2000a; Castells, 1996, Giddens, 1990; Harvey 1990, Sassen, 1998, 2001b, Urry, 2000; Virilio, 1995) or 'first-wave global theorizing' (Smith, 2005a). This body of work, though articulated differently and in varying degrees, contests the persistent linear nation-state container view of society, insofar as it does not adequately capture the dynamic and complex interconnectivity of contemporary social relations.

For example, the discipline of 'sociology has been in the service of the nation-state since its inception' (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007: 130), consequently there is an enduring tendency, both within sociology specifically and social theory more generally, to consider space as a passive site for the unfolding of social life, rather than as an active dimension of social relations (Cresswell, 2004). In response, John Urry (2000: 1) urges sociologists to abandon outmoded static notions of societies and shift the discipline 'beyond societies' to consider 'the diverse mobilities of peoples, objects, images, information and tastes.' Similarly Virilio (1995: 141) discusses 'new formations of reality, new relations between the self, space, and a sense of real, whose moving contours require new conceptual maps.' In place of seeing the local as connected to the nation-state (a contained, distinct, and unified spatiotemporality), this orientation posits a mutually constitutive relationship between the local and the global, whereby 'dynamics of interaction and overlap operate within the global and the national and between them' (Sassen, 2001b: 215-16). Tomlinson (1999: 107) employs the term 'deterritorialization' to capture 'the loss of the 'natural' relations of culture to geographic and social territories.' Sassen (2001b: 215) contends that the multiple processes that constitute globalization produce mutual imbrications and interpenetration between the local and the global, effectively producing new spatialities and temporalities.

Similarly, David Harvey (1990: 147) views globalization as primarily manifest through a changing experience of time and space, what he refers to as 'time-space compression', as a result of accelerated economic and social exchange. Time-space compression implies that we actually experience place and time differently, 'so that distance and time no longer appear to be major constraints on the organization of human activity' (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002: 6). Likewise, Giddens (1990) views globalization as involving a dramatic reorganization of space and time in cultural and social life, so that cultural and social practices are disembedded from localized contexts and social relations are stretched across widespread spans of time and space. As a result Giddens (1990: 79) observes greater numbers of people 'live in circumstances in which, disembedded institutions, linking local practices with globalized social relations, organize major aspects of

day-to-day life.' Importantly, Giddens is not arguing that daily familiarity and communal/local life is usurped by 'abstract' global forces, but rather that 'this familiarity no longer derives from the particularities of localized place' (Tomlinson, 1999: 107). Giddens (1990: 64) therefore characterizes globalization 'as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.' In sum, the 'spatial consciousness' of first-wave global theorizing has convincingly and dramatically reconstituted the spatialized dichotomy of the local-global, so that the global is no longer understood as effacing the local, but rather the articulation of global processes is understood as manifesting in multiple, discontinuous and often contradictory ways (e.g. Appadurai, 1996, 2001; Bauman, 2000, 2004; Beck, 2000a, 1999; Sassen, 2001b, 2003). In this way, global and national dynamics are understood as mutually constitutive (Appadurai, 2001; Beck, 2000a, 1999; Sassen, 2001 a/b).

Theoretically grappling with new spatialities, however, has not been unproblematic. Smith (2005a) and Conradson and Latham (2005) argue that a great deal of first-wave global theorizing privileges mobility and deterritorialization—discussing 'flows', 'networks', 'mediascapes' and 'liquidity' for instance (e.g. Bauman, 2000; Urry, 2000; Castells, 1996, Appadurai, 1996; Lash & Urry, 1994). Gille and Ó Riain (2002: 274-75) also worry that these orientations tend to reify networks, flows and other mobilities as themselves defining society, thus disconnecting the social from any particular place. Similarly, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1008) argue that many social theorists 'tend to underplay the concept of the social as they reconfigure the concept of society' beyond the confines or boundaries of the nation state. They contend that 'Beck's (2000b) formulation of reflexive cosmopolitization and much of the related literature on cosmopolitanism, for example, largely abandons an exploration of social relations and social context... social relations and social positioning fall out of the analysis; the individual and the global intersect' (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004: 1008). For Anna Tsing (2000: 341) David

Harvey's (1990) work on time-space compression is 'unsatisfying, [as] [n]o ethnographic sources for understanding spatial and temporal texture or diversity are consulted [and] the concept of 'experience' is never explained'. For many then, the over valorization of mobility underpinning first-wave global theorizing creates the impression of disembedded social relations.

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1008) submit that, '[t]ransnational migration studies, with their concrete tracing of the movement and connection of people, provide a useful corrective...by highlighting the concept of social field,' a concept which will be returned to later in this section. Certainly, transnational studies is another key site in which scholars have rethought the boundaries of social life in light of new social-spatial realities of contemporary processes of globalization. In fact, Collins (2009: 435) notes that, '[i]n many respects, the study of transnationalism emerged from a confluence of academic debates around migration and globalisation.' The transnational shift in migration studies can be traced to the publication of Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton's seminal book *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Post-colonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation States* (1994). Collins (2009: 436) notes that '[w]hile this may not have been the first employment of the term 'transnational' in relation to migration (e.g. Bourne, 1916), Basch et al. are the first to develop transnationalism as an approach to what they viewed as a qualitatively different form of international mobility.'

In the text, Basch *et al.*, (1994: 6) provide the foundational definition of transnationalism: 'the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement'. A key conceptual contribution of this work is the suggestion that the study of migration must be 'unbound' from its focus on the nation-state as the key container of social action, a focus that fails to account for the much wider field of action that contemporary migrants inhabit (Collins, 2009: 436). Indeed, previously migration research tended to subscribe to 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003), with homogeneous and distinct isomorphic cultural and ethnic identities, uncritically accepting

the nation state as a natural and bounded unit of analysis. Methodological nationalism implied that 'the web of social life was spun within the container of national society, and everything extending over its borders was cut off analytically (thus removing trans-border connections and processes from the picture)' (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002: 307). This framework largely presupposed one-way migration transfers by privileging questions of immigrant integration, assimilation, and settlement.

In contrast transnationalism recognizes that some migrants maintain a variety of enduring and often qualitatively new ties to their home countries even as they are incorporated into the countries where they settle (Levitt *et al.*, 2003; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Providing a 'new analytic optic' (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), transnationalism, 'makes visible the increasing intensity and scope of circular flows of persons, goods, information and symbols...allow[ing] analysis of how migrants construct and reconstitute their lives as simultaneously embedded in more than one society' (Caglar, 2001: 607). Early transmigration research detailed how migrants participate in economic, familial, political, religious, social, and cultural connections and exchanges across borders while simultaneously settling in societies of destination (*e.g.* Basch *et al.*, 1994; Faist, 2000 a/b; Glick Schiller, *et al.*, 1992; Guarnizo, 1997; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999; Levitt, 1998; Mahler, 1998; Portes *et al.*, 1999; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998).

Despite the fact that scholars employing the transnational framework broke innovative ground in migration studies, their work also provoked a great deal of critiques and debates (*e.g.* Fitzgerald, 2008; Nagel, 2001, Portes, 2001; Kivisto, 2001; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004; Waldinger, 2006; 2010). In part this is because early adopters of the transnational lens tended to be overzealous—exaggerating the scale of transnational migration and often prematurely celebratory about its transgressive and liberating potential (*i.e.* gender equality and poverty alleviation) (Lazar, 2011; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Critics, consequently charged that the work suffered from conceptual ambiguity, questioning both the theoretical significance and utility of



transnationalism (.e.g. Faist 2000 a/b; Labelle & Franklin, 1999; Portes *et al.* 1999; Rex 1996; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). Alejandro Portes and colleagues (1999), for example, conceded the salience of transnational ties for the first generation, but suspected that these ties would not endure among subsequent generations. Others questioned the scope and impact of transnational processes, arguing that findings from the primarily case-based research are often skewed or exaggerated as a disproportionate number of studies were too narrowly focused on migrants from the Caribbean and Latin America (Levitt *et al.*, 2003; Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007, .e.g. Dahinden, 2005; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004).

The significance of the nation-state has been another key point of contention. Transnationalism does represent a radical rethinking of contemporary understandings and perceptions of migration and settlement; however despite criticism to the contrary, the literature continues to underscore the importance of the nation state. For instance, when questioning the analytical and empirical implications of the nation-state container model of society, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1009) state, 'if we remove the blinders of methodological nationalism, we see that while nation-states *are still extremely important*, social life is not confined by nation-state boundaries' (emphasis added). Likewise, Smith (2001: 3) stresses that the nation-state is not becoming obsolete in terms of framing, restricting and encouraging individuals' actions. Similarly, in a review of transnational migration scholarship, Levitt and Jowarsky (2007: 129-30) observe, '[i]ncreasingly more aspects of social life take place across borders, even as the political and cultural salience of nation-state boundaries remains clear.' In fact, the importance of states and state policies in shaping transnational spaces and engagement is now appreciable (Goldring, 2002; Itzigsohn, 2000; Koopmans & Statham, 2003; Smith 2003; Wayland, 2003).

For example, researchers have documented the ways in which migrants engage in transnational processes of nation building (Gabaccia & Ottanelli, 2001; Laliotou, 2004). More recently, Duany (2011:2) demonstrates how migrants' attachments to their home countries

depend largely on the nature of their states' relationships to the host states. Likewise, Bose (2007) and Cheran (2007) both highlight the importance of differing orientations between states and emigrants. Bose (2007: 173) work 'seeks to explore the increasingly complex transnational relationships between immigrants, expatriates, or diasporic communities and developments in their ancestral 'homelands'', illustrating how the state of India actively courts the Indo-Canadian diaspora for transnational financial investment in national development strategies (i.e. hydroelectric dams, housing developments), which displaces and further marginalizes local populations in India. Cheran (2007: 143) shows that within the context of the Canadian Tamil diaspora, transnational engagement is shaped primarily by the political context in the homeland, where transnational ethnic networks are shown to sustain ethno-political conflicts in Sri Lanka. Taken as a whole this research suggests that 'scholars of transnationalism do not deny the significance or durability of national or state borders; the variation in state economic, military, or political power; and the continuing rhetorics of national loyalty. Instead, they see the links between citizen and state as multiple, rather than disappearing' (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007: 134).

Of course, migrants are not all transnational. It has long been recognized that transnational activities are quite heterogeneous and vary across immigrant communities, both in their popularity and in their character (Portes, 2003). Most scholars recognize that not all migrants develop transnational practices, and many do so only in one sphere of their lives (Faist, 2000a). Nevertheless, Vertovec (2004c: 3-4) contends that the critique, raised most often, is whether transnational activities among migrants are in fact novel. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1004) also note that 'the extent to which transnational migration is a new phenomenon or whether it shares similarities with its earlier incarnations has been the subject of much debate' (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004: 1004). However, because the critiques of transnationalism have been thoroughly addressed in the literature (e.g. Foner, 2000; Glick Schiller, 1999; Harzig &

Hoerder, 2006; Smith, 2002, 2003; Morawska, 1999, 2003; Weber, 1999), Steven Vertovec (2004c: 4) characterizes ongoing criticism of transnationalism as 'tiresome conceptual nit-picking'.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the work of Roger Waldinger and David Fitzgerald, strident detractors of transnational migration studies. In an article entitled *Transnationalism in Question* (2004), they argue that migrants have historically always maintained ties to their countries of origin, and that, therefore, there is essentially nothing new to explore. Waldinger (2006) also believes that some of the transnational literature prematurely dismisses both national borders and the nation-state system. Fitzgerald (2008) is of the same opinion and also sees the lack of historical and comparative work as key methodological shortcomings of transmigration scholarship. For these reasons, Levitt, De Wind and Vertovec (2003) conclude that the significance of transnationalism remains a subject of strong debate.

Moreover, resolving these debates is made even more difficult because what is meant by 'transnationalism' and what should and should not be included under the transnational rubric are not always clear' (Levitt *et al.*, 2003: 565). Goldring and Krishnamurti (2007: 10), concur, reminding us that the literature of migrant transnationalism is 'not monolithic. In addition to disciplinary variation, there are differences in definitions employed, methodological approaches, conceptual and theoretical orientations, and findings.' It is not surprising then, that transnational studies has been characterized as a 'highly fragmented field' (Espiritu, 2003: 3). Scholars have certainly 'wrestled to bring definitional precision to the term [transnational] while, at the same time, attending to the nuances and intricacies of immigrants' cross-border lives' (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006: 336). In fact, debates about the appropriate definition of transnationalism and parameters of analysis have led to the emergence of 'two opposing tendencies' (Lazar, 2011: 70) or 'two distinctive "schools" within the field of transnational studies, [albeit], mainly in North America' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 10).

The first approach advocates for conceptual rigour in the operationalization and/or quantification of migrant transnationalism arguing that ‘too wide a range of phenomena have been included in the study of transnationalism and that there is a need to delimit the field’ (Collins, 2009: 436 e.g. Kivisto, 2001; Portes *et al.*, 1999). This approach is typified in the work of Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt’s (1999) who insist that transnationalism be demarcated by ‘regular and sustained’ contacts and activities. They contend that transnationalism should strictly be defined as practices and activities that ‘require regular and sustained social contacts over time and across national borders for their implementation (Portes *et al.*, 1999: 219). Portes (2001, 2003) maintains that the analysis of transnationalism should be confined to those individuals who are formally and regularly engaged in strict transnational economic, political or sociocultural activities (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007: 132). From these ‘three broad categories...individual-level data grouped by national origin (and other variables) can be analyzed to determine variations in types and levels of transnationalism and to test hypothesis regarding the determinants of particular kinds and levels of transnationalism’ (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 11: e.g. Guarnizo, 1997, 2003; Itzigsohn *et al.*, 1999; Itzigsohn & Saucedo, 2002; Portes, 2001, 2003; Portes *et al.*, 2002; Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). In so doing, this approach focuses attention on the regularity, significance, and durability of transnational activities (Portes *et al.*, 1999: 219).

The second approach advocates a broader method for the study of transnationalism ‘that includes both formal and informal social, economic, cultural and religious practices connecting all levels of social experience (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007: 132, e.g. Faist, 2000a/b; Glick Schiller 1999, 2003; Glick Schiller & Fouron, 1999; Kim, 2006; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Pries, 1998, Smith, 2005b; Vertovec, 2001). Building on Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc’s (1994) original conceptualization of transnationalism as fluid, dynamic and multifaceted this approach emphasizes the importance of ‘shifting the focus of research away from sending and receiving contexts per se and toward an examination of *the processes* and

*networks* used in structuring and maintaining *transnational social spaces*' (my emphasis, Levitt & Nyberg-Sorensen, 2004: 2-3). The concept of transnational social spaces is used to 'encompass relationships, identities, practices, exchanges, and institutions that develop in the process of transnational migration' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 5). In order to delineate 'transnational topographies', (Faist, 2000 a/b) or the types and qualities of transnational social spaces and how they are constituted, this approach places emphasis on the concept of social field. Levitt & Glick Schiller (2004: 1009) define social field 'as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organized and transformed.' A focus on social fields, 'encourages grounded empirical research that attempts to recognize and analyze transnational engagement (rather than either ignoring or assuming them' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 10). Accordingly, 'this approach has tended to be interpretive, qualitative, institutional, and often historical and comparative' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 10).

A key benefit of the concept of social fields is that it is 'a powerful tool for conceptualizing the potential array of social relations linking those who move and those who stay behind' (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004: 1003). Examining the character and constitution of the transnational social fields in which migrants are embedded, reveals their multiple, contingent and fluid nature. That is, transnational social fields are dynamic social spaces, multi-layered and multi-sited arenas that extend beyond the contexts of home and host countries. As such, migration is not an event that comes to a completion, but on-going processes in which migrants constantly negotiate and rework their embeddedness within fluid social spaces in more than one society (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Pries, 2005; Smith, 2005b). Migration, then, is not a prerequisite for transnational engagement. Unquestionably nonmigrants' locality is significantly affected by the activities of others abroad. In fact, scholars have stressed the wide-ranging reconfigurative consequences of transnational social fields in order to identify the ways in which

*nonmigrants* lives are impacted and transformed (e.g. Boyle & Halfacree, 1999; Kyle, 2000; Levitt, 2001, Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Mahler, 1999; Park, 2007; Watkins *et al.*, 1993; Willis & Yeoh, 2000; Yeoh *et al.*, 2005). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) observe 'that people may feel a sense of transnational belonging without engaging in transnational practices and vice versa' (Golding & Krishnamurti, 2007: 5). Likewise, Toyota, Yeoh and Nguyen (2007) emphasize the importance of examining the specificity of life for those left behind and how their lives have been reshaped or are being reshaped or negotiated within complex transnational social fields. A social fields approach is therefore important because it moves analysis beyond those that migrate and those who do not, but who nevertheless are connected to migrants through networks of social relations, which in turn means they too are engaged in the creation of transnational social spaces (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007).

Although epistemological debates around transnationalism remain unresolved, these controversies have served as important foundations for the refinement or sharpening of the transnational approach to migration (Lazar, 2011; Levitt *et al.*, 2003; Vertovec, 2004c). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1004) assert that scholars have 'fine-tuned concepts and analyzed transnational relations in a much more nuanced manner than earlier formations.' Similarly, Yeoh *et al.*, (2003: 208) observe that subsequent work has begun to 'sketch the lineaments of transnationality, clarifying its shape, contours, and structure, and at the same time pointing to the processes and agencies that sustain transnational trajectories and edifices.' Collins (2009: 451) documents how '[t]hese expanded understandings of transnationalism have helped to unbind the study of transnationalism from what was a limited and limiting focus on 'regular and sustained' contacts and activities' (Portes *et al.*, 1999).

In this vein, a great deal of recent work calls attention to centrality of space/place/locality in shaping the migration experience (e.g. Brettell, 2006; Bunnell, 2007;

Collins, 2009; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Crang *et al.*, 2003; Cresswell, 2004; Dahinden, 2009; Dunn, 2005, 2010; Featherstone *et al.*, 2007; Glick Schiller & Caglar, 2008; Jackson *et al.*, 2004; Lees, 2003; Ley, 2004; Ho & Hatfield, 2011; Mitchell, 2004; Pries, 2005; Rankin, 2003; Sheppard, 2002; Smith, 2005a; Yeoh, 2005). These authors point out that the scholarship of transnationalism has paid limited attention to the spatial characteristics of population mobility, an oversight that has allowed scholarship of transnationalism to become disembodied from the spatial arenas in which transnationalism takes place. Consequently, discourses of 'ungrounded' or 'deterritorialized' transmigrants remain (Featherstone *et al.*, 2007; Ley, 2004; Kastoryano, 2000). Geographers in particular have been troubled by the lack of concern for the ways in which transnational social spaces are inhabited materially and symbolically by different individuals, migrant or otherwise (Collins, 2009: 437). In response, scholars have sought to advance studies of transnational processes by theoretically and empirically emphasizing the importance of spatiality and the groundedness of transnational mobilities (Featherstone *et al.*, 2007: 386).

Stressing that 'the local sites of translocal processes matter' (Smith, 2005a: 243), a spatial focus reminds us that 'even when space itself appears to have been transcended the particularities of place are re-established (Jackson *et al.*, 2004: 6). Undoubtedly, '[p]laces matter because it is in places that we find the ongoing creation, institutionalization, and contestation of global networks, connections, and borders' (Gille & Ó Riain, 2002: 278). For Jackson, Crang and Dwyer (2004: 4):

[a] spatial focus is important in making explicit what is central but sometimes under-theorized in transnational studies: namely that transnationality is a geographic term, centrally concerned with *reconfigurations in relation with place, landscape and space*' (original emphasis).

Interventions about the 'spatialities of transnational practices' capture the 'diverse ongoing connections and networks that bind different parts of the world together and that are constituted through (and in fact constitute) particular sites and places' (Featherstone *et al.*, 2007:

383-4). In exploring the spatiality of transnationalism, scholars are charting ‘geographies of transnational spaces’ (Jackson *et al.*, 2004)—explicating ‘the complexities of transnational relations to place’ (Jackson *et al.*, 2004), illustrating the ways in which these spaces are ‘complex, multidimensional and multiply inhabited’ (Crang *et al.*, 2003).

Prompted by an ‘interest to understand the actions and effects of socially and spatially situated subjects’ (Smith, 2005a: 237), Michael Peter Smith’s (2001) conceptualization of *transnational urbanism* has served as a critical point of departure; emphasizing the ways in which this ‘research optic’ assists ‘to focus our sense of transnational interconnectivity because it capture[s] a sense of *distanciated* yet *situated* possibilities for constituting and reconstituting social relations’ (original emphasis, 2005a: 237). Understanding emplacement and mobility as interrelated is an appreciable shift within transnational scholarship, which tends to overemphasize the social institutions of transnationalism and the flow of material goods and services, typically at a macro scale of analysis (Nawyn, 2010; Rankin, 2003; Sheppard, 2002). An emphasis on global interconnectivity can however lend itself to totalizing and linear accounts of globalization—effacing the particularities or ‘located specificity’ (Tsing, 2000) of transnational practices.

Anna Tsing (2000: 350) was among the first to emphasize that research ‘must stress the concreteness of ‘movements’’, arguing that scholars ought to begin their analysis by tracing out place-making projects that seek to define new kinds of place, with new definitions of social relations and their boundaries (Gille & Ó Riain, 2002: 278). Conradson and Latham (2005: 228) therefore endorse Smith’s (2001) work, stating: ‘[w]hilst acknowledging the scope of contemporary global mobility, transnational urbanism is a concept that remains attentive to the continuing significance of place and locality.’ As such Smith’s ‘creative incorporation of both mobility and emplacement’ (Conradson & Latham, 2005: 228), has inspired ‘a wide range of research on the everyday practices that sustain the mobile and located lives and social relations



of transmigrants' (Blunt, 2007: 688) and more broadly, an increasingly important part of everyday life both within and beyond processes of migration (Collins, 2009: 438). By definition then, spatial explorations of transnationalism subscribe to a much broader focus on transnationalism.

Indeed, this literature marks a significant departure from 'efforts to delimit the study of transnationalism to those who would be defined as transnational (involved in sustained cross-border activities)', [instead] propos[ing] a post-structural version of transnationalism as a frame of analysis for interrogating a whole range of networks, actors and spaces within and beyond national boundaries, as a means to focus on processes of (dis)connection in historical and contemporary contexts (Collins, 2009: 437). Proponents point out that, 'approaches that sought to define and delimit the use of the term [transnational] have been less than helpful in developing a range or registers for interrogating how and why transnationalism is dissimilarly engaged, negotiated and enacted' (Collins, 2009: 442). A noteworthy contribution of this literature then, is how it has widened the scope of transnational studies through a more dynamic conceptualization of transnationalism (Collins, 2009; Dunn, 2010; Lazar, 2011).

In this context, human geography has taken the spatial theorizing agenda forward by 'attend[ing] to the emplacement of mobile subjects and the *embodiment* of their everyday practices and mobilities' (my emphasis, Smith, 2005a: 235). This exciting new work calls attention to transnationalism as an inherently *embodied* phenomenon involving the friction and materiality of bodies, places and lived experiences (e.g. Allon & Anderson, 2010; Dunn, 2010). Although the field of migration research is fundamentally about bodies moving across space—the geographical emplacement and embodied nature of the migration experience is often overlooked (Dunn, 2010). As a result the varied nature of the experience of migration and how these experiences may affect migration are often obscured (Dunn, 2010: 1). An embodied approach to the study of migration provides nuanced insights into the desires, needs and experiences of migrants (Dunn, 2010: 1). Because an emphasis on embodiment brings attention to the experiential, the sensory and the

emotive elements of movement—revealing the affective and emotional geographies of transnationalism (Dunn, 2010). I view a focus on everyday materiality and embodiment as a valuable approach for moving beyond transnationalism as a ‘discursive world’ (Thrift, 1999: 300). This is because an embodied approach to migration is centered on the actual localities and places of transnational engagement, such an analysis makes the material or corporeal aspects of transnational engagement accessible (Dunn, 2010). Against a totalizing reading of global economic transformations, embodiment speaks to the ways in which actors embedded in transnational social fields actively negotiate and engage in transnational articulations.

Though most studies continue to overlook the important embodied intimate, affective, and emotional dimensions of migration, there is a growing interest in *subjective transnationalism* (e.g. Aranda, 2007; Boehm & Swank, 2011; Gardner & Grillo, 2002; Napolitano Quayson, 2005; Svašek, 2008; 2010; Svašek & Skrbiš, 2007; Wise & Chapman, 2005). Early notable contributors include: Levitt’s (1998: 927) inclusive definition of social remittances as ‘ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital’, while Wolf (2002: 258) characterizes emotional transnationalism as measurable through the preservation of cross-border connections ‘at the level of emotions, ideologies, and cultural codes’. Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) ambitious and multifaceted study utilizes *the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey* to explore new immigrant second generation’s lives—probing various private or subjective experiences of acculturation, identity, experiences of discrimination and self-esteem. Where *subjective transnationalism* is indexed as the place where respondents feel ‘most like home’ (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Espiritu and Tran (2002: 39) sketch the contours of symbolic transnationalism vis-à-vis ‘imagined returns to the homeland (through selective memory, cultural rediscovery, and sentimental longings).’ Valentina Napolitano Quayson (2005: 335) explores the embodied state of transnational migrancy by looking at the experience of belonging and social suffering among a daily labour Latino migrant population in San Francisco, California. Elizabeth Aranda (2007) examines the settlement

experiences of Puerto Ricans in the United States (settled and returning) through their subjective interpretations and the meanings they attach to their own experiences of mobility and integration. Velayutham and Wise (2005), consider the ways in which a ‘translocal village’ from Tamil Nadu in Singapore is maintained through a moral economy of obligations and responsibility which is regulated by regimes of affect, whereas Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar (2001: 8) describe the importance of attending to what they call a ‘transnational cognitive space’ in making better sense of the role of individual agency, the imaginary and the unarticulated thoughts which shape and underlie the realities of the ‘transnational social field’. In spite of the insights garnered from these studies, *subjective transnationalism* remains relatively unexplored and our knowledge of the emotional lives and subjective experiences of those embedded in transnational social fields remains limited (Aranda, 2007; Gardner & Grillo, 2002; Viruell-Fuentes, 2006). This study is intended to address this void.

## RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

This study is unique in that it foregrounds the emotional and intimate dimensions of migration. In line with emerging developments within the field of transnational studies this dissertation seeks to turn the focus of transnational migration away from dominant economic and political frames to consider ‘*transnational affect*’—the non-material conditions which foster and underpin transnational networks and relationships (Wise & Chapman, 2005: 2). As such, the research corroborates calls for ‘grounding’ the study of transnationalism (Collins, 2009; Walsh, 2006; Crang *et al.*, 2003; Jackson *et al.*, 2004), moving scholarship towards more analytically nuanced ways in which to think about contemporary forms of global mobility (Conradson & Latham, 2005: 227). For example, Ho and Hatfield (2011) contend that understanding the intimate life-worlds of migrants requires scholars to examine the seemingly insignificant norms, routines and everyday experiences. Gathering insights from a range of recent transnational literature on emotion, affect and embodiment, the research adopts the orientation

of *embodied transnationalism* in order to examine the intimate texture of migrants' everyday lives—their emotional lives and subjective experiences as they enact and are embedded in transnational social fields (Aranda, 2007). The research highlights the significance of attending to 'affective transnationalism' (Dunn, 2005) by demonstrating the emotive and subjective geographies of Mexican transnationalism in Canada as well as their importance in shaping transnational practices.

The study specifically aims to examine the dynamics and influence of transnationalism on the everyday lives of Mexican migrants in Canada, *the feel of migration* or what Appadurai (1996: 191) describes as 'the nature of locality as lived experience'. Though there has been an astonishing growth in the transnational approach to migration research over the past twenty-five years, 'questions remain as to the relevance of the symbolic and affective characteristics of transnationalism' (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006: 335). Cultural anthropologist Sarah Lamb (2002: 300) observes that 'transnational[ism] is, crucially, an intimate matter;...intimacy, however, has become elusive in research on transnationalism...largely because transnational studies have concentrated on large-scale forces, to the relative exclusion of attention to the ways in which these forces are produced and played out in the daily lives of actual people.' This omission is highly problematic given that '[t]ransnationalism is about encounters between different bodies which leads to all kinds of intimacies and emotions, some that generate sharing and exchange and others which lead to tension, friction, and even hostility and anger. And importantly, these intimacies are visceral encounters, they trigger embodied and affective responses' (Dunn, 2010: 6).

My research intends to contribute to the promising scholarship of *embodied transnationalism* (Dunn, 2010) by exploring the intimate, symbolic and emotional translocal geographies through which Mexican migrants situate their lives. Focusing on the emotional contours of migration as an entry point to the materiality or corporeality of transnationalism, the

research provides an in-depth account of the everyday social-spatial relations from which embodied practices of transnational engagement are produced. Certainly gaps in our knowledge of the actual *experience* of transnationalism remain. In foregrounding ‘*subjective transnationalism*’ (practices that are private, affective and/or symbolic) (Gardner & Grillo, 2002), the present research broadens conceptualizations of transnationalism in order to access the ordinary, daily ways in which Mexican migrants living within, creating and relating to transnational spaces actually perceive them. The study’s focus on Mexican migrants in Canada is significant given the comparative absence of empirical research on this population. In fact, ‘the literature on Latin American transnationalism [in Canada] is scarce compared with that on immigrants from Asia (and other parts of the world)’ (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 3). I hope that attention to Mexican migration in the Canadian context will provoke reflection, dialogue, and policy initiatives that will lead to improvement of the overall well-being of Mexican migrants in Canada.

#### MIGRATION TO ‘ESTE LADO’ (‘THIS SIDE’—CANADA)

Mexicans have historically engaged in migration *al Norte* (both circular and permanent) to the United States for the better part of the twentieth century (Gonzales, 2000). Poverty has always been a decisive ‘push factor’ inducing the migration of Mexicans to the U.S. or *al otro lado*—the ‘other side’. Certainly, ‘[t]he move to the ‘other side’ is a central theme in music and folklore, and all forms of Mexican popular culture are filled with stories of journeys *al otro lado*—framed as escape strategies to deal with personal or collective problems (Hellman, 2008: 6). This migration was significantly impacted by President Ronald Reagan’s Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in the late 1980s, which granted amnesty to almost 3 million undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the United States and set in motion legal provisions of ‘family

unification' and the subsequent legalization of another million and a half Mexicans residents in the United States (Hellman, 2008: 7-8).

In the 1990s poor economic gains, agricultural decline and internal labour market saturation in post-NAFTA Mexico induced a dramatic acceleration of Mexican migration to the United States (Hellman, 2008; Massey & Brown, 2011). According to the 2010 U.S. Census, of the 40 million total foreign-born population in the United States, 11.7 million or 29 per cent were born in Mexico. Beyond the sheer size of the modern wave of Mexican migration to the United States, The Pew Hispanic Centre (2012) suggests that its 'most distinctive feature [is] the unprecedented share of immigrants who have come to the U.S. illegally [or undocumented]; just over half (fifty-one per cent) of all current Mexican immigrants are unauthorized, and some fifty eight per cent of the estimated 11.2 million unauthorized immigrants in the U.S. are Mexican'. The magnitude of the migratory flow of Mexicans into the United States is extraordinary 'where one in every ten Mexicans now lives in the United States, with possibly as many as half a million Mexicans crossing their northern border each year' (Hellman, 2008: 8). Not surprisingly then, few issues in the United States generate as much academic interest, controversy and polarizing debate as Mexican immigration. Mexican immigration, particularly undocumented immigration, has simultaneously been centre stage of U.S. national and state political campaigns, angry anti-immigration talk radio rhetoric and mass organizing for immigrant rights (i.e. May 1, 2006 'day without immigrants'). In the background of the remarkable flow of Mexicans into the United States, however, is 'the emergence of an entirely new migration stream to a second country of destination—Canada' (Massey & Brown, 2011: 121).

The number of Mexicans migrating to Canada or '*este lado*' (this side), as research participants in my study frequently referred to Canada, has been growing steadily since the mid-1990s. The emergence of Mexican migration routes to Canada stems, in part, from rising economic integration under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (Massey &

Brown, 2011; Mueller, 2005). The provisions of NAFTA not only increased trade between Canada and Mexico, but also facilitated the movement of people from Mexico to Canada by easing the entrance requirements for Mexicans seeking employment and business opportunities in Canada (Mueller, 2005). For example,

between 1994 (the year NAFTA came into effect) and 2001, the number of Mexican workers granted authorization to work in Canada increased by 112 per cent—this growth in Mexican temporary workers has been across all entry types, but the largest numerical increase was in the intermediate and clerical categories, where almost all of the workers are employed in agriculture as a result of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) (Mueller, 2005: 37).

In the context of congruent neoliberal policy shifts, Canada has expanded, modified and intensified its dependency on temporary labour migration programmes (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007; Preibisch, 2010, 2007). Accordingly, the total number of temporary visa workers has grown from 103,239 in 2003 to 195,519 in 2008 (Preibisch, 2010: 410). Mexico is the second largest source of temporary workers for Canada, accounting for 11 per cent of all entries of foreign workers (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2008); with temporary labour migration from Mexico growing by 153 per cent, from an annual flow of around 7,000 workers in 1998 to just under 18,000 in 2007 (Massey & Brown, 2011: 121-22). Recently, the Canada-Mexico Working Group on Labour Mobility, an intergovernmental body established in 2007 as part of the Canada-Mexico Partnership, announced several small-scale pilot projects in 2008 to bring Mexicans to Canada to work in construction and hospitality (Canada-Mexico Partnership, 2008). Likewise, the Canadian federal Pilot Project for Occupations Requiring Lower Levels of Formal Training now permits employers to hire temporary foreign workers on contracts for up to twenty-four months in jobs requiring a high school education or below (Massey & Brown, 2011: 140). These initiatives are indicative of a broadening and diversification of channels for temporary Mexican migration to Canada.

Importantly, during the same period (1998-2007) the overall number of Mexicans becoming permanent residents also dramatically increased, with a growth rate of 132 per cent (Massey & Brown, 2011: 123). In absolute terms, however, Mexican immigration to Canada remains quite small with just over 3,000 Mexicans becoming permanent residents in 2008 (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2008). Moreover, the 2006 Canadian census enumerated a mere 50,000 Mexicans out of a foreign born population of around 6.2 million (Statistics Canada, 2009). Though speculative, Mueller (2005: 33) suggests ‘that flows of Mexican migrants to Canada will continue into the foreseeable future.’ This is perhaps best gauged by the fact that Mexico has earned the contentious distinction as the top source country for refugee claimants in Canada with the number of refugee claimants almost tripling from 3,400 in 2005 to more than 9,400 in 2008—accounting for more than 25 per cent of all refugee claims filed (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2009).

Nevertheless, refugee status for Mexican citizens is relatively unusual with few claimants being approved as permanent residents. In 2008, for example, of the 5,654 Mexican refugee claims, 606 were accepted, for an overall acceptance rate of 11 per cent for Mexican refugees (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2009). In 2009, the number of claims has increased while the acceptance rate has decreased further still (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2009). As of March 31, 2009, 22% of the claims pending before the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada were from Mexican nationals (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2009). In 2011 Mexico was the country with the highest number of refugee claimants to Canada, of the 6,114 refugee claims filed only 1,043 were accepted—for a 82.9 per cent rejection rate overall (Sheppard, 2012a). Media reports suggest that the recent influx of refugee claimants from Mexico is directly related to the increased ‘crack down’ (surveillance and deportation) of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States (Davey & Goodnough, 2007; National Post, 2007), and the escalating violence connected to Mexico’s drug cartels—a growing issue for both the U.S. and Canadian governments. These claimants are being dubbed ‘narco-refugees’



(Sheppard, 2012b). In response, as of July 2009, the Canadian government instituted temporary resident visa requirements for Mexican nationals entering Canada (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2009).

The recent stream of Mexican migration into Canada represents one of the most significant increases in the movement of people from Latin America (Mueller, 2005: 32), yet research on the topic is sparse. Literature on Mexican migration to Canada has largely been confined to Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), in which 94 per cent of the temporary workers coming to Canada from Mexico participate (Citizenship & Immigration Canada, 2006). This literature is now considerable (e.g. Basok, 2002, 2003; Binford, 2002, 2004; Preibisch, 2003, 2004; Preibisch & Binford, 2007; Sharma, 2006, 2001, 2000), yet with a few exceptions (e.g. Basok, 2002; Preibisch, 2007; Becerril, 2007) the analytic of transnationalism is not well utilized. In fact, to my knowledge, there are no empirical studies explicitly exploring transnationalism and the broader context of Mexican im/migration to Canada. This represents a serious gap in Canadian migration research—a limitation my research seeks to address.

## STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

I studied Mexican migrants in Southwestern Ontario interrogating if, how and why transnationalism is 'engaged, negotiated, and enacted' (Collins, 2009: 442). The central aim was to access the *lived experience* of transnationalism by focusing on how transnationalism occurs within, and has impact upon the daily lives of individuals (Voigt-Graf, 2002). Many important questions emerged after I began my study. What types of transnational practices do Mexican migrants undertake? What motivates transnational engagement? What meanings do Mexican migrants attach to their transnational practices and activities? Are transnational social spaces experientially salient in the daily lives of Mexican migrants in Canada? Are notions of 'difference' (i.e. class, race and gender) challenged or reconfigured through transnational engagement?

Delving into these questions a principal theme surfaced: the significance of emotions to migrants' accounts of, engagement with and maintenance of transnational practices and social spaces. Pursuing this theme led me on an interdisciplinary tour from sociology, anthropology, feminist studies, migration studies, to human geography. My analysis of transnationalism among Mexican migrants in Canada evolved at the intersection of these disciplines.

## STRATEGIES OF INQUIRY

In order to investigate '*subjective transnationalism*' (Gardner & Grillo, 2002) or the '*affective registers*' (Collins, 2009) of transnationalism among Mexican migrants in Canada, I undertook a qualitative research study. The study was conducted in Southwestern Ontario and completed over approximately a seven month period between August 2008 and March 2009. I gathered my data by combining two complementary strategies of inquiry: interviewing and ethnographic immersion, with interviews serving as the principal method. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1013) endorse ethnography as 'particularly suited for studying the creation and durability of transnational social fields,' this is because participant observation and ethnographic interviewing allow researchers to document how migrants 'maintain and shed cultural repertoires and identities, [and] interact within a location and across its boundaries.' Tse's (2011) study of the religious dimensions in the everyday lives of Hong Kong-Vancouver migrants successfully combines ethnography with interviews to draw out migrant narratives on otherwise overlooked aspects of migration. Ho & Hatfield (2011: 711) describe Tse's methodological strategy as 'further unpicking the complex nature of everyday life through an analysis attentive to seemingly routine occurrences that shape behaviour.' With Levitt & Glick Schiller (2004) and Tse's (2011) work serving as a critical point of departure, I sought to access the meaning participants gave to their experience of transnationalism (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, Denzin 1997) and document the nature of transnationalism among Mexican migrants through an analysis attentive to the emotional dynamics that shape such engagements.

In order to derive rich or ‘thick descriptive’ (Geertz, 1973) narratives of *the lived experience* of transnationalism, I conducted interviews with thirty Mexican migrants: twenty Mexican ‘newcomers’ who had either permanently settled or were seeking permanent residency in Canada and ten temporary agricultural workers, who migrate to Canada annually for seasonal employment. Workers are granted temporary visas to Canada as single applicants with no provisions for family reunification or eventual permanent residency (Basok, 2007). I limited my sample to thirty participants, a choice that ‘reflects an in-depth qualitative approach, consistent with understanding embodied experiences, and thus drawing on relatively small sample sizes’ (Dunn, 2010: 7). In carrying out this research I employed a three component qualitative approach. First, I conducted in-depth loosely structured/open ended interviews—employing Spradley’s (1979: 3-4) interview-respondent dynamic whereby the aim is ‘the establishment of human-to-human relations with the respondent and the desire to understand rather than to explain’. Certainly, ‘[r]espondents learn who we are in the field as we participate in their lives or as we actively interact with them in shaping their telling of stories about their lives’ (Hertz, 1997: xi). Douglas (1985: 25) refers to this exchange as ‘a creative search for mutual understanding.’ To this end, although I constructed an interview guide, I remained open to conceptualizing interviews as *intersubjective dialogue* (Burawoy, 1998) or conversational journeys—allowing for improvisation as research participants shift the terrain of the interview (Miller & Crabtree, 2004). In so doing, interviews developed depth and became more intimate and personal, a particularly useful strategy when exploring the emotional nuances of migrants’ narratives.

Nonetheless, by and large ‘conventional’ interviewer-respondent dynamics permeated the interview process—as I actively steered conversations, introduced new topics and probed for particular themes and issues. More specifically, I asked research participants questions about themselves, their lives in Canada and their experiences of migration (i.e. Are you married? Do you have children? Has life in Canada been what you expected?). Research participants were all

asked the same basic questions, however, some questions were divergent as interview guides were constructed to reflect research participants' dissimilar migratory status in Canada. For example, immigrants were asked: How long have you lived in Canada? Why did you migrate to Canada? With whom did you migrate? Migrant workers were asked: How many years have you been coming to Canada to work? Why did you decide to migrate to Canada for work? Was it a difficult decision to come to Canada as a migrant worker? (see appendices for complete interview guides). From these initial primer questions I delved into questions that explored transnational engagement and practices (i.e. What type of contact do you have with Mexico? How often do you connect with friends and family in Mexico? How do you connect with them? Mexican immigrants were also asked: Have you returned to Mexico since migrating to Canada? Why and how often do you return? Then, I explored the embodied emotional contours of such engagement (i.e. Do you feel like you belong in Canada? How do you think Canadians view you? How are you treated while shopping? Where is home for you and why? Is there any place in Canada that feels like Mexico? Do you ever feel conflicted about your decision to migrate to Canada? Has your decision to migrate created conflict with your family and friends? How do you negotiate or cope with this conflict?). Once interviews were underway, I was frequently struck by the quality of intimacy and raw emotion—the almost poetic tone—that permeated so many of these exchanges. Unquestionably the considerable emotional toll of migration to Canada was palpable, especially among Mexican migrant workers. This is critical because my research was designed to qualitatively explore research participants' feelings about their everyday experiences—their emotional lives and subjective experiences as they enact and are embedded in transnational social fields (Aranda, 2007).

Interviews varied in length from one to two hours and were conducted in either English or Spanish based on the preference of the interviewees. In cases where research participants preferred Spanish, a translator was used and these interviews were translated to English with the aid of a bilingual research assistant. To secure anonymity pseudonyms were created for all

research participants. The Spanish excerpts included in my analysis chapters appear in translated form and identifying details have been removed. In addition, consent was achieved through research ethics protocol, with full assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Though my initial preference was to conduct formal interviews in public settings (*i.e.* a quiet room in public libraries), the majority of Mexican immigrants and a couple of migrant workers requested that interviews be conducted in their homes or ‘bunk houses’ where migrant workers temporarily reside while working in Canada. This granted me access to the texture of their intimate spaces; further facilitating the intimacy of interviews and enhancing my ethnographic observations. I recorded in my fieldnotes the ways in which Mexico was tangible in the material culture of some of the homes I visited (*i.e.* the pictures and painting displayed, the smells of Mexican cooking, Mexican national and cultural iconography, and religious artifacts). During my visits research participants often referenced the importance of these objects, stating how they helped them feel connected to Mexico and/or how having them around eased their homesickness—themes explored in my discussion of transnational ‘proxy co-presence’ (Chapter 4). The intimate quality of interviews sometimes led to on-going post-interview relations. For migrant workers this involved requests for assistance with translation and/or paper work, accessing medical services or resolving conflicts with telecommunication providers (*i.e.* Bell Canada). For Mexican immigrants, this involved answering questions related to Canada (*i.e.* employment opportunities, accreditation, and post-secondary and graduate studies), providing assistance with immigration papers, and/or requests for translation services. I also subsequently received invitations to birthday parties and barbeques, which provided entrée to additional ethnographic sites and significantly increased the number of Mexican immigrants I met during my fieldwork.

The second component of my study involved ‘ethnographic immersion’. In his pioneering work of ‘global ethnography’, Burawoy (2000: 4) contends that ethnography’s connection to

globalization can be drawn from its goal of studying others in ‘their space and time’, ‘[i]n entering the lives of those they study, ethnographers attune themselves to the horizons and rhythms of their subjects’ existence. The ethnographer has, therefore, a privileged insight into the lived experience of globalization.’ To this end, in addition to visiting research participants’ homes, I also regularly went to locations where Mexican migrants patronize and/or congregate (*i.e.* restaurants and stores servicing the Latin American and/or Mexican ‘community’, attending Spanish Catholic masses, participating in the Catholic ministry for migrant workers and attending Mexican ‘community’ events). While immersed in these various fields I actively approached and engaging with Mexican migrants, exchanging information, and asking questions—in order to ‘*get the feel*’ of their daily lives. In line with my interpretive qualitative approach I constituted informants as active agents in the interactive and intersubjective ethnographic process (Reinharz, 1992). Due to Spanish-English language barriers between myself and the Mexican migrant population, particularly Mexican migrant workers, these endeavours were almost always undertaken with the assistance of a translator.

For the third component of the research I also conducted five open-ended interviews, follow-up visits and informal discussions with representatives of migrant serving organizations (*i.e.* settlement agencies, churches, and migrant worker advocacy groups). The content of exchange for the third component of the research processes was fundamentally shaped by the themes and insights that were generated from both interviews with migrants and my ethnographic efforts. For this piece of the research, in particular, I emphasized an interpretive approach to research so that the ‘choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context’ (Nelson *et al.*, 1992, 2). As a qualitative researcher I approach qualitative inquiry *as process*—flexible, interactive, and continuous (Miller & Crabtree, 2004). Accordingly, analysis evolved as the study proceeded. Interpretation and analysis were ongoing and holistic, occurring during interviews and through ongoing research

observations and insights emerging throughout the research process, including ongoing consideration of pertinent literature. I began transcribing interviews early in my research and transcribing continued as I was conducting interviews—this allowed me to highlight issues and themes I wanted to further examine. In this way coding frames developed as aggregation of patterns and themes arising from the data. All interviews were hand coded using ‘open coding’ (Charmaz, 2002; Emerson *et al.*, 1995).

Research participants for both populations (immigrant and migrant worker) were recruited in similar ways. Migrant workers were recruited through a close personal contact I have with a local migrant workers Catholic ministry, namely my mother, who organizes, cooks and bakes for the weekly sponsored masses. She introduced me to potential research participants before and after masses and at the socials that follow. This provided unique entrée to Mexican migrant workers and invaluable opportunities for ethnographic emersion—attending weekly masses, socials, and annual Father’s Day barbeques I was able to meet and speak with workers in informal and relaxed settings. Half of the migrant worker participants were secured in this manner the other half were recruited through public advertising (*i.e.* flyers and posters on community bulletin boards in grocery stores and churches).

Despite initial concerns that my personal connection to the Catholic migrant ministry may impede the quality of information research participants would be willing to share, the opposite was true. The pre-established trust and rapport greatly facilitated the research process with workers sharing intimate narratives about their lives in Canada. In cases where research participants were secured through public advertising, the initial participant would then introduce me to a friend, usually a coworker and so forth. This snowball sampling strategy worked well and is known to be useful for the recruitment of research participants who are otherwise difficult to locate, such as homeless individuals, undocumented immigrants and migrant workers (Babbie, 2004). Likewise, Mexican immigrant men and women were recruited

through snowball sampling with referrals beginning with personal networks and friends in the area. Initial research participants then introduced me to their family members and Mexican immigrant friends and so on. My personal and professional networks were also utilized to meet with potential research participants. Snowball sampling is useful because it taps into social networks (Gilbert, 1993).

Mexican migrant workers participants were all men, a gender composition that reflects the realities of the SAWP framework in Canada, where in 2005, there were 450 female participants and 19,824 men (Preibisch & Binford, 2007: 10). Temporary migrant workers all held six to eight month contracts for a minimum of two seasons and a maximum of twenty seasons (a median number of seasons being eight) with the exception of one participant who was in the second last week of a four month contract when he was interviewed. The majority of participants then, have spent three quarters of each year in Canada and have done so for at least the last five years. Indeed, because of the high degree of annual circularity among temporary migrant workers participating in Canada's SAWP (Preibisch, 2010; Basok, 2007), their lives represent a unique vantage point from which to consider the experience of transnationalism. Mexican immigrant research participants included ten males and ten females ranging in age from 32 to 55, having lived in Canada from 1.5 years to 20 years and currently living in Southwestern Ontario.

During the research process I came to appreciate that there are very few relations and/or interactions between these two groups. As discussed in Chapter 2—the 'lived experience' of a Mexican 'community' in Canada is powerfully mediated by complex and intersecting geographies of gender and class. Generally there is a tacit understanding that one does not mix too much with Mexicans of lower socio-economic classes. Mexican immigrants who are established or settled in Canada (*i.e.* Canadian citizens or permanent residents) tend to be upper-middle class. In fact, the Mexican immigrants who participated in my study were predominately



highly educated professionals. As such there are pronounced socio-economic differences between Mexican immigrants and temporary migrant workers, differences which are not reconfigured in the Canadian context, but rather maintained. I mention it here, because of the persistent tendency within migration policy to assume or reference the shared experiences of migrants living in particular places (*i.e.* ethnic ‘communities’). Brubaker (2002) describes this tendency as ‘groupist’ thinking. A tendency unresolved in the transnational migration literature, which predominately represents immigrant groups or ‘transnational communities’ as ‘relatively stable, culturally bounded and socially integrated groups’ (Wimmer, 2004: 2).

Though I did not delve into immigration status in great detail, information disclosed during interviews and informal exchanges in the field allowed me to observe socio-economic continuity between the Mexican migrant worker population and those without status and/or actively seeking immigration status in Canada. Refugee claimants and/or undocumented migrants tended to be of lower socio-economic status (*i.e.* working class or poor), have limited education and most reported previous undocumented migration to the United States. This is consistent with the social-economic profile of migrant workers, who widely reported previous undocumented migration to the U.S. (*i.e.* eight of the ten migrant workers interviewed). This profile is also fitting of the Mexican family I met while conducting my research. The family was actively seeking refugee status in Canada—the father reported undocumented migration to the U.S., followed by seven years of participation in Canada’s SAWP and subsequent migration to Canada with his wife and three children in order to flee the escalating drug related violence in Mexico. They lived in Canada for two (+) years before their refugee claim was denied and they were ultimately deported.

Without a doubt, the existence of undocumented Mexican migrants in Canada functioned as a meaningful backdrop of my research. I met undocumented Mexican migrants during my fieldwork, and their existence was referenced in numerous interviews and discussions

not only with temporary migrant workers, but also with Mexican immigrants and a number of key informants and stakeholders in community and settlement agencies. When discussing the potential of a local Mexican community centre one research participant responded in the following way: *“That would not work. It wouldn’t be good because people would be too visible and others would start asking too many questions—You see, many Mexicans here [in Canada] they want to be invisible, they want to go about their lives, doing their work, do their shopping whatever and then, you know disappear, mind their own business and that’s all, nothing more.”* Research participants were usually initially hesitant to discuss the topic. In fact, it was often only after the formal interview was completed that participants would share their knowledge of undocumented Mexican migrants in the area and/or their personal experiences of undocumented migration in the United States. As such, accessing and gaining the trust of potential research participants was sometimes quite challenging. As was securing interviews and building rapport, but what helped was an equally powerful desire among Mexican migrants to share their stories.

Nevertheless, entrée to research participants was not easy. I was often met with suspicion and some Mexican migrants were leery of my intentions. For instance, when research participants were obtained through public advertising on two separate occasions the potential participants opted not to proceed with the interview after filling out the appropriate paper work (*i.e.* consent form). Commencing interviews with the formality of standardized ethical procedures, these individuals seemed to fear that I was a government official, panicked and left. It is worth noting the cultural bias of research ethic board (REB) procedures that presume an autonomous, contract-making individual, conversant with legal structures. These incidents demonstrate the potential that these individuals were undocumented and working in the ‘underground economy’, a growing trend among migrants admitted to Canada with temporary work permits (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2008; Contenta & Monsebraaten, 2009). Reports suggest that ‘at least 200,000 people are believed to be living undocumented in Ontario. In 2008 the

auditor general reported that the Canadian border agency had lost track of 41,000 files for illegal [or undocumented] immigrants (Sheppard, 2012b). In the final analysis, access to undocumented Mexican migrants was difficult and my knowledge of this group remains partial and inadequate.

## REFLECTIONS OF A *BICHO RARO* RESEARCHER

‘[T]he truth about stories is that that’s all we are’ (Thomas King, 2003: 2)

My influence on the research processes is undeniable. I understand my role as researcher as one of a positioned subject—who constructs interpretations of experiences rather than simply reporting on the ‘facts’ discovered during fieldwork (Hertz, 1997; Rainbow, 1986; Van Maanen, 2004). As Bruner (1986: 5) notes every ethnographic tale represents the ‘imposition of meaning on the flow of memory, in that we highlight some causes and discount others, that is, every telling is interpretive.’ I was indeed the sole authority in producing my analysis—i.e. developing coding frames, selecting excerpts from transcripts and interpreting them—what was included or excluded, what I privileged, and what I accorded weight is intrinsically connected to my views, my identity and my research goals. Methodologically my ‘influence’ is not a flaw of the research, but rather a strength of reflexive qualitative research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004), which understands the researcher as a *situated actor*, an active participant in the process of meaning creation (Hertz, 1997: viii). My *positionality* (‘all the ways in which the socially positioned experiences that ethnographers bring to the field shape the ‘knowledge’ and ‘facts’ they derive from it’) (Michalowski, 1997: 48), undoubtedly shaped my inquiry. In line with Rosaldo’s (1989: 19) observation that the ethnographer is a positioned subject who observes with a particular angle of vision, I believe it is essential that I locate myself as researcher in relation to the topic of Mexican migration to Canada.

My transnational biography begins in Mexico, where I was born a child of a ‘mixed marriage’ with an American mother and a Mexican father, who immigrated to Ohio at the age of

five when my parents divorced. We stayed in the U.S. for two years and then moved to Canada, where I have spent the bulk of my life. I was raised in an English speaking household and my connection to both my father and my Mexican cultural heritage were tenuous until my late-twenties. Nevertheless, my Mexican background significantly affected my life. Simply put I have always been a *bicho raro* (a rare bug)—a Mexican expression, meaning someone who is strange, rare or even weird. At a very young age, I came to understand that being Mexican was to be ‘other’—different, less than, inferior. My early memories of school are marked by a pronounced sense of ‘otherness’ and related loneliness—as a dark-skinned Spanish speaking Mexican child I was an anomaly. Out of place among my all-white anglo-Catholic peers at St. Joseph’s elementary school. In on the ‘joke’, I vividly remember doing Speedy Gonzales impressions in attempts to make friends. I was frequently teased and ostracized, so that when my mother spoke Spanish to me, I eventually covered my ears and cried “*No hablo español!*” In order to facilitate my ‘integration’ into American schools, the decision to not speak Spanish was also adamantly encouraged by my teachers and maternal grandmother.

Later, when my family moved to Kitchener-Waterloo Ontario, I found myself in a class with a sizeable group of girls from Latin America (*i.e.* Peru, Colombia and Chile). Having denounced speaking Spanish, I was now—*not Spanish enough*. The girls, evidently offended by my claim of Latin American ‘belonging’, accused me of lying about being Mexican and spent most of grade three making my life miserable by actively excluding me and making fun of me in Spanish. My family eventually settled in Southwestern Ontario, where I frequently encountered discriminating and racialized stereotypes of Mexicans. In fact, because most people assume I am Canadian I have been privy to many, many jokes and remarks about ‘*lazy, stupid, Mexicans, wet backs*’ *etc.* When I revealed my Mexican background in high school—the running joke for a group of guys in my class became ‘*Hey Fran why aren’t you pickin’ tomatoes?*’ or ‘*How many Mexicans does your family fit in a car?*’ When wearing a large pair of silver hoop earrings, given to me by my father

while visiting him in Mexico, two girls I hung out with called me a ‘wigger’ (a pejorative insult, meaning a white person who wishes they were black). In this way I have always occupied a precarious and shifting space of ‘difference’.

As an adult, perhaps as a symbolic attempt to preserve ties to Mexico, I have maintained my Mexican citizenship, despite severe inconveniences at the U.S. border, *i.e.* frequent inquisitions and regular mandatory finger printing and retina scans. When visiting Mexico, my citizenship results in significant confusion because I am not fluent in Spanish. On more than one occasion Mexican immigration officials have thought my passport to be a fake. Plus, while visiting relatives in Mexico, my lack of ‘*Mexicaness*’ is a frequent topic of conversation; memorably after a long absence, my tía, who came to meet me at the airport, repeatedly said, ‘*What a shame!*’ and even began to cry when she realized I had lost most of my Spanish. Once, when renewing my passport at the Mexican consulate in Toronto, the consulate official openly shamed me for my poor Spanish—loudly scolding me in the crowded waiting room, asking ‘*What kind of Mexican are you?*’ Though a sympathetic bilingual Mexican woman took pity on me and assisted me with the necessary paper work, I left the building crying, I think because that question—‘*What kind of Mexican are you?*’ has plagued me my entire life. There has always been a sense of dislocation and loss. Basically, then, I have never really ‘belonged’; I have felt like a *bicho raro* all of my life, an understanding and sensitivity I brought to this study, which enhanced my abilities to appreciate other Mexican migrants’ everyday lives.

At the same time, my status as perpetual outsider did little to assist me in gaining access to Mexican migrants. In this context, my mother’s strong connection to the Mexican-Canadian ‘community’ proved to be invaluable in gaining entrée, establishing rapport, familiarity with Mexican customs and interpretation of the data. Without question, my relationship with my mother facilitated trust building among the Mexican ‘community’. More than the fact that she

speaks Spanish, my mother's location as 'insider' is derived from her ongoing dedication to the Catholic migrant ministry and her social networks among Latin American immigrants (i.e. close friends); connections that enabled me to quickly gain access to Mexican migrant workers, as well as Mexican immigrants. Yet, my personal status as a 'white', privileged upper-middle class, female, graduate student was never completely negated. This is best captured by the following illustration:

*On a beautiful sunny Saturday morning in July, I stopped by my mom's house after attending a friend's baby shower, for which I had dressed up. Playing with my daughter in my mom's front yard I noticed several migrant workers picking peppers in the field across the street. I had already interviewed a couple of the men and knew the others from church. Yet they did not say hello or even wave. Finding this strange I made a point of saying hello. Once I initiated this greeting they reciprocated with a polite nod. This exchange was so uncharacteristic of our previous interactions that it prompted immediate reflection. In that moment I became painfully aware of both my outsider status and our differing socio-economic statuses. Dressed up in my expensive clothes, leisurely enjoying a Saturday afternoon with my daughter in her equally 'fancy' clothes, as Doña Nancy's daughter—the researcher', I occupied a particular status. As such, the men did not think it appropriate to initiate a conversation with me. In my mother's absence I felt self-conscious and insecure, fearing I would be unable to carry a conversation further than the social niceties permitted by my meager Spanish. So I simply waved and did not cross the road—though I wanted to engage with the men, as I had done with my mother's assistance on previous occasions. I could not. In that moment, the road that divided the physical spaces we occupied became symbolic of our differing worlds—spaces which remained separate and difficult to cross, even impermeable at times.*

In this context, Nancy Naples (1997) reconceptualization of the 'insider/outsider' debate is instructive. She argues that the insider/outsider distinction masks the power differentials and experiential differences between the research and research participants, setting up a false separation that neglects the interactive processes through which 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' are constructed (Naples, 1997: 71). Highlighting the fluidity of 'outsiderness'/'insiderness', Naples (1997) demonstrates the ever shifting and permeable social locations of this dichotomy as differently experienced and expressed. Indeed, my status as a female researcher was at times an asset (i.e. serving as a common ground when building rapport with female immigrants), and other times an impediment (i.e. when discussing sensitive topics like sexuality and infidelity with temporary migrant men). Thus, different demographic characteristics and aspects of my

biography became salient at different points in the research process—affecting my ability to gain access, build rapport and the quality or type of information shared.

## STUDY SUMMARY

Chapter Two of this dissertation, *Ambient Intimacy? Exploring the Embodied Experience of Subjective Transnationalism among Mexican Migrants*, explores the under-researched transnational lives of Mexican migrants in Canada. The transnational context, as I explore it here, ‘involves living intimately in two or more disparate places at once’ (Cravey, 2005: 358). Drawing from migrants’ narratives of the intimate and affective contours of their transnational engagement, my analysis reveals the ways in which transnationalism among Mexican migrants is motivated by the loneliness, isolation and disconnection they experience in Canada. Findings reveal an acute sense of loss, estrangement, and disorientation among research participants, for many a feeling of being walled in or locked up (*encerrados*) and for migrant workers a sense of *being ghosts* in Canada. These feelings precipitate regular transnational practices that result in the creation of transnational social spaces, both of which are integral to Mexican migrants’ emotional wellbeing in Canada. The research offers insights into the everyday intimate and social relations constituting experiences of migration for Mexican migrants in Canada. This is a valuable contribution to the Canadian migration literature, given the absence of research on Mexican migrants in Canada. Moreover because ‘there are virtually no case studies of Latin Americans in Canada conducted using a transnational framework’ (Goldring, 2006: 184) this research makes a distinct contribution to the emerging scholarship of transnationalism in Canada.

Levitt and Jaworsky (2007: 144) have identified ‘increased specificity in the types and dimensions of [transnational] social fields’, as ‘a major research task’ for future scholarship on transnationalism. Chapter Two takes up this challenge by surveying the existence, quality and basis of transnationalism among Mexican migrants in Canada, an important research

contribution given both the growing importance of Mexico as a source country of migration and the dearth of research on Latin American transnationalism in Canada (Goldring, 2006). Furthermore, in exploring the emotional and intimate experience of transnational engagement for Mexican migrants, the research implicates the importance *embodiment* for the conceptual advancement of the transnational framework.

Levitt and Jaworsky (2007: 144) also identify the delineation of the ways that various kinds of social fields intersect with class, race, nationality and gender as a second and related [research] task. This echoes Pessar and Mahler's (2003) challenge for scholars to do research that provides a gendered analysis of transnational migration. With these objectives in mind, Chapter Three, *Shifting Gendered Geographies of Difference among Mexican Immigrants in Canada*, explores the gendered migration experiences of Mexican immigrant men and women in Canada. Utilizing Mahler and Pessar's (2001) 'gendered geographies of power' (GGP) model, this chapter offers a gendered analysis of how intersecting 'axes of difference' (Mahler & Pessar, 2006) are negotiated by Mexican immigrants in the transnational context. In so doing, the chapter provides part of the answer to Wong and Satzewich's (2006: 11) question 'of whether transnational activities and transnational social spaces reproduce or transform established relationships of power and privilege.' Focusing on gender and not women, the chapter underscores the importance of a relational, spatially and temporally contextualized gender analysis. Moreover, in attending to transnational embodiment the chapter offsets overly structuralist readings of transnational migration. Problematizing scholarship suggestive of the liberating and destabilizing effects of transnational migration, my findings document the complex, contingent and even contradictory articulations and negotiations of difference within the transnational milieu. Examining the dynamic ways in which gender is simultaneously stable and reconfigured through transnational migration, the research begins to map 'the gendered geographies of power' or the shifting transnational social location of gender for Mexican migrants in Canada. These 'gendered



geographies of power' problematize the reconfigurative potential of transnationalism and speak to the solid 'old hegemonic strategies' that underpin Mexican immigrants lives both in Canada and transnationally. As such, the research makes important contributions to Canadian migration studies and feminist migration scholarship

Chapter Four, *Emotionally Engaged Transnational Fatherhood Among Male Mexican Migrant Workers* investigates the neglected topic of men's experiences within transnational families. Specifically, the chapter explores the emotional and affective geographies of migration among Mexican migrant workers in order to explicate their experiences within transnational families. This is done by advancing 'embodied transnationalism' (Dunn, 2010)—the materiality and socio-spatial emplacement through which transnational practices, processes and networks are produced. Drawing from Baldassar's (2008) study of emotions and the construction of co-presence, the chapter traces migrant workers creation and maintenance of transnational social space. Findings detail regular and frequent information and communication technology (ICTs) use among migrant workers, providing empirical detail of Canadian-based Mexican transnationalism, a significant finding because: 1) research has only recently begun to explore the significance of ICT usage among migrant workers (Horst, 2006) and 2) Latin American transnationalism in Canada is not well understood (Goldring, 2006). Findings reveal that migrants' transnational engagement functions as a critical lifeline to their families in Mexico—enabling transnational intimacy, facilitating transnational caring and emotionally anchoring migrant workers lives in Canada. In contrast to the literature's predominate focus on male migrants' instrumental contributions to transnational families, my findings document *paternidad afectiva transnacional*—emotionally engaged transnational fatherhood, in which 'emotional labour' and emotional intimacy are critical to Mexican migrant workers' 'fathering from a distance'. Findings also reveal the complex and paradoxical reconfiguration of gender transnationally, as masculinity is simultaneously contested, reinscribed and reconstituted by and through

migration. As such, the research makes unique contributions to scholarship of transnational families as well as feminist migration scholarship.

Chapter Five, I conclude my study by considering Canada as ‘the quintessential transnational country’, citing Canada’s significant levels of immigration, the expansion and intensification of its temporary labour migration programs and the remarkable diversity of the immigrant population as evidence that transnationalism warrants special consideration in Canada (Goldring *et al.*, 2003). I discuss the ways in which my research illuminates the existence of transnational engagement among Mexican migrants in Southwestern Ontario, revealing both the salience of subjective transnationalism and how transnational social spaces have a profound influence on daily lives of Mexican migrants in Canada. I address the import of a ‘grounded’ approach to transnationalism in my study and the associated benefits. This chapter also underscores the key findings, contributions and significant questions that arise from my study. Namely the fact that my research addresses the scarcity of research on Mexican migrants in Canada as well as Canadian-based Latin American transnationalism and also begins to empirically document the particularities and nuances of Canadian-based Mexican transnationalism. I also consider directions for future research, underscoring the necessity for more comprehensive scholarship of transnationalism in Canada in order to enhance our understanding of the factors that motivate and shape migrants’ transnational practices and engagements (Goldring *et al.*, 2003; Goldring, 2006). Finally, I consider potential policy implications, drawing attention to the ways in which transnational practices can have a constructive role in enhancing the emotional wellbeing of migrants I suggest that although it may seem counterintuitive the acceptance and promotion of transnationalism can assist in fostering greater social cohesion and by extension assist in building a stronger Canada.

## CHAPTER 2

### ‘AMBIENT INTIMACY’? EXPLORING THE EMBODIED EXPERIENCE OF AFFECTIVE TRANSNATIONALISM AMONG MEXICAN MIGRANTS

Transnationalism has become a ubiquitous term of reference for the multiple ties and interactions linking people or institution across the borders of nation states (Crang *et al.*, 2003; Vertovec, 1999). In spite of the extraordinary expansion of literature on transnationalism and transnational migration, ‘[r]esearch on migration rarely captures the affective and emotional dimensions of global processes’ (Boehm & Swank, 2011: 1). Certainly our knowledge of the emotional lives and subjective experiences of those embedded in transnational social fields remains limited (Aranda, 2007; Dunn, 2005; Levitt *et al.*, 2003; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). There is now a widely perceived need to ‘ground’ the study of transnationalism with greater empirical detail and an emphasis on the socio-spatial characteristics and the materiality of everyday life (Carling, 2003; Collins, 2010, 2009; Ho & Hatfield, 2011; Smith & Bailey, 2004; Vásquez & Marquardt, 2003). Failure to do so has resulted in significant neglect of the affective, everyday, and banal aspects of transnational communities (Allon & Anderson, 2010: 12; *e.g.* Gardner & Grillo, 2002; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Smith, 2005a)—*the feel of life* as migrants negotiate, create and are affected by transnational spaces and trans-local environments, triggering calls for located rather than frictionless notions of transnationalism (Collins, 2009) in order to understand how transnationalism is manifested and given meaning in local places (Alinejad, 2011).

Current research seeking to refine and advance the transnational paradigm, is stressing the importance of adopting an embodied approach to the study of transnational migration, or ‘embodied transnationalism’ (Dunn, 2010), in order to consider how transnationalism is lived and spatialized through emplaced corporeality. Interrogating the multidimensional and complex articulations and implications of transnationalism within localized contexts, an embodied

analysis of transnational migration ‘attend[s] to the emplacement of mobile subjects and the embodiment [and materiality] of their everyday practice and mobilities’ (Smith, 2005a: 235), exposing the ways in which migrants are simultaneously mobile and emplaced. While there is growing interest in what might broadly be referred to as *embodied transnationalism* (Dunn, 2010), especially among human geographers, the approach is still quite novel.

Accordingly, this article aims to contribute to scholarship of *embodied transnationalism*, specifically by using this approach to explore the under-researched transnational lives of Mexican migrants in Canada. In fact, despite the richness of Canadian migration scholarship, ‘little attention has been paid to Mexican migration’ (Mueller, 2005: 33). As a result Mexican migration to Canada is not well understood. My research targets this deficit in the literature. In emphasizing *the affective* (subjective, sensory, and emotive) the research locates the actual bodies and actors embedded in emerging transnational spaces—the embodied ‘lived experience’ of migration—demonstrating the importance of *the affective* in the creation and maintenance of ‘transnational social space’ (Pries, 2001). Moreover, in emphasizing Mexican migrants embodied emotional and intimate experiences of transnational migration, the research underscores the importance of situating the study of emotions within a transnational frame and by extension contributes to the emergent literature of the emotional terrain of transnationality (Boehm & Swank, 2011; Svašek, 2010; Svašek & Skrbis, 2007; Wise & Chapman, 2005).

This article explores ‘the embodied state of transnational migrancy’ (Napolitano Quayson, 2005) by examining the affective dimensions of transnational engagement among Mexican migrants in Southwestern Ontario. Significantly, the number of Mexicans in Canada has increased dramatically in the last decade (Massey & Brown, 2011; Mueller, 2005). In fact Mexicans are the largest group of immigrants from Spanish-speaking Latin-America, and among the fastest growing group of immigrants from any country (Mueller, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2003). Mexicans also represent the majority of Ontario’s temporary migrant worker population

under Canada's long-standing temporary migrant workers program (TMWP), the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) (Basok, 2002; Gogia, 2006). In 2002, for example, of the 18,353 migrant workers employed in the fruit and vegetable sector in Ontario, fifty-eight per cent were Mexican (Verma, 2003: 26). The Mexican migrant population I considered for this research is composed of a sample of twenty Mexican immigrants (ten males and ten females) who have either permanently settled or are seeking permanent resident status in Canada and ten male migrant workers who migrate to Canada annually for seasonal employment. Through analysis of in-depth interviews the research reveals an acute sense of loss, estrangement, and disorientation among research participants, for many a feeling of being walled in or locked up (*encerrados*) and for migrant workers a sense of *being ghosts* in Canada (*este lado*—'this side') reflecting a particular 'space of non-existence' (Bibler Coutin, 2003: 172) at the margins of Canadian society.

Almost without exception participants spoke of a deep sense of dislocation and longing for Mexico, which in turn served as a powerful incentive for transnational practices. The importance of these exchanges is two-fold—first the lack of physical proximity between migrants and their families in Mexico serves as a vital impetus for transnational practices, and second, this results in the creation of transnational social space that simultaneously mediate trans-local relationships, while critically informing migrants' embeddedness in Canada. Migrants engage in transnational practices not only to bridge the geographic distance between Canada and Mexico, but also in order to create bearable and emotionally meaningful lives in Canada. In other words, 'the transnational activities that create mobility also foster a sense of place' (Preston *et al.*, 2006: 1648). Hence transnational practices, particularly the experience of information and communication technologies (ICTs) use is transforming the experience of migration.

## EMBODIMENT AND AFFECT

'[C]oncern[ed] about both the overly literal accounts of migrant practices and readings that describe transnationalism through abstract spaces of cultural flow' (Collins, 2009: 437),

geographers have been at the forefront of calls to address the embodied dimensions of transnationalism. Specifically troubled by the lack of theorization and investigation of space in the study of transnationalism, there is too little concern for the ways in which transnational spaces are inhabited materially and symbolically by different individuals, migrant or otherwise' (Collins, 2009: 437 *e.g.* Bailey, 2001; Crang *et al.*, 2003; Mitchell, 1997, 2002). Much of the transnational literature 'has an overwhelming feel of being 'disembodied'—as quite literally having an absence of physical bodies and tangible places' (Allon & Anderson, 2010: 12).

As a corrective geographers are advancing what might broadly be referred to as *embodied transnationalism* (Dunn, 2010), refocusing attention on the continued significance of place and locality, embodied transnationalism encourages attention to the complex interweaving of individual networks within and through places, emphasizing both *mobility* and *emplacement* (Conradson & Latham, 2005: 228). This promising orientation stresses the everyday life enactment of transnationalism (Bailey, 2001; Bailey *et al.*, 2002; Collins, 2009; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Dunn, 2010; Friesen *et al.*, 2005). Political scientist Michael Peter Smith has been an influential contributor to the literature on embodied transnationalism through the research optic of *transnational urbanism*, which he developed in order to:

focus our sense of transnational interconnectivity because it captures a sense of distanced yet situated possibilities for constituting and reconstituting social relations. The study of transnational urbanism thus underlines the socio-spatial processes by which social actors and their networks forge the translocal connections and create the translocalities that increasingly sustain new modes of being-in-the world (Smith, 2005a: 237).

While 'acknowledging the scope of contemporary global mobility, transnational urbanism is a concept that remains attentive to the continuing significance of place and locality' (Conradson & Latham, 2005: 228).

A central 'starting point is the now relatively widespread understanding of the self as a relational achievement' (Conradson & McKay, 2007: 167). Embodiment references 'the links between conceptualizations of the body...and states of bodily being, bodily experiences and bodily activities' (Moss & Dyck, 2003: 58)—as bodies are fundamental to the constitution of space and the reproduction of social relations in a whole multitude of ways (Nast & Pile, 1998; Pile, 1996; Pile & Thrift, 1995; Massey, 1999). Accordingly, ordinary people are treated as socially and spatially *situated* subjects—i.e. as members of families; participants in religious or locality-based networks, occupants of classed, gendered and racialised bodies, located in particular nationalist projects, state formations and border crossings (Smith, 2005a: 236). Unquestionably there is a 'mutually constitutive relationships that exist between bodies and places' (Longhurst, 1997: 496). As asserted by Nast and Pile (1998: 3), '[b]odies and places are woven together through intricate webs of social and spatial relations that are made by, and make, embodied subjects.' In other words, '[w]here bodies are located in space, therefore, has significant ramifications for how social and spatial relations operate' (O'Connor, 2010: 76).

International migration is an inherently embodied process (O'Connor, 2010: 75). As Nupur Gogia (2006: 373) reminds us 'corporeality plays a major role in the ways in which people make journeys and the roles they are inscribed within these travels.' By explicitly referencing transnationalism as 'an inherently embodied phenomenon involving the friction and materiality of bodies, places and lived experiences' (Allon & Anderson, 2010: 12); embodied transnationalism 'provides nuanced insights into the desires, needs and experiences of migrants. This brings attention to the sensory and emotive element of movement' (Dunn, 2010: 1), which are essential facets of engagement in transnationalism. Scholars have sought to explicate the complex emotional geographies of transnationalism or the 'range of feelings that emerge as a consequence of dwelling within and movement through places' (Conradson & McKay, 2007: 169; e.g. Anderson

& Smith, 2001; Boehm, 2011; Brennan, 2004; Coe, 2011; Davidson & Milligan, 2004; Ryan, 2008; Sutton, 2004).

For Conradson and McKay (2007), the emotional dimensions of transnational mobility are particularly important as a register of analysis because of both the role that feelings play in the forms of migration people undertake (desire, hope, fear) and because feelings will have an influence on the kinds of transnationality that is enacted (freedom, connection/disconnection, loneliness, family stress) (Collins, 2009: 244-5). 'Home' for example, can function in a mythic or imagined way, as both material and immaterial site for the expression of considerable emotion in migration: loss, distance, love, fear, (lack of) intimacy, joy, [excitement] *etc* (Collins, 2009: 444), which in turn compel migrants to participate in transnational practices (Collins, 2009, 2010; O'Connor, 2010; Velayutham & Wise, 2005). Nevertheless, much of the transnational literature significantly neglects the affective and emotional dimensions of transnational migration (Allon & Anderson, 2010; Aranda, 2007; Conradson & Latham, 2005; Dunn, 2005, 2010; Gardner & Grillo, 2002; Wise & Chapman, 2005; Wise & Velayutham, 2006; Viruell-Fuentes, 2006). An understanding of the affective embodiment of the migration process is therefore critical. This article demonstrates the affective drive of Mexican migrants' transnational practices and outlines the ways in which these practices provide Mexican migrants with a sense of emotional well-being. Findings reveal the ways in which Mexican migrants in Canada negotiate feelings of loneliness, isolation and dislocation through ICT practices, which reconstitute their spatial estrangement from Mexico. My examination of the affective dimensions of Mexican migrants' transnational practices offers a rich insider's perspective of their 'transnational cognitive space' an especially relevant contribution given the dearth of knowledge in this area (Aranda, 2003, 2007; Baldassar, 2007).



## METHODOLOGY

In order to explore Mexican migrants' migration experiences and their engagement in transnational practices, and the meanings they attach to both, I employed a qualitative research design, conducting face-to-face in-depth loosely structured interviews (the primary mode of data collection) and also participating in 'ethnographic emersion'—partaking in social activities in Mexican households and communities (i.e. attending Spanish Catholic masses for migrant workers, shopping, visiting and eating at locations where Mexican migrants frequent), attending Mexican socials (birthday parties, backyard barbecues) and community celebrations. This research was undertaken between August 2008 and March 2009, during which time interviews were conducted with thirty individuals who were born and raised in Mexico and who have migrated to Canada as adults for various reasons.

Immigrant research participants ranged in age from 32 to 55, having lived in Canada from 1.5yrs to 20yrs and currently living in the vicinity of Southwestern Ontario. Migrant workers participants also lived in Southwestern Ontario, all of the men held six to eight month contracts for a minimum of two seasons and a maximum of twenty seasons (a median number of seasons being eight); with the exception of one participant who was in the second last week of a four month contract when he was interviewed. The majority of migrant workers, then, have spent three quarters of each year in Canada and have done so for at least the last five years. Recruitment was achieved through snowball sampling, public advertising and pre-existing connections with a Catholic migrant workers ministry, whereby a personal contact introduced me to initial research participant who in turn introduced me to another and so forth. In a related manner, students, friends and colleagues who were aware of my research also introduced me to potential research participants. Interviews varied in length from one and one-and-a-half hours and were conducted in either English or Spanish based on the preference of the interviewees and then translated and transcribed verbatim in English. In cases where research participants

preferred Spanish, a translator was used and these interviews were translated to English with the aid of a bilingual research assistant. Analysis was an ongoing and holistic exercise as I actively journaled research observations and insights emerging throughout the research process. In this way coding frames developed as aggregation of patterns and themes arising from the data. All excerpts taken from Spanish interviews appear in translated form and aliases have been created in order to secure anonymity.

Notably, the Mexican immigrants in my sample occupy 'middle-income positions', with some participants predictably falling towards the lower or upper limits of this category. This is significant because there is a persistent tendency in the transnational literature to focus on polar ends of the migration spectrum, that being transnational highly-skilled economic elites or low-skilled developing-world migrants (Conradson & Latham, 2005; Mahler & Hansing, 2005; Smith, 2005a). Conradson and Latham (2005: 229) argue that if we want to understand the full importance of transnational mobility, we need to understand the patterns and dynamics of little examined 'middling' forms of movement. A focus on 'middle transnationalism' (Clarke, 2005), usefully 'draws attention to the more 'ordinary' aspects of migration and transnational life, including issues of housing, education and relations with family and friends' (Collins, 2009: 439). Further, 'the focus on migrants who occupy middle-class social positions is also of particular import in the increasingly skill-based migration regimes of countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, UK and elsewhere (Collins, 2009: 439). For these reasons documenting the transnational engagement of middle-class male and female Mexican immigrants represent an important contribution to the transnational migration literature.

At the same time, the study's inclusion of Mexican migrant workers is also significant because scholars have only recently begun to explore the frequency and significance of migrant workers' information and communication technologies (ICT) usage (Horst, 2006). The existing literature suggests that ICTs use such as mobile phones, prepaid calling cards, videoconferencing

and texting among migrant workers has become integral and indispensable to the everyday lives of transnational migrants, not only for instrumental purposes (*i.e.* employment networking, arranging remittances and meeting arising financial needs), but in particular for providing social and emotional support and facilitating familial relationships (Benítez, 2006; 38; *i.e.* Horst, 2006; Horst & Miller, 2006; Lam & Peng, 2006; Chu & Yang, 2006; Strom, 2002). Steven Vertovec (2004a) contends that in spite of the prosaic nature of cheap international phone calls, they serve as ‘the social glue’ that binds migrant transnationalism. This article explores the validity of this claim for Mexican migrant workers in the context of Canada’s Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP).

## ORIENTING AFFECT AND MAPPING TRANSNATIONALISM

*"Navigating the cracks between the worlds is difficult and painful, like going through the process of reconstructing a new life, a new identity,"*  
Gloria Anzaldúa (Keating, 2000: 255)

The above quote from Gloria Anzaldúa describes one of the most pronounced themes in my research—the difficulty, pain and loss experienced by Mexicans migrating to Canada. These *affective dimensions* of migration are central to the exploration of the *experience* of transnational localism, the production or creation of transnational social spaces or ‘place-making projects’ that seek to redefine the connections, scales, borders, and character of particular places and particular social actors (Gille & Ó Riain, 2002: 276, *e.g.* Appadurai 1995; Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, Tsing 2000). Namely, ‘the nature of locality as lived experience,’ in Appadurai’s (1996) terms, how migrants negotiate and are affected by the ‘time-space compression’ (Harvey, 1990) of transnational spaces and trans-local environments; in short, *the feel of life* in Canada for Mexican migrants.

My interest in these dynamics is deeply informed both by my own childhood experience of migration from Mexico to the United States and then to Canada, and my intellectual interest

in contemporary theorizing of transnationalism. I wondered if and how contemporary Mexican migrants experience a sense of trans-locality, of being and belonging to multiple places? Is transnationalism experientially salient for Mexican migrants? And if so, in what ways does this manifest and play out in their everyday lives? What are the affective contours of migration to and inhabitancy in Canada? I had read enough to suggest that I would find evidence of innovative transnational connections and exchanges with Mexico, my familiarity with the extent literature of Canada's SAWP led me to anticipate migrant workers' isolation and vulnerability; and I knew enough from my own biography to suspect that the experience of migration may be informed by a sense of loss and dislocation. I was not however prepared for the profound stories of sadness and isolation research participants would share, nor had I anticipated the striking and dynamic transnational practices I would find.

To emphasize the significance of affect and emotion in the (re)production of transnational social fields, Wise and Chapman (2005: 2) have coined the term 'transnational affect.' Their work speaks to the non-material conditions which foster and underpin transnational networks and relationships (Wise & Chapman, 2005: 2). The concept is extremely relevant, as emotion and affect markedly punctuate the narratives research participants shared. Certainly, '[t]he happiness, sadness, frustration, excitement and ambivalence that accompany emplacement and mobility are central to social life, shaping our experiences of the world and relations with others' (Conradson & McKay, 2007: 169). In order to highlight the significance of emotion to research participants' transnational practices, I will first briefly outline the emotional contexts which motivate their transnational practices.

### 'WHERE IS HOME?'

Given the transnational orientation of my research, a focal concern is the exploration of migrants' meaning of 'belonging' or 'feeling of being home'. Initially it is important to emphasize that for the vast majority of research participants the 'feeling of being home' in Canada was

problematical and not clear cut. For example, among immigrant research participants five see both Canada and Mexico as home, nine continue to see Mexico as home and the remaining six now see Canada as home. Yet, even when Canada *'feels like home'* participants repeatedly emphasized how long it took to *'make the switch'* as described by one research participant. For Mayra who has lived in Canada for fifteen years: *'only in the last two years has Canada become home'* Likewise, when asked 'Where is home for you?' Amelia, who has lived in Canada for twenty years, answered: *'Well, [pause] now in Canada. But it took a long time, yep, absolutely! In some ways, even today, it is something I am still getting use to.'* For Irma, who has been in Canada for eleven and a half years: *'Home is Canada. It was hard to accept that in the beginning, but it is so. Mexico stopped being home for us a few years ago.'*

When asked 'Where is your home?' migrant workers poignantly answered in the following ways:

*My home, oh well that is with my family in Mexico. Because I live there, here [Canada] I never thought about it really. I just come here to work, it is not my place. ....I see it only as a place that is helping me to get ahead. Canada is like a cow that needs to be milked. Here is where the money is, the work, the milk (leche)...here is just work, work totally work, that is all there is here for us.  
(Pablo, two seasons as a temporary migrant worker)*

Roberto similarly replied:

*My home is in Mexico of course. Here, the life in Canada, it is just a daily routine. I come here only because of financial need and the opportunity to work. Many who come for the first time they will make comments like "Oh look! Everything is so nice, so clean, and so calm." But, what they don't know. What they don't realize, is that all they will be doing is just working. That is all that is here for us, to work. I have no illusions about this. I know there is no place for me in Canada.  
(Roberto, five seasons)*

Lupe, who has participated in Canada's SAWP for six seasons, offered the following:

*My home in Canada is in a trailer. But, it is not truly a home. I never say my home is Canada, because no, in reality there is really no place for me here.*

In contrast others referenced a multi-local sense of home:

*My home is in Mexico because my family is there and I come here just to work for a limited time. My home is over there. [pause] But, because I work here, well...in some way it is sort of like my second*

*home. If I could I would like to stay, to live here, if I could be with my family. There are so many Mexicans here [in Canada]. Many, many Mexicans you see walking down the street, so I feel Mexico here. In this way the town looks happier, more people, people walking and on their bikes. When they leave the streets seem to be lonely, but when they are here they look happier.*  
(Jesus, three seasons)

*Home for me it is Mexico. But of course I have a sense of home in Canada too. It is because when it is cold I have a warm place and in this way it is my home. We are here for many months and we are still living. We don't stop living. We live in Mexico, but I think we live here too. In the time when we are living here it is our home.*  
(Francisco, six seasons)

Although consideration of the literature on the meaning of home is well beyond the scope of the present paper, for our purposes it is suffice to say that the meaning of home for Mexican migrants is complex, with their interviews suggesting a type of space/place ambivalence or 'the in between places of migration' (Faist, 2008: 36-7). Indeed, it is suggested that as migrants construct and reconstruct their lives as 'simultaneously embedded' (Basch *et al.*, 1994) in more than one society, they are often at the centre of identity paradoxes caught between countervailing pressures (Glick Schiller, 1999: 94), their transitory tie to a place often situates them in relations of social exclusion that produce longing in belonging (Ilcan, 2002: 3). The constant and simultaneous state of being 'here and there' (Smith, 2001) may translate into a situation of never being defined as 'us' or 'them' (Keith & Pile, 1993: 222) and in the face of this, the discrepancies between citizenship and locality may lead to a sense of 'placelessness' or 'homelessness' (Friedman, 1998). At the same time, others may struggle with hybrid notions of national identity 'in-between' nations (Brazier & Mannur, 2003: 5; Ilcan 2002; Magat 1999).

Participants in my study consistently expressed multiple attachments and feelings of home—with some clearly coming to feel settled and 'at home' in Canada, while others spoke of '*belonging to both places*' (Canada and Mexico). Still other's struggled with outsider status; that there is no place for them in Canada, for migrant workers this feeling is even more pronounced because despite the fact that they are in Canada legally owing to their participation in the SAWP; because they are denied permanent resident status or legal citizenship in Canada, their

experience of migration is inherently one of non-belonging. Migrant workers are *always* ‘temporary’, ‘seasonal’ and/or ‘foreign’, in spite of the fact that many work and live in Canada for much of their lives. Importantly, research participants’ reports of missing ‘home’, ‘*missing the feeling of home*’ in Mexico—speaks to their continued emotional embeddedness in Mexico, where ‘home’ embodies feelings of familiarity, comfort, support and belonging.

## ESTRANGEMENT, *ENCERRAMIENTO* AND INVISIBILITY

A strikingly consistent theme among research participants was the shared acknowledgement of feelings of ‘estrangement’—that feeling of being disconnected from the spaces individuals inhabit, of being out of place (Ahmed, 1999). For most, the experience of migration has been very difficult and sometimes painful, particularly in the beginning, with some participants equating migration with a loss of identity as in the case of Elsa, who has been living in Canada for two and a half years:

*[w]hen I came to Canada the first three, the first six months were terrible! Depressed, I was so depressed! I didn't want to go out. I didn't want to do anything! I didn't know how to speak English. I didn't know, absolutely nothing. I felt so trapped, caged in my house. It was very difficult! It was a huge depression! I asked God so many times "What should I do? What should I do?" Because I didn't know what to do, I just can't explain it, I just didn't feel the same.*

Angelica, who has lived in Canada for ten years, describes her early settlement experiences in a similar way:

*Well a part of me died I think. That is how it felt! Like I was losing pieces of myself—it is difficult to describe, but I was just not the same! I felt trapped in my house, alone and afraid. And, that is not me! But, I was afraid of everything! Overwhelmed by everything! It was such a sad and terrible time.*

For Amelia, the sense of sadness upon arrival to Canada was sudden and intense:

*I just did not realize how difficult it would be. I had travelled my whole life O.K., I remember people asking me about it and I remember saying, "I know that it is going to be difficult, but I know I can do it. If other people can do it so can I." But, I didn't know. I had no idea how difficult it would be until I arrived. Oh, I just about died! And, I had been here [to Canada] before on vacation, like visiting. But it is not the same to move, so I did not expect it to be that difficult. Um, but you have no idea what it is like to lose your identity. Really, that's what it boils down to, unless you have experienced it before and I hadn't so...I had travelled all my life and I thought it would be the same, but it is not!—Because I think a lot of people go*

*through it and we just don't expect it, we don't know what losing your identity is, until you go through it and um, back then I did not realize I was losing my identity back then, I just felt depression.*

Amelia went on to recall her sense of sadness upon arrival to Canada:

*All of a sudden the plane landed and I just...the panic set in...all of a sudden it was panic, it was panic, it was sadness, it was loneliness, it was loss. I will never forget the moment the plane landed and I just, I just started bawling. And, I just couldn't even comprehend it myself, from that moment on it was crying constantly. From the moment I woke up until the moment I went to bed.*

Miguel Antonio, who moved to Canada two years ago, described being in Canada in the following way:

*I don't know if this is the word, the correct word?—But, for me, life was like bleak—yeah, kind of bleak. Because we [Mexicans] are so used to—maybe to mingle more with the people. I told you right? For example, in Mexico City, there are people, everywhere all the time. So, you are so used to walking the streets and seeing people everywhere—in general I think it's more warmer—the feeling is warmer—the relationship with the rest of the people I guess...I didn't expect to find, to feel like this in Canada—like, here I often feel trapped in my house; I feel a kind of isolation. In the beginning it's really hard I think, really lonely.*

Migrant workers also related a sense of initial disorientation; a feeling of being lost as intimated in the following quotes:

*The first year that I came here, I don't know...I came here as one who was afraid. Lost really because one doesn't know, not even about to what place they're coming to, not what kind of work they are going to do, not even to which farm. I didn't know anything. I had no place, like a scared one I was.*  
(Francisco)

*You get off the plane and you don't know where you are going. What you will be doing. No one explains anything to you...No one says, "Welcome. Do you have any questions? These are your rights? This is what you can expect. These are the services available to you? This is what you don't have to accept." You know talk about what you are doing in Canada. Your rights, nobody tells you this and so you do feel very alone and unsure of yourself.*  
(Antonio, fifteen seasons)

The above quotes are also indicative of another key theme in migrants' narratives—the feeling or sense of being walled up or locked up (*encerrados*) in Canada. Benny who immigrated to Canada ten years ago, a time that he emphasized as 'being quite good and happy', did however share the following sentiment:

*[h]ere life is so different, so much lonelier, here everyone is separated. They are alone in their houses with only their immediate family. They are always working, working, not really getting together. Always busy working, they work all day to buy big houses where they stay alone and watch T.V.—it is really strange,*



*working, working to be alone. You know, that is what I found most difficult when I first arrived, that feeling of being alone, of being locked up in my house and that is still what I miss the most of all about Mexico—my family, the people and the time we spend together.*

Feelings of *encerrados* are amplified for migrant workers because ‘employers prefer locating workers on or near their property, housing arrangements extend the reach of employers’ control over farm workers behavior beyond the sphere of work, including restrictions on workers’ mobility off the farm’ (Preibisch, 2010: 415). This has involved the imposition of curfews, prohibiting visitors of the opposite sex, or obliging workers to inform their employers of their whereabouts when outside the farm (Preibisch, 2010; Preibisch, 2007; Preibisch & Encalada Grez, 2010). For Sharma (2006: 19) the Canadian state’s positioning of migrant workers as a foreign worker force and the associated denial of the freedoms of labor market and spatial mobility (i.e. assigning workers to a specified employer and stipulations of occupation, residence, and length and terms of employment) constitute migrant workers as *legally* indentured to their employers. Likewise, Gogia (2005: 364) notes migrant workers’ ‘limited access to and control over forms of mobility ascribes a secondary status...over their rights to work and stay in the country.’ These conditions culminate in acute feelings of *encerrados* with workers reporting: ‘*It does make one feel trapped*’, ‘*It feels like a kind of jail. Yes you want the money. Yes you are desperate for the money, but, how you must sacrifice. It is not right. It feels terrible!*’ and ‘*I like to go out to walk around the town, to know where I live, where I am at. Otherwise we are like birds caged up*’.

When reflecting on their lives in Canada Mexican migrant workers described an appreciable labour vulnerability, lack of personal autonomy and social isolation. The following quote is emblematic of these dynamics.

*In my way of seeing things, it’s not that you need courage to come here. No, it is that you have to bare the sadness, the sadness to see that there are those who do not see us as people, I have thought about this a lot, there are people who see us as human being and that are kind and thank us for our work. But there are others who see us as animals. Some see us as if we have come here to take their jobs. At work some treat us as if we are here to be slaves and do what we are told to do. Not ask questions, not have breaks, like machines. Lately, coming here to work I see more and more of this kind of abuse, where those men treat us*

*like machines, picking on us, calling us names, if the workers demand respect and if we don't satisfy them, then they ask for other workers. If we ask about how we are being paid, if one starts to protest they complain and say that worker is no good. They don't want us to think, they just want us to work. They understand that we are desperate to work. So what can I do? I am in a situation I did not choose. It is not like the majority of [migrant] workers love it here, to be away from their homes, what keep us here is the necessity. I just want people to realize we are not animals or machines. We are human beings!*  
(Gilberto)

The terms and conditions of Canada's SAWP therefore create a particular 'space of non-existence' (Bibler Coutin, 2003). What Sharma (2006: i) refers to as 'a system of apartheid where those categorized as 'migrant workers' live, work, pay taxes, and sometimes die in Canada, but are subjected to a legal regime that renders them *perennial outsiders* in relation to Canadian society' (my emphasis). In speaking with Mexican transmigrant workers it was apparent that this sense of 'non-existence' or invisibility is a distinct element of migrants' emplacement in Canada. As clearly articulated in the following quotes:

*'The people here they don't see me...here I am like a ghost...they see right through me.'*  
(Gilberto)

*'I expected so many good things of Canada. In Mexico people they talk, often you will hear them say, "Canada is amazing! Canada is so much better than the United States." So I had high expectations of this country. And, yes because you see Asians, Hindus and Indians you think, it is going to be good because there are a lot of people from outside, not only Mexicans as I am. ..I thought, here I will make it. But instead, I discovered for me, a Mexican migrant worker, I do not count. I am not seen here.'*  
(Juan, one season).

*'The Canadian people are closed off, they don't talk to you. They don't want anything to do with you. It's as if they don't see me, as if they see right through me, like I do not exist.'*  
(Diego, twenty seasons)

*'We are treated like animals, like we don't matter, like we don't really exist. At work the boss he never even looks at me, he doesn't know my name. It makes me very, very sad.'*  
(Antonio, fifteen seasons)

Roberto's commentary is also telling:

*Look I am a "good Mexican", I obey my bosses and I just work. That is what they want Mexicans to be here, silent workers. You sense it, for example, when you are in town too. When there are a lot of Mexicans around, when Canadians see a lot of us here, they get tired of us. Because everywhere they go they bump into a Mexican. And they tire of that; that is what I think. In the fields in the greenhouses, this is our place for Canadians. Not in the stores, not in the streets. In these spaces we are a nuisance, an inconvenience. They would prefer we were not seen.*

## AMBIVALENCE, DEPRESSION AND DISORIENTATION

Generally, all research participants spoke very openly about the emotional challenges of migration, migrant workers and female immigrants were especially candid. Still, immigrant males did consistently reference 'culture shock', 'isolation', 'extreme change' and 'disorientation' in relation to their early arrival in Canada, as was the case for Alejandro, who has lived in Canada for five years:

*The first year was really tough for me, especially tough. I was so sad and felt so isolated. For more than two or three years, I did not like it, I hated how lonely I felt and I thought about going back [to Mexico] every day! Every single day! It was hard.*

*It is difficult to define—the feeling because it's a kind of ambivalence, because on one hand I feel very welcome. When I came here, the first year, the first month, let's say, maybe even the first weeks or so...I thought people, and even, I continue thinking that right, that the people are very polite, certainly very lovely. They treat you very well, right. They speak to you in English, straight, and sometimes they say, to you—"Ah hello", "Good morning", "Good evening", "Hi". Right, that's on one hand, but on the other hand, yeah, I mean, sometimes I feel like, not that the people are rude, the people are never rude here, never rude. But, hmm...like isolated, strange, sometimes I think a lot of people are staring at me, like um, like weird. Like who is this weird guy? There is this difference...I suffer this kind of difference, one I do not feel in Mexico. No for sure not!  
(Miguel Antonio)*

In time this sense of dislocation and loneliness does lessen, but for most never quite goes away. As expressed in the following quotes:

*I think I have begun to accept what Canada is because in the beginning I couldn't accept it; it was a lot of work to try to change. Well, in reality I have changed, I have tried to accept things, I have learned, I don't know if I've learned, I am getting used to Canada, the food, the people, the language, the customs-- everything what represents Canada, the climate above all else. It is something I don't think I will ever get use to. But, I think it is a question of time. Overall, when you stop and think that you have family here, at least in my case...for now I have to learn how to be, to live in Canada. You see there is no other way...I've had to accept leaving my family behind and forming a new one. I've had to learn even how to eat differently; I've had to learn how to leave my friends behind, friends that I've had all of my life. This has been a lot of work. I had to learn how to live again and I think I still have a lot to learn, I have a long way to go. I have not finished accepting 100% to live in a country that is not mine  
(Marta, 1.5 yrs in Canada).*

Even after eight years in Canada, Paulina expressed emotional ambivalence:

*It is really hard, you know because I am really happy with my husband, with my kids, you know like everyone. But, [pause] I'm not complete here—like all, completely happy, you know like 100% no. There's something missing and I think it is always going to be the same. Always! [Pause] You know?*

*But, thinking about security and all that for my kids I know that it is a lot better in Canada...But, I just want you to know that it is never going to be, for me 100% happy or you know complete, because there is always something that I am missing. You know, like all my roots and my family and if I could move my whole family here, then I would be O.K. [pause]. But no, still it is not the same. Mexico is Mexico!*

Overall, missing family generates the greatest sense of loss and ongoing feelings of homesickness or longing for home. This was pronounced in relation to physical absence during holidays particularly Christmas, *Dia de Los Muertos* (Day of the Dead or All Souls Day), *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) and *Dia de las Madres* (Mother's Day). Participants repeatedly mentioned guilt and sadness at having missed significant rites of passage, for example weddings, births of children and their baptisms, birthdays, illnesses and funerals. In fact, research participants frequently linked close familial ties as a central feature of their Mexican cultural identity. When asked if migration to Canada represents a break from Mexico, Elsa responded by saying:

*No! No, never! Because I can never forget I am Mexican. It is who I am! I do not forget my roots and I think I can't break that which unites me with my family!*

Nonetheless, negotiating familial relationships and networks across distant locations presents many challenges and evokes difficult emotions as intimated by both Maria, who has lived in Canada for three years, and Marta:

*Oh God! The guilt sometimes it is enough to make me sick. I feel so bad that my parents don't get to see my kids. I feel guilt all the time! I feel like I am depriving all of them, my parents and my kids! (Maria)*

*I always feel guilt that I am not there for the birthdays or when my nephews had their first communions, that was important for my family. I am going to Mexico to baptize my daughter and I am not thinking about baptizing her here. So, the truth is yes, for me there is still a lot of conflict. I personally feel conflicted most of the time. (Marta)*

For Paulina the conflict is a salient reality of everyday life:

*I feel conflicted all the time! Like all the time! Birthday parties, the kids' birthday parties, you know sometimes I just look at my kids and I just think to myself, 'Oh you guys don't know what you're missing. You don't know what fun is!' [laughing]. I feel that way about everything! I'm telling you I feel that way*

*with everything! There [in Mexico] kids can just be kids. When I was there I was surrounded with family, we were always doing things together. And, I feel bad sometimes because my sisters they are always going to birthday parties with their kids. I remember I was so excited when my eldest son got his first invitation to a party in Canada. Because it is not like it is in Mexico, it is just not as common.*

This conflict often translates into emotional suffering as evidenced in the following quotes:

*I cried a lot at first, thinking of what I was missing in Mexico. What if because I stayed here [in Canada], what about the chance, the chance that exists that I may not see my parents again? That they may die and I am not there—that is very difficult! That breaks my heart!*  
(Rodrigo, who has lived in Canada for three years)

*When you remember your young children, the little one above all else, and you say, “My child, I left him! How could I have left him?” How he cried, how he was crying! Oh man! One remembers it and you just want to go back in time. But at the same time, one has to stand it, to take it—to be able to stand it here all this loneliness. It breaks you. And well years and years go by and you do it again and again, so now things are a little different, but the loneliness continues being the same.*  
(Diego, who has migrated to Canada for seasonal employment for twenty seasons)

Research participants cope with this sense of being torn or conflicted by stressing all of the ways their lives have improved by coming to Canada (i.e. employment opportunities, personal security and lack of government corruption). As expressed by Alejandro:

*Although it has been difficult we’ve taken advantage of the opportunities. For example, here it is a normal life, one that all Mexicans should have. You go out and there is respect, there are laws, you’re not robbed, there is security and over there [in Mexico] we don’t have that. We don’t have that part of life that we should have. Over there you wake up and the first thing you think about is all of the economic problems. There are no jobs. You don’t know how you are going to get the money. You don’t know how you are going to pay off your debts. The insecurity of getting robbed or your kids getting kidnapped—life there it is very, very difficult! But, it is the normal thing. It is part of the everyday life. It is a life with constant stress, it is very different. And while yes there is also stress here, it is something else in another way. So you make your choice and you receive Canada’s gifts.*

Despite the many challenges migrant workers face while in Canada, they unquestionably also expressed great appreciation for the financial opportunities afforded them through participation in the SAWP. For example, Pablo told me:

*I would like to thank the Canadian government for what they have done. To make the connection with the Mexican government, to be able to come here to work and to have what we need. To make a living in this way we are accomplishing our dreams in Mexico little by little.*

Again and again research participants emphasized the ways in which their migration to Canada was all about tradeoffs. As expressed by Angelica:

*The sense of conflict and loss because you are missing things [in Mexico] is constant. Oh yeah! My sister has had two babies and I never saw her pregnant for example—things like that.*

R: And how do you cope with this?

*Oh, well you realize that you have things here [in Canada] that you don't need to deal with anymore, like safety or lack of opportunities and you say, but I have this. I cannot share that, and you try not to dwell—but, oh yeah I can tell you how on so many birthdays I felt so sad not to be with my family or vice-versa to not have them here with me.*

Ernesto who has lived in Canada for ten years offered the following:

*There has been conflict, sure, but more in the past, obviously I have missed a lot of things that have happened [in Mexico]. And that is O.K., I mean it is a choice right? So, no for me it has never been an overwhelming thing, like no I should have never come here [to Canada] no. [long pause] But, I do think about, well obviously my parents are going to die at some point, and I have been preparing for that, as much as one can. And when that happens I will be here and they will be there, and that will be difficult, but obviously I am ready to assist and help and return to be there after [pause]. But, I don't regret it, [pause] no.*

While participants acknowledge the emotional strain induced by migration, they also stressed the many advantages available to them in Canada and readily expressed gratitude, loyalty and even love for Canada. As articulated by Irma and Gilberto:

*I care for Mexico and Canada, if you ask me what is your citizenship? It is Mexico and Canada, I feel obliged to these countries, to be a better person, to be a better citizen. (Irma)*

*Of course I know I am a Mexican and I know my homeland is Mexico. But, in coming to Canada, that is how I was able to progress and to a certain extent I have come to love Canada. I see it as my second home. In the last several years, you noticed, unexpectedly that you begin to miss Canada. Last year when I went back to Mexico I sort of missed Canada. Because I got use to being here, although I missed my family for a long time and I love them a lot and I missed my country. I now also miss Canada. I always bring back a Canadian flag and tell them, my family, this is because I thank Canada. Thanks to Canada I have the things I have. I love my country a lot! But now I always put the two flags up, I have come to now to see it that way, that my second home is Canada.  
(migrant worker, Gilberto)*

In sum, despite clear appreciation and respect for the opportunities available in Canada, there is a concurrent sense of ambivalence about *being in Canada*—affirming the embodied nature

of transnationalism, of being somewhere else, so that '[b]odies in separate countries continue to remain elsewhere distant, and out of place' (O'Connor, 2010: 78). Ambivalence then is evoked by physical emplacement in Canada and ongoing emotional embeddedness in Mexico—primarily longing for familial relationships and networks, illustrating the principal importance of family in the lives of Mexican migrants. It is this longing, this desire to be and feel connected and apart of the lives of their families in Mexico that motivates the transnational exchanges and associations to which we now turn.

### AFFECTIVE DRIVERS OF EVERYDAY TRANSNATIONALISM

*My place is in Mexico. Yes I am in Canada now, you know here physically, my body,  
but my heart, my family, my life, all of me is there! My soul is in Mexico, it wanders there.”*  
(Jesús, migrant worker)

In examining the transnational practices of migrant workers and 'middling' transnational actors, it is clear that familial ties and the emotional benefits derived from these relationships serve as a noteworthy 'affective driver of transnationalism' (Dunn, 2005: 27). Moreover, participants' consistent referencing of feeling and being 'out of place' speaks to their embodied experience of transnationalism—the effects associated with being physically distant from their families. As discussed above, the result is ongoing and often unresolved feelings of being lonely, conflicted, guilty and homesick. Indeed, feelings of estrangement, isolation, entrapment, ambivalence and, in the case of migrant workers, invisibility, form the 'embodied underpinning' (O'Connor, 2010: 82) of Mexican migrants' transnational practices. To manage with these feelings, transnational practices function as a means of maintaining familial relationships across distance, but also as vital coping mechanisms to alleviate the guilt associated with leaving their families and importantly to deal with the isolation, loneliness, sadness and homesickness they experience in Canada.

For immigrants, return visits to Mexico serve as a key coping strategy with the majority of participants returning to Mexico not only once, but multiple times. (Obviously this is not the case for migrant workers, as the conditions and arrangements of their migration to and from Canada are strictly regulated under the stipulations of the SAWP [Basok, 2002]). For instance, Irma returns on average three to five times a year, while Nico has returned to Mexico five times in the three and a half years he has lived in Canada. Of the five participants who had not returned to Mexico, all had done so in accordance with stipulations related to their applications for permanent resident status in Canada. Further, all five shared their plans to return as soon as possible and in one case the return visit had already been planned with tickets for a two month trip purchased once the approval of permanent status was given. In all cases participants reported regular visits from their Mexican family members to Canada. By and large this was an annual event with family members (especially parents staying in some cases for up to six weeks). Thus, as a whole the group of immigrants is characterized by high levels of transnational mobility—with regular and often lengthy return visits to Mexico complimented by characteristically similar reciprocal visits from their families.

It must however be recognized that Canadian state policies set parameters for migrant ‘affective’ transnationalism by structuring when migrants are able to return to their home countries and who qualifies for visitation visas and in turn, who is permitted entry to Canada. In fact, there is regular enforcement of a singular version of ‘family’ by the state whereby people who fail to conform to this authoritative version of family are excluded by the state (Lee and Brotman, 2011). Memorably, my research completely ‘dried up’ around the holidays with participants returning to Mexico for Christmas. I wrote the following in my research notes:

*A Christmas exodus seems to be occurring as participants are busy preparing for trips to Mexico to be with their families for the holidays with some indicating that they are returning for two to four weeks. This has been presented to me as a given, as something that just happens, an important part of the year. I note it here because I think it speaks powerfully to the transnational character of their lives. Although they may now physically live in Canada they are still very intimately connected to life in Mexico.*



In this way mobility is heavily motivated by emplacement, the actual physical distance separating transnational actors and the need to bridge this divide, vis-à-vis actual face-to-face physical visits—so that actual physical proximity remains important. But just as emplacement informs mobility, mobility also informs emplacement—where geographic distance remains, emplaced research participants cope with this spatial reality by engaging and interacting with their families in innovative ways through information and communication technologies (ICTs)—creating transnational spaces—new ways of *being together*. Given the social exclusion that circumscribes the daily lives of migrant workers in Canada, their access to and use of ICTs is quite critical.

## POLYMEDIA: TRANSNATIONAL INTIMACY AND COPRESENCE

Almost two decades ago anthropologist Arturo Escobar (1994) coined the term *Cyberia* to describe how in part various groups appropriate or reject new technologies based on cultural, political and economic factors (Panagakos & Horst, 2006: 109). Escobar (1994) urges scholarship of cyberculture to examine how the social construction of reality is modified and negotiated as new technologies become available and integrated into daily life (Escobar, 1994: 217). Today even a cursory review of the literature reveals that theoretical discussions and empirical studies of the use and impact of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) are as diverse as they are abundant (e.g. Sassen, 2002; Castells, 2001; Castells *et al.*, 2006; Couldry & McCarthy, 2004; Gibson, 2003; Haddon, 2004; Hughes & Hans, 2001, Holloway & Valentine, 2003; 2000; Sassen, 2001a).

Topical research in the area explores the recent proliferation and affordability of a multiplicity of communication channels or *polymedia* (Madianou & Miller, 2011), such as email, mobile phones, Skype, Facebook, texting, instant messaging (IM), and the relationship between them. Madianou and Miller (2011) suggest that in the context of polymedia the primary concern

shifts from an emphasis on the constraints and affordances vis-à-vis a particular medium to an emphasis upon the social and emotional consequences of choosing between a plurality of media. Likewise, Baym (2010) focuses on the meaning of polymedia usage stressing the qualities of media as well as the social and personal contexts in which they are developed and used. In this way contemporary research is addressing questions about the degree to which mediated interactions are authentic and emotionally meaningful, the sense of community, the veracity of self, and whether using these media damages the other relationships in our lives (Baym, 2010, Madianou & Miller, 2011; Miller, 2011).

Importantly researchers continue to be cognizant of the uneven and unequal access to polymedia given the *global digital divide* or the ‘rapidly growing disparities in the utilization, expenditure, and availability of technology globally’ (Pick & Azari, 2008: 91). Clearly, all migrants do not have equal access to emerging international communication technologies, as emphasized by Panagakos and Horst (2006: 113) who state, ‘almost any study of new communication technologies needs to assess the issue of access, particularly in relation to the lived experience of the digital divide that not only captures the differences between the ‘North’ and ‘South’ but also legal status and gender, among other categories of difference and inequality.’ Likewise Sassen (2002: 336) stresses ‘the material conditions and practices, place-boundedness, and thick social environments within and through which technologies operate.’

Even as early conception of the radical newness of cyberculture as a context of social life are being critiqued (e.g. Wilding, 2006), there is now little skepticism that polymedia are indeed having important effects on our relational lives. Haddon (2004) contends that information and communication technologies are so embedded in daily life for many that their temporary removal causes social dislocation and a perceived breakdown of social networks (Panagakos & Horst, 2006: 112). Livingston and Das’ (2010: 5) research on family and media in the UK and Europe found that

[f]or most families, the media have shifted in status from a merely incidental, if desirable, element of private life and leisure to becoming thoroughly embedded in families' everyday life, providing the indispensable infrastructure for domestic space, daily timetables and, in consequence, a taken-for-granted mediator of social relations within and beyond the home.

In his ground-breaking study of Facebook anthropologist Daniel Miller (2011) examines the impact of social networking sites upon the lives of their users—demonstrating that the effects can be profound, as Facebook can be understood as a means of creating and sustaining relationships, negating isolation and loneliness, while also devastating marriages, privacy and creating scandal.

Interestingly, however, '[w]hile the use of information and communication technologies is a central component in the lives of many transnational migrants, it has only recently begun to receive consideration in transnational studies' (Panagakos & Horst, 2006: 111). 'In the field of cultural studies the simultaneity of communication flows and the speed and frequency of global travel have been deemed to be highly salient to those who live transnational lives' (Smith, 2005a: 239). These advances are seen as contributing to transnational simultaneity, where '[c]o-presence in more than one spatial location (place/country/locality) is viewed as occurring in the postmodern 'now' rather than, as in earlier times, in sequenced stages of time (before/after), space (sending/receiving), and place (here/there)' (Smith, 2005a: 239) so that technological innovation is said to be creating qualitatively new and novel opportunities and circuits of transnational exchange (Vertovec, 2009, 2004b), transnational social spaces (Bernal, 2006) and even new transnational subjectivities (Conradson & McKay, 2007; Dahinden, 2009). Not wanting to overstate the influence of simultaneity Smith (2005a; 240) stresses that, 'just what difference [simultaneity] makes in the lived experience of translocal subjects is an empirical question.' Further, Panagakos and Horst (2006: 112) remind us that,

[w]hile transnational migrants may adopt new ICTs to suit their communications and networking needs, the impact on social networks, daily life and community is largely contested. Scholars do not automatically assume that increased use of the Internet,

mobile phones or other ICTs necessarily means that individuals feel more connected or are more community-minded.

Moreover, '[t]ransnational communication and the achievement of intimacy [is] a greater challenge for migrants with families located in rural areas without the appropriate facilities and infrastructures' (Parreñas, 2005b: 318). Certainly, the experience of transnational communication does not exist in a vacuum. Instead social and geographical inequalities (i.e. one's social location in the intersecting and multiple axes of social inequalities such as gender, class, and rural versus urban differences) (Glenn, 2002; Lowe, 1997) shape the quality of intimacy in transnational family life (Parreñas, 2005b: 318).

Nonetheless, Karim (2003) and Broadbent (2012) both position migrants as the most advanced and cutting edge users of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Mellor, 2009: 81). Research on ICT or polymedia use among transnational migrants raises many 'provocative questions about, for example, the meaning of 'community', identity and public space; the decline of the nation-state; ownership of and access to information; the creation of new types of inequality' (Panagakos & Horst, 2006: 110) and the 'transformation of political participation' (Bernal, 2006: 163). Vertovec (2004a) goes so far as to suggest that communication technologies such as the telephone, fax, and Internet are the social glue of migrant transnationalism—serving to bind people together across great physical distances (Collins, 2010: 55-6). In fact, the role of ICTs in the maintenance of transnational familial and social networks has been the focus of a great deal of research. Wilding (2006: 109) for example, not only demonstrates that ICTs are more available for some people than for others, but also 'how the decisions people make about using particular communication technologies are the social and cultural contexts of family life, which render some ICTs more desirable than others at specific points in time.' In *Technologies of Love: Migration and the Polymedia Revolution* Madianou and Miller (2011) examine the impact of polymedia on transnational families, specifically Filipina workers

and their left behind children in the Philippines. The central concern of this work is the ways in which ‘those at both sides of the communication utilise the entire range of possibilities and the parameters of difference in order to try and control the nature of that communication (i.e. to avoid argument, allow time to consider a response, express love and feel a sense of authenticity to content)’ (Madianou & Miller, 2010).

Within the literature of ICT use among transnational migrants, the Internet in particular has been recognized as providing effective and affective connections between people by offering the potential for real-time experiences (Collins, 2010: 56), meeting the desire for media that is more ‘emotional’ or expressive, possessing the capacity for visual, oral, aural, interactive and other sensory experiences that more effectively enable co-presence (Baldassar, 2008; Ling, 2004; Panagakos & Horst, 2006). For Collins (2010: 56),

the Internet, then, is a thoroughly embodied space...that has the potential not only to bring bodies together virtually but also to stimulate sense of sight and sound, and *as a result be thoroughly affective*. As such the Internet facilitates the movement of bodies through space in the sense that it serves to connect experiences that would otherwise be separate (my emphasis).

Innovation in ICTs or polymedia ‘heighten the immediacy and frequency of migrants’ contact with their sending communities and allow them to be actively involved in everyday life there in fundamentally different ways than in the past’ (Levitt, 2001: 22). In this way online communication reduces the ‘tyranny of distance, time and space’ (Barraket & Henry-Waring, 2008: 156). Online communication can help maintain intimate relationships when partners are working in separate cities [or countries] (Thompson, 2008: 45), so that ‘[c]ontemporary transnational households have a different temporal and spatial experience from the binational families of the past’ (Parreñas, 2005b: 318).

In what follows I provide a preliminary sketch of the polymedia transnational practices among the Mexican migrants who participated in my study. I preface this as preliminary because although I found significant evidence of such practices, given contemporary developments and

questions about these types of practices (i.e. quality, depth, authenticity, and nature of communication *etc*) my work provides an initial outline and documentation of these practices. Their dynamics will need to be further explored in light of these emerging research frames. That said, given the dearth of knowledge about such practices among various transnational migrant groups, including and not limited to Mexican immigrants and migrant workers in Canada, it is meaningful to begin to ascertain if and how the lives of Mexicans migrants are being affected by the experience of using polymedia.

Certainly I found that some of the most dramatic articulations of transnationalism did not require actual physical movement or material exchange say for example remittances, but can be described as ‘subjective transnationalism’—intangible exchanges of psychosocial resources over the phone and internet, linking [migrants] to family members across borders (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006: 341). Like, transnational affect (Wise & Chapman, 2005), subjective transnationalism strengthens the arguments for keeping the framework of transnationalism open and not submit to pressures to neatly define, operationalize or delimit transnationalism (Collins, 2009; Crang *et al.*, 2003; Smith & Bailey, 2004); which in turn ‘restrict[s] its epistemological range (insisting on a particular disciplinary approach or narrowly defined subject matter (Crang *et al.*, 2003: 452), for example, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt’s (1999) insistence that transnationalism be demarcated by ‘regular and sustained’ contacts and activities. Implicated within the turn to *embodied transnationalism*, which ‘usefully expands understanding of the subjects, registers and spatialities of cross-border lives’ (Collins, 2009: 451), transnational affect and/or subjective transnationalism are central to our understanding of migrants’ use of polymedia.

For example, cell phones and their internet based platforms such as email, texting, Facebook and instant messaging (IM) can create what Ito and Okabe (2005: 264) have coined *ambient virtual co-presence*, which implies ways ‘of maintaining ongoing background awareness of

others, and of keeping multiple channels of communication open.’ Likewise, Thompson (2008: 45) describes the connections created through the use of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook as *ambient intimacy* creating a kind of continual connectivity. By following the posted ‘updates’ of friends or contacts, users have access to daily life, often intimately through pictures and videos which can become a way of seeing into their lives, creating a sense of closeness through detailed knowledge of their activities (Thompson, 2008: 45). This type of *ambient virtual co-presence*, is now even more possible given the fairly widespread access to mobile phones with internet capacities such as SMS (texting), email and instant messaging (IM), allowing for ongoing communication without being fixed to a specific location. Research has confirmed the role of cell phone based ICTs in several transnational communities, principally addressing cell phone use by transnational families (Benítez, 2006; Horst, 2006; Horst & Miller, 2006; Lim & Soon, 2010; Parreñas, 2005b).

Consistent with this literature, my research reveals noteworthy use of polymedia, where instant messaging (IM), mobile texting and Skype were used as continuous channel of communication, opened in the background while people did other things. For example, when asked ‘Do you have much contact with your family in Mexico?’ Paulina shared the following:

*Yeah everyday! [Laughing]. I am on the web cam with my sisters and with my mom. With her, my mom, I call her on the phone every two days or sometimes everyday too. Even though I Skype her it is not the same, I still want to talk to her and catch up and all that. Or if I want to cook something and I need a recipe or whatever, I just call her. Or sometimes I just connect to the internet on the webcam like all day—with one of my sisters, and it is just like we are there together. Yeah! So she is there at home with her kids like, “Oh no! Don’t do that or be careful!” and I’m here with my kids doing the same and we just spend the day together.*

This quote is a formidable example of transnational practices and transnational social spaces which are mediated through polymedia. Not only does Paulina’s illustration speak to *ambient virtual co-presence*, but it also delineates the ways in which different media are used for different purposes, where the webcam is being employed in a ‘phatic’ way and the telephone is associated with more intimate or directive exchanges. Paulina emphasized how much these exchanges

helped her to cope emotionally in Canada and that her contact with Mexico is so frequent that when she gets off the plane in Mexico “*there is nothing to say!*” Maria shared a similar image of daily transnational exchanges:

*I am still very connected with Mexico, very connected! I call home all the time, email, and MSN [instant messaging] every day! Practically every single day I cook with my mom. We have the webcam on in our kitchens and she shows me how to make certain dishes, usually family recipes, you know like Mexican dishes. We talk about our lives and for that time I feel like we are together—[becomes emotional] I would be absolutely lost in Canada without the contact I have with her. I don't think I could make it otherwise [deep sigh].*

Miller (2008: 395) notes that frequent online communication can become ‘phatic,’ that is, less about communicating specific information or having a dialogue and more about simple recognition of each other’s presence. Likewise, Ling (2004) argues that the mobile phone is widely used for the performance of ritual activities. Both of these dynamics are evident in the following dialogue:

*R: How do you stay connected to Mexico?*

*R.P.: I use my phone to text my wife. I text her four times a day, every day, four times. I send her a message when I wake up, after lunch, after dinner and when I go to sleep. I do, every single day!*

*R: And, what sorts of things do you say?*

*R.P.: Oh [laughing], romantic things, you know, ‘I love you’, ‘I miss you’, ‘Good night’, ‘Good Morning’ or, ‘Kiss the children for me’ [laughing]. Things like that, yes. And I also call her and my parents about two to three times a week. It helps very much. Very, very much!  
(migrant worker, Pablo two season)*

For Miguel Antonio his embodiment in Canada is equally navigated through his emotional and social emplacement in Mexico, where polymedia mediates his daily life:

*Even though I am far from Mexico, even though I'm physically here in Canada, I have more communication with Mexicans. I think in some ways I now have more communication with my family and my Mexican friends than when I lived there, more than my Canadian friends here. For me, Canada seems sort of transitory, it is a place where I am physically, but my friends, my family, my life, is still very much in Mexico.*

*R: And how do you maintain those connections?*



*Ah well—instant messaging—all the time! [Laughing], Facebook, I phone my mom like every weekend, well my whole family, but mainly I talk to my mom. And, to my friends again, all the time on the internet, email, texting, Skype all of that and with very close friends. Like I have a cousin, he is like, well he is my cousin, but at the same time he is my best friend. We still call each other like once a month in addition to like the email, Facebook and all the rest.*

While these are among the most dramatic examples of polymedia transnational practices and not characteristic of all research participants, overall polymedia have a very clear influence on the daily lives of Mexican migrants in Canada. For instance, the majority of immigrant research participants engage in frequent transnational polymedia use through a bundling of such media as regular and frequent home telephone calls, home P.C. emailing and Facebook, Instant Messaging and Skyping, and also cell phone emailing and texting for example. Notably sixteen out of twenty Mexican immigrants reported daily or almost daily polymedia contact with Mexico. Migrant workers also use a variety of ICTs (i.e. letters, prepaid calling cards/telephones, mobile phones, and the Internet) to communicate with their families in Mexico. Significantly, migrant workers all owned cell phones and in order to avoid excessive phone bills they also intermediately used prepaid calling cards at phone booths or phones at the farms where they are employed. Of the ten migrant worker study participants, three reported regular texting and instant messaging as important daily activities, while other workers I met in various ethnographic settings referenced internet cafés and public libraries as key sites for emailing, Facebook and even Skyping. Still, by and large telephone calls (both landline & mobile) were unquestionably the primary means of communication. As a whole migrant workers reported frequent (daily or every other day) transnational engagement through telephone calls and in some cases texting and emailing.

All research participants consistently referenced the ways in which polymedia facilitated a meaningful sense of connection and shared experience with their families in Mexico, as evident in the following quotes:

*When I came here, I bought a telephone to stay connected with my family. If I get sick I can call my wife. My family gets sick they call me. When my wife needs to call me, she can. It is so important, just to have that option, to be able to check in on them. You know, to let them know how I am doing...For me, here [in Canada] it is everything! I talk to them every other day. I have to! To feel, to fill me up.*  
(Migrant worker Juan, one season)

*I could not be here without my cell phone, without the ability to text and email home that would be hell. I tell you, that's all that gets me through my days here [in Canada].*  
(Migrant worker, Antonio)

Marta's comments are also illustrative:

*[m]ost of our Facebook posts are about nothing, really, nothing! [Laughing]. But just reading my family's posts, knowing what they are up to, even if it is as simple as tucking their kids in or going to the market, or watching a T.V. show, I don't know it just makes me happy. Plus, I love posting pictures and seeing their pictures, especially to watch how the babies grow. Yeah, I love that! We all just feel more connected, more involved in one another's lives. I cannot tell you how much Facebook has helped me with my homesickness.*  
(Marta)

In this way, the fact of communicating, may be seen as just as important as its content (Licoppe & Smoreda, 2005). This was a consistent theme in discussions of polymedia use with participants reporting that most of their emails and texts were basically comments on the mundane (i.e. the weather, schedules, food choices, leisure activities etc). These exchanges may on the surface appear relatively insignificant, however, numerous participants remarked on their importance to their 'sense of connection' 'feelings of happiness' and 'feeling cared for' with and by their families and to a lesser extend friends in Mexico. Participants described these exchanges in the following ways: "*it gets me through my day*", "*vital to my sanity*", "*helps me feel alive*" and "*sometimes they are all I've got*". Repeatedly I was told by participants that they "*would be lost without it*" or "*I would be lost without them*" referring to the emotional support and connections to Mexico derived from engagement with ploymedia. As noted above research participants' narratives of their early experiences of migration also frequently referenced feelings of 'disorientation' and of 'being lost' or 'feeling lost', where here 'virtual intimacy' interestingly provides participants their bearings in Canada, anchoring their everyday lives.

Not surprisingly younger participants were more media savvy and in line with the literature polymedia use was often driven by children or younger generations (Benítez, 2006; Livingstone & Das, 2010; Panagakos, 2003). For instance, Juanita, a mother of three teenagers, who has lived in Canada for 2.5 years, shared the following when asked about her ongoing contact with Mexico:

*Oh goodness! [Moaning] I know more about my little town in Mexico than when I lived there! Seriously, I do! And I don't even go on the Internet that much. But, my kids are on it constantly! Constantly! Emails, instant messaging, texting, Skyping, whatever, they do it all! All the time! Some things I don't even want to know, I mean I really don't care that so and so just bought new shoes or whatever. I'm always telling my kids, "I've got work to do, stop bothering me with this stuff" or "Get off that computer!" You know, to live life, like here, like more in Canada. But for them, all of their friends, all their cousins, they are on the internet all the time too. It's just what they do, actually their Canadian friends too. They would rather text than call each other. I just don't get it! I don't get it! I still use the phone and even write letters sometimes too. I'm not much for computers. I want to hear my sister's voice and not too many things make me as happy as finding a letter in my mailbox! [Laughing].*

Again Juanita's comments fit with literature which suggests that 'the introduction of the Internet does not completely displace communication by letters or telephone' but 'does contribute to some significant changes in how people communicated...where as a result of the instantaneity of email communication, and possibly as a function of its frequently prosaic content, migrants in particular felt much more closely connected to their kin in the home country' (Wilding, 2006: 132).

Pessar & Mahler (2003: 817) also remind us, 'people's social locations affect their access to resources and mobility across transnational spaces, but also their agency as initiators, refiners and transformers of these locations.' Older migrants and migrants of lower socio-economic status do not have knowledge of, let alone mastery of ICTs, as the following quotes reveal.

*I am in contact with Mexico once or twice a week. I talk to them [his family] on the phone. But I do not know how to use the internet. My kids do though. For me just the phone and it is very important to me, to hear their voices, to just hear the sound of their voices.  
(Francisco, migrant worker)*

*Email? No, no, I don't even know how to turn the computer on! [laughing]. I know nothing about the internet. I only call my family and sometimes I still write letters. That is all.*

(José, migrant worker-seventeen seasons)

Given migrant workers circular and longstanding migration to and from Canada, they are emblematic subjects of transnational process. As such their use of ICTs is especially relevant. Plus, because questions about the novelty of migrants' transnational practices have plagued the transnational migration scholarship since its inception in the early 1990s (Vertovec, 2004; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), migrant workers' commentaries on the implications of changing transnational communication and exchange are especially noteworthy. For example, Francisco describes how the accessibility to ICTs has transformed the quality of his transnational exchanges with his children:

*I call home every other day. I use the cell phone to ask them and ask about their days. To see how school is going. I look forward to calling them. It is what gets me through my days. It is not so expensive, like it use to be, so now we can just talk about nothing and we do! [laughing]. It helps a lot, a lot. It helps me not to feel so lonely.*

Antonio's commentary is also very telling of a qualitative shift in transnational communication.

*Calling home to my wife use to be terrible. She understood it was hard but she did not understand, you know? She understood it, but there was no other solution because we did not have a phone in our home; only phone booths in both places, me here in Canada, she in Mexico. When finally it was my turn in the booth and she would be there waiting for me, there was almost always already someone there, a woman, already talking. Maybe to her husband in the United States? I don't know. It took so long and I would be waiting here, to be able to connect with her. Looking forward to hearing her voice, to reassuring her and her me, waiting, waiting. Also, sometimes I would try to use the phone in my bosses' house and the boss would be a little bit bothered. You know, looking at his watch as if to say, "What time are you going to call?" and "When are you going to get out of here". To be in his house, that was a bit uncomfortable for me. But, this I say, thank God is over! Now with my cell phone it is so much easier! We can communicate on whatever day, whatever time, an emergency, when one wants to speak, to hear your family. It is easy and helps me to be here, it is so much better this way!*

References to 'then' and 'now' in the narratives of migrant workers who have been coming to Canada for many years expose radical shifts in ICT availability, both in terms of the communication resources available to migrant workers while in Canada and also their ability to provide improved means of communication for their families in Mexico.

The transformative implications of ICTs can also be noted by the fact that the connections they facilitate may at times feel 'too close for comfort' as reiterated by Jorge, who has

lived in Canada for ten years and spoke to the frequent and daily contact that polymedia facilitate.

*My wife and my brother [who also live in Canada] are always on me about not calling home more often, but we Skype my mom like once or twice a week. She emails me practically every day and then I get on Facebook and she is telling me what she is having for dinner, what the doctor said about my uncle's moles, her friend's bad back [Laughing]. Then, I go to bed and my cell phone buzzes with a text saying 'good night'. I mean, come on! I love my mom, I do, but a little space would be nice [Laughing]. It's as if because we are here [in Canada], she feels the need to be even more involved in our lives, you know, to like overcome the distance, yeah, she's kinda driving me crazy! [More laughter].*

Paulina shared an equally humorous illustration:

*Oh! [Laughing] Let me tell you! I learned just how connected my life in Canada is to Mexico. This one time I was having a hard day and so I posted on Facebook something about being homesick and sad—Ah well, that week my tía in Texas called my mother asking what was wrong with me. My friends and cousins in Mexico were sending me messages asking what was wrong, posting on my wall messages of support. Even my abuelito who doesn't even own a computer called me because he heard I was not doing well in Canada. Ey, my God! I was just having a bad day! [Laughing].*

These illustrations speak to the ways in which polymedia are deeply penetrating the daily lives of Mexican migrants—who are indeed accessing and engaging in polymedia transnational practices to maintain strong relational ties with Mexico. Family is chief among these interactions with friends mentioned infrequently. With the exception of one participant, when friendships were referenced these relationships were secondary and peripheral to their families. Clearly the accessibility and affordability of various free Internet services (i.e. Skype and Facebook) are facilitating strong transnational familial ties and connections. Importantly however, it must be remembered that

family relationships are dynamic and fluid, shifting according to life-cycle events (including birth, death and migration) and perceptions of affection and emotional closeness. This makes it impossible to identify fixed patterns of communication or exchange that might be strictly quantified (Wilding, 2006: 129).

Additionally, some research participants also reported going online to access news stories and the weather conditions in various parts of Mexico. Even more reported such on-line activities as

visiting Mexican websites, downloading Mexican music and watching Mexican programming. Finally, the majority of participants reported watching Spanish television programming on a daily basis, with shared family viewing a weekly and enjoyable bonding event for many Mexican immigrant families. These activities also denote the transnational quality of many of the research participants lives.

Importantly the majority of research participants do cite the importance of polymedia, whether through the telephone, email, Skype, Facebook or instant messaging (IM), in facilitating on-going trans-local engagement in the lives of their families, and to lesser extent their friends, in Mexico. These transnational practices are not indicative of extraterritorial transnationalism or radically new 'virtual families'. Instead motivation and enactment in transnational social spaces is appended to physical emplacement in Canada, producing 'affective drivers' for transnational practices that speak to the significance of embodied transnationalism. Transnational practices, then, especially polymedia, are having an unquestionable influence on the experience of migration creating a 'mutual imbrication' (Sassen, 2001b) of trans-locality, where the sense of connection to distance spaces is real and emotionally consequential, but the reality of space is not eradicated so that research participants remained keenly aware of the physical distance separating themselves from their families in Mexico.

## CONCLUSION

Advancing the concept of embodiment in relation to migration and mobilities, Andrew Gorman-Murray (2009: 444) contends that if we accept that 'migrants are not disembodied actors', we may begin to appreciate the profound ways in which 'sensual corporeality, intimate relationality and other facets of emotional embodiment' suffuse processes and practices of mobility. Indeed, emergent scholarship insists that in order to fully appreciate the qualitatively new transnational contours of the experience of migration, research must attend to the affective and relational motives of transnational practices (e.g. Anderson & Smith, 2001; Dunn, 2010;

Huang & Yeoh, 2007; Ho & Hatfield, 2011). O'Connor's (2010: 82) research of the migration experiences of contemporary Irish immigrants in Australia is apropos, as the work addresses how,

[a]ffective drivers, particularly those relating to separation from the extended family in one place and the anchoring effect of family formation in another place, need to be explored if the embodied underpinnings of transnational practices are to be more fully understood.

In this context, my research adopts an embodied transnational lens in order to offer nuanced insights into everyday intimate and social relations constituting experiences of migration for Mexican migrants in Canada, revealing—'the story of life as it has been lived and is being lived at this very moment' (Escobar 1994: 223). This is a meaningful and valuable contribution to the migration literature, given the absence of studies on the experiences of Mexican immigrants living in Canada.

Moreover, in engaging Comaroff and Comaroff's (2009: 294) question '[of] how...human beings construct their intimate, everyday life-worlds at the shifting intersections of here, there, elsewhere, everywhere?', the research locates the intimate and affective processes of transnationalism in the everyday lives of migrants, tracing their trans-local connectivity and intimacy to Mexico as mediated through affordable and accessible transnational transportation and polymedia, though the parameters and the implications of these practices warrants further study. In underscoring how the intimate and affective contours of Mexican migrants' experiences play a central role in the creation and maintenance of transnational social spaces, the research reveals the ways in which international migration fundamentally remains an embodied experience.

My research demonstrates the ways in which affective transnationalism distinctly infuses the everyday lives of Mexican migrants in Canada, highlighting a type of space/place ambivalence or 'the in between places of migration' (Faist, 2008: 36-7). As such, my analysis of affective embodiment reveals the ever-present valency of place (Dunn, 2010), namely migrants'

physical emplacement in Canada—a fact which in turn prompts concomitant engagement in transnationalism practices and social spaces—facilitating trans-local mobility. This dynamic captures the ways in which ‘[t]here is permanent temporariness (Bailey *et al.*, 2002) as well as temporary permanence in a transnational world—transnationalism, then does not transcend the frictions of distance and the sticky embeddedness of place’ (Dunn, 2010: 7). In sum, attending to the emotional lives and subjective experiences of Mexican migrants embedded in transnational fields, draws attention to the analytical significance of *embodiment* to any understanding of transnational migration. In so doing, the research offers grounded knowledge of migrants’ micro-level daily experiences of macro scale issues of international migration and immigrant settlement.



### CHAPTER 3 SHIFTING GENDERED GEOGRAPHIES OF DIFFERENCE AMONG MEXICANS IN CANADA

*Migration has always had the potential to challenge established spatial images. It highlights the social nature of spaces as something created and reproduced through collective human agency, and, in so doing, reminds us that, within the limits imposed by power, existing spatial arrangements are always susceptible to change.*

(Rouse, 2001: 159)

Despite approximately three decades of significant contributions to understanding numerous aspects of the migration experience, feminist migration research still lies largely outside mainstream migration studies (Nawyn, 2010: 749). Accordingly, the goal of this work is to contribute to efforts to ‘engender migration studies’ (Pessar, 1999) or to incorporate gender analysis in migration studies. Specifically, the paper considers how Mexican men and women’s embodied experiences of migration are negotiated through complex and paradoxical ‘gendered geographies of power’ (Mahler & Pessar, 2001). Transnationalism has proven to be a productive analytical framework from which to examine contemporary global migration, where *transnationalism* is understood to denote ‘multi-stranded’ social relations linking societies of origin and settlement (Basch *et al.*, 1994) or ‘the ways in which migrants are intimately and intricately involved in social, political and economic networks that stretch across national boundaries’ (Gilmartin, 2008: 1841). A transnational perspective, then, ‘emphasizes the blurring of social space and geographic space’ (Yeates, 2011: 1113), as migration can imply ongoing and simultaneous relations between countries of origin and settlement.

Notably, however, the ways in which transnational migration is gendered is an area that has not received sufficient attention (Levitt *et al.*, 2003: 569). Mahler and Pessar (2001: 441) point out that ‘gender has rarely been a principal focus of studies on transnational spaces and processes, including transnational migration’. Indeed, the analytic of gender has historically been sidelined in scholarly research on international migration and within the transnational

framework (Donato *et al.*, 2006; Lutz, 2010; Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Nawyn, 2010; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). As a corrective scholars have sought to 'engender migration studies' (Pessar, 1999), pushing 'gender from the margins to the core' (Mahler & Pessar, 2006). These efforts have enriched scholarly research on migration in two important ways: 1) by bringing female migration into the forefront of migration studies, and 2) in facilitating a shift from an additive approach (i.e. studies that include gender as a dichotomous variable or simply women-centred research) toward a more sophisticated analysis (Donato *et al.*, 2006; Nawyn, 2010; Piper, 2005) where gender is understood as a 'key constitutive element' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003: 9) of migration processes.

Building on the burgeoning literature of gender and transnationalism, this article considers migration through a gender framework that seeks to map out the 'gendered geographies of power' (Mahler & Pessar, 2001). My treatment of gender reflects my understanding of gender as relational and fluid: a construct that is always negotiated and mediated across diverse contexts (Connell, 2009; Kimmel, 2000). The first section of the article provides a brief overview of my methodological orientation. The next section reviews relevant literature to 'bring gender into an even tighter transnational focus' (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 812). Next, drawing on the analytical construct of 'social location' (Pessar & Mahler, 2003) I consider Mexican women and men's embodied narratives of migration to Canada, illustrating how migration produces shifting transnational articulations of gender. Eschewing a simplistic male versus female comparison, my analysis of gender as relational and as spatially and temporally contextual points to the ways in which migrants' experiences are mediated and shaped by dynamic and intersecting geographies of 'difference' in heeding calls to focus on gender and not women (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Cranford, 2006; Moch, 2005) and by integrating feminist conceptions of gender the research advances the agenda of feminist migration scholarship.

## METHODOLOGY

The findings for this article are drawn from my doctoral research: conducted between August 2008 and March 2009 on Mexican transnational migration. The research broadly explores ‘embodied transnationalism’ (Dunn, 2010) for Mexican migrants in Canada, which foregrounds the affective, banal and everyday characteristics of transnational mobility. To this end, I conducted in-depth interviews, lasting from one to one-and-a-half hours, with 30 Mexican migrants residing in Southwestern Ontario—10 male migrant workers, who migrate to Ontario annually for seasonal employment in the agricultural sector under Canada’s long-standing Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), and 20 immigrants (10 females and 10 males), who have obtained Canadian citizenship or are attempting to obtain permanent resident status in Canada. Interviews were supplemented by participant observation (i.e. I attended birthday parties, Spanish Catholic masses, Mexican community events, visited sites such as restaurants and stores frequented by Mexican migrants *etc*) and many informal discussions and interactions with key community stakeholders (i.e. persons who work with or volunteer with Mexican migrant workers and/or Mexican immigrants on a regular basis).

Mexican migrant men and women were recruited to participate in my research through snowball sampling with referrals beginning with personal networks and friends in the area. To protect the anonymity of research participants I have created pseudonyms throughout and omitted identifying details. The majority of interviews were conducted in English, except in cases where research participants preferred Spanish, in which case a translator was used. Interviews conducted in Spanish were translated to English with the aid of a bilingual research assistant. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim in English in order to facilitate in-depth analysis. Field notes were kept in order to record the essential themes transmitted in interviews, and to detail contextual features of each interview.

Given that 'the decision to migrate and the opportunities that facilitate migration are often nested in household arrangements' (Nawyn, 2010: 754) it is important to provide some additional information about the composition of my sample: all of the female immigrants I interviewed were married with children, with the exception of one woman who was married but did not have children. There was less uniformity among the ten immigrant men interviewed. This group was composed of six married men with children, two married men without children and two single men. All of the migrant worker participants were married with children. A profile that reflects the stipulations for participation in the SAWP requires migrant workers to:

enter the country as single applicants but must demonstrate that they support families in their home countries. Preference in recruitment is biased toward married workers to deter them from attempting to secure permanent residency through marriage or seeking to remain illegally (Preibisch, 2007: 101).

In effect, the state is intentionally creating and regulating transnational affective bonds as an instrument of labour policy. Of the total sample of thirty research participants, then, twenty-five were married with children (four of which represent two married couples), three were married without children and two were single. Notably, given my wider interest in 'embodied transnationalism' (Dunn, 2010), specifically the 'emotional terrain of transnationality' (Boehm & Swank, 2011), the interviews sourced in this article reflect participants' candour about their migration experiences, speaking at length about the challenges of negotiating their lives across transnational spaces. While all interviews in my study explored the role of emotions in the transnational migration experience, my primary data for this article draws on the literature of gender and transnationalism in order to explore the ways in which gender is negotiated and reconstituted through and as a consequence of migration.

## RELEVANT LITERATURE

The import of gender to migration research is evidenced by the numerous interdisciplinary reviews on the subject (e.g. Brettell & de Berjeois, 1992; Curran *et al.*, 2006; Donato *et al.*, 2006; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999, 2003; Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Nawyn, 2010; Pessar,

2003a/b; Silvey, 2004, 2006; Willis & Yeoh, 2000), with consideration extending to the subfield of 'transnationalism' (Boyle, 2002; Pessar & Mahler, 2003). Moch (2005: 101) argues that gender 'is a most revelatory concept when it is used as an organizing principle to elucidate the experiences of both men and women...for this reason, gender can be a central construct fruitfully used to interrogate and analyze immigrants and the migration process.' Nevertheless, Mahler and Pessar (2006: 50) contend that many transnational scholars claim to study 'gender', yet examine only women.

Undoubtedly, 'the interface between gender and migration scholarship has been problematic for many years' (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 814). Even with the currency of the '*feminization of migration*' (Castels & Miller, 1993), the recognized demographic trend that globally female migration is now virtually equal to or slightly greater than that of males, the lone-rugged male migrant stereotype has endured (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 822). So too has the prevailing understanding that women generally prefer to stay at home (Lutz, 2010; Carling, 2005). Hence, men are commonly portrayed as *voluntary migrants*, while women are implicitly understood as *voluntary non-migrants*, so that the significant participation of women in mass migrations is either ignored or ascribed to a lack of agency on the part of women (Jónsson, 2011: 11).

Given the long-standing omission of women from migration studies and against lingering perceptions of migrant women as 'out of place' when out of the 'home' it is important that feminist scholars have problematized the traditional view of 'home' as 'haven'—the domain of nurturing, emotional support and care-giving (Mitchell, 2009). For example, Valentine (2001: 63) stresses that the home is 'a matrix of social relations...and has wider symbolic and ideological meanings. Furthermore, adopting a 'critical household lens' (Nawyn *et al.*, 2009) feminist migration scholars have rejected prevalent conceptualizations of the household as an undifferentiated unit of analysis, which obscures the gendered dimensions of power within household decisions about migration. Drawing insight from studies delineating *the necessity* of a

gendered analysis of migration outcomes (e.g. Boyle & Halfacree, 1999; Constable, 1997; Hagan, 1994; Grasmuck & Pessar, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Kibria, 1994; Mahler, 1999; Menjivar, 2000; Momsen, 1999; Moodie, 1994; Morawska, 1996; Pessar, 1994; Wolf, 1992), it is now widely understood that migration engages individual household members in different ways (Silvey & Lawson, 1999). In fact, scholars have further problematized the ascendancy of the household in migration research by exploring the significance of the family and kinship groups over and above the household, indicating the importance of these networks in gender norms regarding the acceptability and likelihood of women's migration (Zontini, 2010: 227).

Researchers have also challenged the presumption that women assume greater gender freedom vis-à-vis migration (e.g. Pessar, 2003a/b), in fact 'a common premise of contemporary research on transnationalism is whether or not transnationalism has a 'liberating' effect on migrants' (Levitt *et al.*, 2003: 568). For example, scholars have sought to 'uncover the extent to which women are oppressed or empowered through transnational household arrangements' (Waters, 2010: 65). The results have been mixed with some studies describing the persistence of patriarchy across borders (Alicea, 1997; Castellanos & Boehm, 2008), the diminishing status of women, the intensification of male control (Abdulrahim, 1993; Kyle, 2000; Peña, 1991), and unequal dependency of women on their migrant spouses (Goldring, 1996; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 2000). On the other hand a sizeable body of literature shows that for female labour migrants, paid employment induces greater autonomy, independence and gender parity, whereas male migrants tend to experience greater relative loss of gender-related status (Eastmond, 1993; Gamburd, 2000; Hirsch, 1999; Kibria, 1994; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 1999). For instance, male migrants have been shown to confront reduced spatial mobility, a loss of male independence and authority in family decision-making process and control over household labour post-migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Messner, 2000; Napolitano Quayson, 2005). The gains of female labour migrants are particularly pronounced when 'women's wages and/or remittances are sufficiently

high relative to those of male household members to be used as leverage to negotiate greater parity in household decision making (including budgeting), in physical mobility, and in housekeeping and childcare' (Mahler & Pessar, 2006: 34). Other studies suggest the emergence of more equality, demonstrating the ways in which migration cultivates the redefinition of spousal relations, whereby couples come to enjoy improved, more egalitarian and considerate spousal relations (Hirsch, 2003; Pribilsky, 2004). Still other studies suggest that cultural norms regarding gendered practices are quite durable in spite of transnational migration (Dreby 2006; Kibria 1994).

My goal here, however, is not to review the empirical contributions of a gendered analyses to the transnational migration literature, but rather to stress how the insights garnered from feminist migration scholarship have contributed to movement away from stark dualistic terms (i.e. migration = emancipation OR subjugation). Integrating rich feminist theorizing of the intersection of gender, power and mobility (Massey, 1994; Mahler & Pessar, 2001; Morokvasic, 1984; Parreñas, 2001a), scholars are now asking 'more nuanced sets of questions about who transnational migration benefits, under what circumstances and why?' (Levitt *et al.*, 2003: 568). Analytically this reflects an understanding of migrants as embedded in gender systems of relations, where gender is understood as a system of power relations that permeates every aspect of the migration experience (Castellanos & Boehm, 2008; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Nawyn, 2010; Silvey, 2006). In fact, feminist migration scholars are increasingly stressing how migration and gender articulate in multiple and contradictory ways, revealing 'the substantial ways in which gender fundamentally organizes the social relations and structures influencing the causes and consequences of migration' (Curran *et al.*, 2006: 199).

For example, while Alicea's (1997) findings suggest that patriarchal domination is not dismantled through migration, she also documents the ways in which Puerto Rican migrant women negotiate and utilize transnational networks and spaces to enact communities of

resistance to racial and class oppression. Similarly, Matthei and Smith (1998) construct transnational family formation as a strategy for negotiating racial inequalities. Dannecker's (2005: 655) analysis of the transnational discourses and practices of Bangladeshi women, who migrate to Malaysia as temporary migrants shows that although transnational spaces are gendered, transnational influences are leading to renegotiations and transformation of the existing gender order. Likewise, Viruell-Fuentes' (2006: 335) research on first and second generation Mexican immigrant women, suggests that embeddedness in a transnational social field can have both liberatory and non-liberatory dimensions. This finding is consistent with Constable's (2003) work of divorce and (re)marriage among Filipina transnational migrant women, which illustrates the intertwined constraining and actualizing qualities of transnational mobility. Correspondingly, Williams (2005: 414) work on the transnational migration of Eastern Indonesian women elucidates different relational dynamics of migration, where women gain a measure of autonomy and experience widening and shifting subjectivities through the process of transnational migration. Finally, against structuralist readings of capitalism and patriarchy as mutually reinforcing, obscuring the agency of migrant women—Zontini's (2010: 226) research points to a complex and paradoxical relationship between capital and patriarchy, where women use opportunities offered by capitalism, namely the economic necessity of transnational migration, as strategies of resistance against patriarchal control of their lives. This work attests to 'the malleability of gender transnationally, illustrating how normative gender roles can be effectively negotiated' (Zontini, 2010: 227).

Recent scholarship of gender and migration, then, has moved from 'recognizing gender as a set of social practices shaping and shaped by migration' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003: 7) to a more sophisticated analytic understanding of gender as 'a central organizing principle in migration' (Pessar, 2003b: 20), the latter reflecting efforts to develop 'a theoretical approach for how to conceptualize and study gendered identities and relations when conducted and negotiated across international borders, as they relate to multiple axes of difference, and as they



operate along and across many sociospatial scales' (Mahler & Pessar, 2006: 42), namely, a framework Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar have called 'gendered geographies of power' (GGP) (Mahler & Pessar, 2001; Pessar & Mahler, 2003),

Combining insights derived from feminist intersectionality theory and the literature on transnational migration (Bayes & Gonzales, 2011), the GGP framework is vital to Pessar and Mahler's efforts to make gender central to transnational migration studies. Broadly defined, intersectionality is a framework for exploring the interlocking systems of domination (i.e. gender, race, class, and sexuality) (e.g. Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 1981; Collins, 1990; hooks, 2000). The perspective recognizes the multidimensional and intersecting nature of social oppression and seeks to understand how systems of subordination and domination are experienced and resisted. For example, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) and Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1992), prominent scholars of intersectionality, employ the terms 'matrix of domination' and 'intersecting axes of oppression', respectively, to emphasize contiguous standpoints derived from 'multiple systems of oppression' (Collins, 1990) that link various positions in society through patterns of both privilege and marginalization.

With intersectionality serving as a critical point of departure, Pessar and Mahler have broadened and deepened their original GGP framework (Mahler & Pessar, 2001) in order to 'bring gender into an even tighter transnational focus' (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 812) by facilitating a nuanced 'analysis of gender (and its articulation with other socially constructed identities) across transnational spaces' (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 818). Their framework is composed of three elements: 1) geographic scales, 2) social locations, and 3) power geometrics. The first element refers to spatial and social scales (e.g. the body, the family, the state) where gender ideologies and relations are reaffirmed, reconfigured or both (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 815). The second component of their model is 'social location'—or the position of people in 'inter-connected power hierarchies created through historical, political economic, kinship-based and

other socially stratifying factors' (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 816). The third analytical construct of Mahler and Pessar's GGP framework draws on Massey's (1994) 'power geometry' to highlight how people express their agency in different ways as they are positioned within and across transnational spaces—their use of 'power geometries' underscores 'the types and degrees of agency people exert given their social locations...in light of their extra-personal social locations and their individual characteristics (i.e. initiative) (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 816-17). In sum, the GGP framework is intended for:

analyzing people's gendered social agency—corporeal and cognitive—given their own initiative as well as their positioning within multiple hierarchies of power operative within and across many terrains. Though this framework is not only applicable to transnational contexts,...it is especially useful for analyzing these contexts in light of their complexities. Thus, we can utilize a gendered geography of power framework to map the historically particularistic circumstances that a given group of people experience and be able to analyze them on multiple levels (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 818).

In this way, the GGP framework, 'explores transnational landscape of gender and power, and further fractures the binary of gender by positioning gender practices within not just a social location that includes race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality but also a context of place and history' (Nawyn, 2010: 757). In what follows, I utilize the insight of this model in order to interrogate the constitution and reconfiguration of gender within the context of transnational migration.

## GENDERED GEOGRAPHIES: SHIFTING SOCIAL LOCATIONS OF DIFFERENCE

Feminist scholars have long theorized the gendered nature of the personal experience of migration (e.g. Constable, 1997; Huang *et al.*, 2000; Lawson, 1998, 2000; Morawska, 1984, Silvey, 2000, 2001; Willis & Yeoh, 2000). Correspondingly there has been increasing exploration of personal accounts and narratives as a unique way to access migrant experience (Hammerton, 2004; Neyzi, 2004; Pribilsky, 2004). The discursive space opened up through story-telling introduces embodied knowledge as an entry point into the materiality of immigrants' lives (Dyck & McLaren, 2004). In what follows I focus on Mexican men and women's embodied narratives of

migration to Canada in order to analyze the gendered dimensions of transnationalism. The portrait that emerges through these accounts demonstrates shifting gendered social locations, as men and women actively construct and reconstruct gendered lives through and as a result of migration.

Here my orientation to embodiment reflects feminist theorizing of embodied knowledge or the materiality of everyday life (e.g. Massey, 1994, McDowell, 1992; Smith, 1999), which stresses how ‘the knowledge through which we understand the world is embodied, derived from bodily social interactions taking place in the spaces of everyday life’ (Dyck & McLaren, 2004: 514). A theoretical orientation which is implicit in Mahler and Pessar’s (2001) GGP framework, particularly the analytical construct of ‘social location—a person’s position within interconnected power hierarchies of class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and, of course, gender, [which] operate at various levels that affect an individual or group’s social location’ (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 816). These ‘multiple dimensions of identity’ are understood to ‘shape, discipline, and position people and the ways they think and act (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 816). Importantly, Pessar and Mahler (2003: 816) stress that ‘[s]ocial locations must be viewed as fluid, not fixed, for people’s social locations can and usually do shift over time’. Crucially, this emphasis of agency is also contextualized against structural constraints, as the GGP model ‘takes as its foundation the obvious but not always stated fact that people—irrespective of their own efforts—are situated within power hierarchies that they have not constructed’ (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 816). This orientation contributes a great deal to our understanding of the lived experiences of transnational migration as it aids analysis of gender and its multiple and mutable articulation with other socially constructed identities across transnational spaces (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 818). My exploration of Mexican migration to Canada draws attention to the ways in which gender shapes unequal geographies of mobility, settlement and exclusion (Silvey, 2006).

## GENDERED MOVES: EXPLORING MIGRATION MOTIVATIONS

To begin, research participants' migration rationales reflect what Boehm (2008: 16) calls 'gendered moves—transnational movement with a decidedly gendered dimension.' In resonance with the associational model of women's migration (Jacka, 2006) all of the women in my sample described '*following their husbands*' as the main impetus of their migration. Four of the women accompanied or later joined their immigrant husbands in Canada, while the other six married Canadians and consequently moved to Canada. This is not, however to suggest that women did not have an active role in migration choices and decisions. Research participants expressed wider motives for their migration, concurrently citing the appeal of Canada, for example in relation to financial opportunities and personal security, or the country's progressive ideological orientation. Many also stressed that Canada provided an excellent environment in which to raise children and have a family. Nevertheless, women's narratives often revealed that their husbands were in fact the main agents in the decision to migrate. For instance, when asked 'Why did you immigrate to Canada?' Elsa, who has lived in Canada for two and a half years, shared the following response in a matter of fact manner:

*It was my husband's decision. When I met my husband he told me that he wanted to come to Canada. I had never thought much about Canada and I had never thought about leaving Mexico or even the city that I lived in. The decision was made because he made the decision of living in Canada.*

Similarly, Juanita, who has lived in Canada for three years, told me:

*You know it wasn't so much a decision as the act of following my husband. We were here [in Canada] on vacation and we liked it a lot: the cities, all the places we were at, we were in Ottawa, Toronto. It did cross my mind that I would like it here—but, never really the intention to move, no. Then there was an opportunity for employment here for my husband and well things just went from there. The decision of coming here to Canada was made actually, more by my husband.*

Likewise, Amelia, who has lived in Canada for twenty years, said:

*Um, well I, I didn't really, I just kind of followed my husband and, he was from Canada and um [shrugging shoulders]*

*R.: So, that's just kind of the way it went?*

*Yeah, there was no choice exactly and I was raised socially to [Pause]. Well, it never occurred to me to say, "If you want to marry me, you move here [Mexico]. The thought never even crossed my mind! It was almost like to marry—I knew I had to come here to Canada. That's just the way it was. And, later on I thought, what the heck was I thinking? It was always like this social thing in my background that the woman has to go where the man is, right? So you're not, it's not even an option. That's just the way it is down there [Mexico] and so it never even occurred to me!*

Amelia's commentary is particularly interesting as it speaks to the ways that immigration to Canada prompted her to question prevailing gender ideologies in Mexico.

Significantly, the women in my sample commonly reported 'giving up' or 'leaving behind' professions and/or careers in order to immigrate to Canada. In fact, eight of the ten women I interviewed held a variety of academic and professional degrees—for example, a degree in Business Administration, a Masters degree in History, a Masters degree in Bio-Chemistry, an Engineer, a Legal Assistant, and a Graphic Designer. Yet, none of the women continued careers in their respective fields post-migration, because they were unable to take advantage of their credentials for various reasons (i.e. the composition of the labour market in Southwestern Ontario, their credentials were not recognized, they lacked Canadian experience, language barriers and in some cases their reproductive labour as mothers replaced paid employment). In fact, employment issues were a central theme in women's narratives of their immigration experiences, with women frequently citing employment barriers and the inability to fulfill their profession potential as key settlement challenges in Canada. This is consistent with literature focusing on immigrant women's relationship to the Canadian labour force, which outlines barriers to participation and the widespread experience of downward mobility (e.g. Chiang, 2001; Creese & Kambere, 2003; Dossa, 2002; Morris & Sinnott, 2003; Preston *et al.*, 2003).

Although women in my sample reported relatively better socio-economic status post-migration, employment barriers promoted husband-wife dependence. Women detailed how this dependence was particularly difficult in light of their separation from their familial support networks in Mexico. This gendering of settlement experiences is indicative of the ways in which

migration can be understood to undermine women's independence and autonomy, at least initially, as women struggle to reconstruct their lives in Canada. For example, Mayra, who has lived in Canada for fifteen years, declared, *"Coming to Canada, I had to start from nothing! I had to start my life all over again and without the support of my family. It was very, very difficult!"* Juanita conveyed the following: *"I expected to find a fountain full of jobs in Canada, but no, this wasn't the case. Everything is calm and safe, yes, it is a good place for my children, but securing a job has been a challenge. I have had to accept many terrible jobs."* Similarly, Paulina shared the following:

*I came here for love yes, to be married, but also I thought I was coming to a country where there were a lot of professional possibilities and that hasn't been the case. In many ways my life has improved, a nice house, less crime and more security for my children—yes. But for me, for myself, coming to Canada has been hard—because I had a really good job in Mexico. A really good job! To just quit, to leave that life behind was very difficult. Coming here was so hard, it is still hard. Like right now I work at [Name of Company], I work on the line, where I have never worked before in my life. I remember thinking: "Oh my God, if my mom sees me doing this! This is what I have done with my education?" Because, well you know, my mom paid for me to go to university, she was very proud and now, it's for nothing. Well, not nothing, but at the same time I haven't been able to use my degree in Canada. Here it is also different because in many cases you make more money in factory jobs than jobs in an office. In Mexico, there's no way. Workers in factories are paid very poorly. (Paulina has lived in Canada for eight years)*

Elsa and Maria also experienced similar conflicts:

*I loved my life in Mexico, especially my job! So it was a hard decision to come to Canada, it was very problematic for me. First, I had to fill out an application. It took my husband two years to convince me to fill out that application for permanent residence. Once he convinced me, I said, "O.K. I'm going to fill this out." But, I was hoping it would be rejected and, to my surprise everything was ready in six months! It was such a shock, I had been working at my job for eight years and my goal was to become a lawyer, plus I was finishing my masters and about to graduate. The day before I left for Canada I handed in my thesis and my whole family was shocked because they didn't understand how I could leave. They thought, "What is she thinking? She has her whole life here, her profession, what is she going to do over there? Who knows?" In many ways it was a lot to sacrifice; here I do not have many job opportunities—many doors are closed. (Elsa)*

*Before coming here I imagined Canada to be so different—I had so many illusions about the employment opportunities and the possibilities. I mean in many ways life here is better, there is more security, more stability and you have more things economically. But I am very dependent on my husband. We have these things only because of him and that has been difficult for me, to not work, to not contribute financially—because all of my life I worked in Mexico. (Maria, has lived in Canada for 3yrs)*

Although the women in my sample readily acknowledge sacrificing their careers, their lives are not simple and they are not passive victims of gender subordination. Most reported a wide-range of strategies to develop productive and meaningful lives in Canada, for example, returning to school and/or embracing new careers as typified in Amelia's narrative:

*Of course when I came to Canada I wanted to work. I certainly wasn't going to sit home and clean anybody's house. A house I was told was now mine, but really it didn't feel mine, nothing was mine. Not the house, not the car. So, I started looking for work, brining my transcripts and whatever, and people were saying "Oh, you're over qualified."...I wanted to work in the worst way and people kept undermining me. It was so frustrating! I couldn't understand why they wouldn't take advantage of my skills. That to me was an insult, I couldn't imagine how things could be so backwards in a supposedly progressive country.*

In keeping with traditional Mexican gender ideologies which value the caring work of mothers and celebrate the ideal of the virtuous, self-sacrificing mother (Dreby, 2006) women often downplayed forfeiting their professions, repeatedly referencing how the realities of motherhood simply required great sacrifice. Embracing motherhood, however, must also not be read in too simplistic of terms: first because womens' domestic and reproductive labour ought not be devalued and second because women clearly cultivating their lives and emotional well-being in Canada through their roles as mothers. Furthermore, women repeatedly emphasized how the experience of migration 'changed them', how the process had made them stronger; more independent and self-reliant. For instance, Mayra stated: "I am very grateful to Canada because in coming here I have learned I am a survivor. I have learned how capable I am, lessons I did not learn in Mexico." Elsa also described how the experience of migration has been enabling and transformative:

*I was raised to value the importance of independence—that if I had a career I wouldn't need to rely on anyone, not a man, not any one. I was self-assured—I was an educated and successful woman in Mexico. But, when I came to Canada, when I came out of my small world, I realized how much I had to learn. I confronted so many of my fears and discovered so many weaknesses and insecurities. In the process I found my true strength, my true self. Through all the confusion I found out what I was really made of, how strong I really am. I give God thanks that he has given me the opportunity to come to Canada, because my life would have stayed the same, working in my small world, with such a limited world view.*

These illustrations speak to complicated and shifting terrain of gendered migrations (Boehm, 2008; Burton, 2004), as immigrant women's narratives defy a simple dichotomy of oppressed women/liberated women.

Likewise, immigrant men's migration initially appeared 'typical' (i.e. economically motivated); however by examining their embodied narratives of migration it became clear that just as women's migrations could not be labeled too narrowly as motivated by personal and familial concerns, men's migration rationales were equally never simply economic. For example, even when men indicated that their migration was economically motivated, this was *always* related either to familial obligations, as was especially pronounced among migrant workers and/or cosmopolitanism, as was the case *only* in relation to immigrant men. Male immigrants' articulation of cosmopolitanism, an attitude that is linked to the idea of new global citizens (Cohen, 2006), reflects the distinct socio-economic and migratory status differentials between male immigrants and male migrant workers, where immigrants, tended to be well-educated, upper-middle class, while *temporary* migrant workers, deemed ineligible for Canadian citizenship, are all men of lower socioeconomic status (essentially poor), with little or no formal education. As such they held no illusions or lofty aspirations of 'global citizenship'.

As elsewhere in the world, the rootedness of male identity within men's activities as income providers for the family is a key dimension of constructions of Mexican masculinity (Dreby, 2006; Fuller, 2003; Gutmann, 2006). Consistent with this construction of masculinity the fathers in my sample stressed their responsibilities as economic providers and indicated how migration represented an opportunity for them to improve the lives of their families. (This theme was especially pronounced in the migration narratives of migrant workers). In line with traditional male-led migration trajectories, immigrant men within the 'family category' led migration to Canada, arriving first and then were later joined by their wives and children (however, it should be noted that research participants who were parents also frequently



reported the birth of an additional child and/or children post-migration and in many cases participants became parents post-migration to Canadian born children. This was true for both men and women).

The reinscription and reification Mexican masculinity as male dominance was apparent in my research in that migrant worker often exclusively made ‘the call’ about migration decisions. Men commonly told me how they learned of Canada’s SAWP by speaking with other men. Once informed about the benefits of migration many men simply signed up—with little or no consultation with their wives. Several men divulged narratives about arriving home one day and announcing, out of the blue, that they would be migrating to Canada. Male dominance or authority over migration decisions is clearly derived from Mexican gender ideology, in which male/father roles are tied to financial provision (Boehm, 2008; 2010; Dreby, 2006). In fact, in the context of ‘historically masculinized Mexican migration’ (Boehm, 2008: 20) ‘the masculinity of those who do not migrate is called into question.’ Thus, despite evidence in the literature suggesting migration induces the reconstitution of gender relations (i.e. household arrangements, so that women exercise more autonomy), male dominance is still evident, as wives are often excluded from migration decisions. In fact, men often alluded to the fact that their migration was not seen as a good arrangement by their wives; many men told me how their wives ‘beg them not to leave’ or ‘are angry with them for leaving’. For example, in spite of the disapproval of his wife and escalating family conflict over his migration, Gilberto has migrated to Canada consecutively for the last eight years.

*My wife she doesn't want me to leave anymore. She worries because our oldest daughter is beginning to mature and there are more pressures. She tells me not to come here and that I am here for too long a time. My wife doesn't want me to come and my daughters don't want me to come either. It is such a long time.*

R: *Do you think you will come again next year?*

Yes, [pause] *I know I will.*

In contrast my research also reveals the ways the masculinity is compromised by immigration to Canada, as immigrant men leave behind their white-collar employment in Mexico to work in labour intensive, often low-wage jobs in Canada. Analogous with the settlement experience of Mexican immigrant women, men often described the significant employment barrier they confronted in Canada in spite of the fact that many held advanced educational and professional credentials. Nico, who has lived in Canada for three and a half years, described the initial two years post-migration in the following way:

*Starting a life for me and my family in Canada was very difficult. I came quite sure of myself, I knew what I was doing and I knew what I wanted—but, I discovered life in Canada would be very difficult. It was from one job to the next, to the next, laid off, laid off—nothing was stable. Now things are better, my family life has improved, but economically I cannot say I am better here than in Mexico—in time I believe I will be, it is a process, it takes time. For example, in my case when I first came I had to start working in a greenhouse with all the other immigrants and even undocumented workers, doing the heavy labour work they were doing. Despite my university degree this is all that I could find—I did it! And, I was thankful for the job, thanks to a friend of mine who was already working there and so he got me in—but, it was very hard and I doubted myself a lot. I became insecure. Now in my current job, I do use my university education. What I have learned is that adaptation takes time—it is not a process that happens overnight.*

Roberto, who has lived in Canada for six years, experienced similar issues:

*I never expected to struggle so much. I never imagined that life de este lado [this side], would be so extreme, you know financially speaking. I came with certain expectations, an image of life in a first world country—the standard of living, the types of employment opportunities that would be available—but, that was not my experience. My financial problems grew and grew, I could not find an employer to recognize my skills and credentials, and well eventually I had to resort to working in a greenhouse. It was very difficult for me. It really challenged my self-esteem—because, well—I am a university graduate; I was well established in my career in Mexico. I had never done physical labour in my life! Then, here I was living in Canada, doing work I would never have considered in Mexico—it was very, very difficult.*

These illustrations underscore the gendered dimensions of migration, as migration clearly placed pressures on (traditional) male identities (i.e. male = breadwinner) and these challenges induced feelings of inadequacy. Although the equation of transnationalism with masculinity is not well documented, the costs of masculinity have been recognized in the literature as men may have particular problems because of their gender and the social expectation placed upon them (Connell, 2005b). Boehm (2008: 23) notes that '[a]lthough masculinity is closely associated with

migration, many men encounter disjunction when they migrate. Rather than experiencing migration as an empowering process, men are often disappointed.’

The settlement experiences of immigrant men and women were also divergent. Unlike the women in my sample, all of whom did not resume employment in their respective professional fields post-migration, men were eventually able to re-establish themselves professionally in Canada. This occurred in the absence of returning to school and for most, without entirely changing their professional orientations. In fact, three of the male research participants in my sample were immune to career disruptions because their migration to Canada was sponsored by their employers. For these men, immigration to Canada not only entailed economic security, but also upward socio-economic mobility as they all reported achieving post-migration promotions. In this sense, the public realm of paid employment and the assumed role of men as breadwinners continued to be key denominators of male Mexican identity post-migration. Correlated with this reconfirmation of traditional notions of masculinity post-migration, men *never* mentioned work-family balance conflicts. Unlike immigrant women, immigrant men did not struggle with issues of sacrificing their careers in order to fulfill parental roles and obligations. In fact, the absence of these conflicts is a key point of divergence between men and women’s migration narratives.

These differences speak to the durability of normative familial gender roles and relations (i.e. essentialized notions of mothers as more ‘natural’ parents and the instrumental role of fathers). However, in relation to migrant workers my findings were contrary to the Mexican gender ideal of stoic instrumental masculinity. Specifically, when examining migrant workers’ familial relations I found *paternidad afectiva transnacional*—emotionally engaged transnational fatherhood, in which ‘emotional labour’ and emotional intimacy are critical to migrant workers’ fathering from a distance (e.g. Chapter 4). In the context of male immigrants, two notable examples illustrate the ways in which younger males did not fit neatly into ‘traditional’ Mexican

male identities. Jorge and Ernesto both immigrated to Canada in order to be with their Canadian wives, both indicated that they had no prior intentions to migrate, both had ‘good jobs’ in Mexico and both told me that ‘circumstances’ brought them to Canada—migrations that markedly entailed significant professional sacrifice.

For example, Jorge, who has lived in Canada for almost ten years and works in the food service industry, is a university graduate with a degree in architecture. Prior to migration Jorge was professionally employed in Mexico, but he has been unable to secure related employment in Canada. When asked: Economically, what has life been like for you in Canada? Jorge replied,

*My opportunities have been limited. There are opportunities in Canada, but few in small towns like this one. So you have to go out and look for them. For me it was all very overwhelming; sometimes one feels scared to go out and look. You don't understand the language, you don't understand the employment process, so in some ways I must admit that my problems have been because of fear or because of nervousness—it is all a lot of work and expensive and so well you get intimidated—you leave it [i.e. the formal accreditation process] and leave it and before you know it one year, two and then five years go by and you are now living a different life. Now I am a husband and father. My wife and children they are my life.*

Ernesto, who has lived in Canada for ten years, shared the following when asked, Was it a difficult decision for you to immigrate to Canada?

*Yes and no, it had pros and cons. My whole life was in Mexico, my friends, my family, my career. I knew my way around the country, I knew what to do, where to go to accomplish what I needed to accomplish. When I came to Canada, I just didn't know ANYTHING! Nothing was simple and this was difficult. It was pretty hard for me in the beginning because I wasn't able to work for a year—I did work under the table, but that year was pretty tough because I was waiting for my work permit and my options were so limited. I really couldn't do anything. I felt useless. My first job in Canada was changing mirrors and fixing bathrooms and things like that, so it really didn't matter what my degrees were in Mexico. It did not have an impact. It can be tough to get your credentials recognized and your Mexican experience doesn't seem to matter. They [potential employers] aren't interested in what you have accomplished there.*

Despite Ernesto's non-traditional female-led migration rationale and his initial career sacrifices, his general experiences are more in-line with that of other immigrant men in that he was eventually able to re-establish himself professionally in Canada and his career remains a key determinant of his life-course trajectory as indicated in the following excerpt:

*I have worked really hard to move ahead. I think to move to Canada, it was pretty smart for me. Like I said I had a good job in Mexico but since I have been here in Canada I have grown a lot and I have accomplished a lot. I have purchased things I could never have afforded in Mexico, at least not so quickly. In this way it has been good—the plan is to live in Canada the rest of my life, but if I get a much better job offer in Mexico, I would go back.*

The danger of course in underscoring the salience of immigrant men's normative gender identities in the public realm of paid employment is inadvertently renewing the tendency to see men's migrations as motivated by economic rationales and therefore undervaluing personal and familial migration dimensions. In effect, immigrant men's lives in Canada cannot be so narrowly understood. For example, fathers frequently related that their 'free time' in Canada was spent with their families and often stressed the importance of 'being with their children', 'spending quality time with them', and 'taking them places on weekends' (i.e. ice-skating, the public library, sporting events, plays etc). In speaking with men it was obvious that their families occupied a central and meaningful place in their lives and also that their family's needs largely drove their career aspirations, indicating the ways in which family and work are linked and intertwined. My interviews with both Jorge and Ernesto were punctuated by interruptions from their young children—climbing up on their laps, bringing them toys to adjust or asking them questions. In the processes I was able to observe both men as active and engaged fathers. In sum, male research participants' narratives of migration complicate superficial linear readings of male migration as economically motivated and destabilize essentialized notions of 'instrumental' Mexican fatherhood.

As previously mentioned, cosmopolitanism represents another interesting divergent theme in migrants' migration rationales. A theme I explore in more detail here. Generally, cosmopolitanism describes an attitude or orientation 'a willingness to engage with the other. It entails an intellectual and aesthetic openness towards divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity' (Held, 1996: 103); it is an attitude that is associated to 'new global citizens' (Cohen, 2006). Six of the ten immigrant men in my sample referenced ideas such

as 'global citizenship', 'meeting and being among people from various cultures' and 'becoming comfortable among diverse world cultures' as key motivations for migrating to Canada. For example, when asked, 'Where is home for you?' Alejandro, who has lived in Canada for five years, replied, '*The world. I want to be at home in the world. To be able to go anywhere and appreciate it all—at the end of the day we are all people. In part this is why I came to Canada; why I'm a good fit for a cosmopolitan country like Canada.*' Likewise, Miguel Antonio, Roberto and Nico all stressed that broadening their cultural horizons was a major motivation for immigrating to Canada:

*I do have friends that speak Spanish, Mexican friends, but also friends from Costa Rica and Columbia...but, I wouldn't say that all or even most of my friends speak Spanish. In fact, part of my goal in coming here was to try to meet or get along with all different kinds of people, for example, I have a couple of Japanese friends. I mean it is just very logical that you can get along well with people who speak the same language. At least it is easier, right? But I came here to try to get along well with all kinds of different people. I prefer to try to meet with and engage with non-Spanish speaking friends; people from all over the world, India, France, Italy...I came to Canada because I thought of it as a very cosmopolitan place. To be exposed to and comfortable among global cultures was a major motivation for me to come to Canada. (Miguel Antonio, has lived in Canada for 2yrs)*

*I have always had an adventurous spirit—growing up I always had an image of Canada as a cosmopolitan country—in fact, this was a huge influence on my decision to come here, to meet and be with people from all over the world. I have always aspired to be a person who is comfortable among people from all over the world—to be a person of the world. (Roberto)*

*The cosmopolitanism that Canada has attracted me a lot—just the way you are able to meet people from different parts of the world—so many countries in just one area. This was a very big draw for me. (Nico)*

Two of the ten immigrant women in my sample referenced viewing Canada as a cosmopolitan country, but none mentioned this as a key motivation for their migration. In contrast, cosmopolitanism was a common and reoccurring theme in men's migration rationales. The assumption that the increase in transnational experiences has a positive effect on the development of cosmopolitan attitudes and orientations is widely present in the literature (Tarrow, 2005; Kwok-Bun, 2002; Hannerz, 1990). Indeed, there is a tendency to equate mobility and cosmopolitan attitudes. In many accounts cosmopolitanism is seen as 'a form of privilege, connoting the well travelled and culturally sophisticated, contrasted with the provincial and naïve' (Sypnowich, 2005: 56).

The fact that female immigrants rarely cited or referenced notions of cosmopolitanism reflect gender differences as transnational migration has historically been conceptualized as a masculine domain. In fact, there has been a strong identification between masculinity and global mobility and exploration (van Hoven & Hörschelmann, 2005). The equation of transnationalism with masculinity is well documented in the literature (e.g. Asis *et al.*, 2004; Connell, 2005b; Ong, 1999; Yeoh & Willis, 2004; Zimmer-Tamakoshi, 1993). Interestingly, Derné (2005) illustrates how males in India handle the destabilization of masculine and national identity induced by transnational migration and global mass media by equating masculinity with cosmopolitanism and femininity with local and domestic spaces. Boehm's (2008: 24) work on Mexican transnational migration also highlights how masculinity is equated with migration, while women's migration is resisted or mediated by gendered power structures in which 'male power is strong and pervasive'. In my study, immigrant men's prominent referencing of cosmopolitanism can be read as suggestive of the ways in which migration and masculinity are often associated, illustrating the transnational production and reconstitution of dominant discourses of masculinity.

## MEXICAN-CANADIAN GENDER RELATIONS

Mexican immigrant men and women's narratives about dating and marital relationships provide another telling example of the ways in which gender profoundly informs not only migration, but also transnational family negotiations. For example, women's narratives reveal how gender practices play out through the restriction of female mobility and the surveillance of women's sexuality, where men are understood as guardians of female virtue, as evidenced in Paulina's story:

*What did my family think of me marrying a Canadian? Ah well [Laughing], it was a big deal! In my town in Mexico it wasn't common. No way! Actually I was one of the first. But the issue wasn't that he was Canadian—it was that he wasn't Mexican. This was the deal, because if Mexicans see someone blond or blue eyed, to them they are American. They don't think, "Oh he's Canadian." I experienced this first*

*hand with my cousin too. She married a pilot from the American air force. A lot of American boys they go to Mexico, to have fun and—you know, try to hook up or get with a Mexican girl. So that even our Mexican friends, you know like guy friends, they take special care of the Mexican girls because they know that Americans they just want to go there and have fun and whatever—My cousin, she started dating an American and it was like the end of the world for my whole family! Like my uncle wanted to kill her, he was like “No way!”, because they resent and hate American men for coming and taking advantage of the Mexican girls. It was the same for me—Oh God! It was intense. There was a big meeting, with my mom and the rest of the family because [husband’s name] had invited me to come here [to Canada] to meet his family and so my mom asked the family, “O.K. what do you think?” And, my uncle was like, “Well if you think that you can go to Canada by yourself. Well, let’s say your relationship doesn’t work, now you’re going to be single all of your life because none of the Mexicans guys are going to want you because they know that you have already gone by yourself with your boyfriend and stayed there.” You know because that is BAD for a Mexican girl. So it was a big deal!*

Gabriela, who has lived in Canada for six years, revealed a similar patriarchal family dynamic:

*When my brothers and cousins found out that I was coming to Canada to visit a boy, my boyfriend, well now my husband, they were pissed. They kept saying to me, “Why can’t you find a nice Mexican guy?” You see, there’s this traditional thing down there, the idea that men have to look after female family members—that kind of thing and well me coming to Canada by myself! That was a no, no. My family saw it as rebellious I guess. Travelling by yourself is not what a Mexican girl should be doing, not a nice girl anyway.*

Despite the absence of such themes in immigrant men’s narratives, Rodrigo’s (a single man who has lived in Canada for three years) candid discussion about his struggle to meet and date Canadian women is quite revealing:

*Women here are especially complex, the opposite of what you find in Mexico—women who are very submissive—who do what their husbands say—this is the kind of women they have in Mexico. There I know how to be a man—I know how to act. Men are meant to be in charge, to take the lead, to protect women—it is the complete opposite here. And, on the one side I think this is good. Women are more in control. But, on the other, women are very dominant in Canada and it is extremely difficult to open them up, to find a way for them to let you in.*

Rodrigo’s commentary attests to the fact that masculinity is not monolithic or unproblematic, but rather constantly negotiated and contested (Connell, 2005b; Mac an Ghaill, 1996; van Hoven & Hörschelmann, 2005).



Discussions of romantic relationships between Mexican and Canadian men and women also shed light on the ways in which relations of gender intersect with class in circuits of mobility. As exemplified in Amelia's and Ernesto's discussions:

*I really don't think it's common for Mexican women to marry Canadians. North American women going to Mexico and hooking up with Mexican men, this is quite common. Because North American women are more liberal, so when they travel to Mexico they tend to hook up with guys of lower socio-economic status. One, because they don't know the difference between a higher-level Mexican and a lower-level Mexican and Mexican women they know, because, well it's our culture. Two, because they can sleep with them and there's no sense of obligation. Where it's harder with a Mexican girl—a Mexican girl has more sense of prudence and modesty and a lot more virginity—that's huge down there, whereas here [in Canada] it isn't valued the same. I'm talking about the resorts on vacation, you know, when North American women go to Mexico. Right away guys would be [snapping fingers to suggest the guys are snapping up the women]. Plus, poor Mexican men are looking for a ticket out of Mexico.*

*I have been always been received well, of course I do believe this has to do with my appearance because it is not the typical stereotype that Canadians have of Mexicans. So for example with my wife [who is Canadian], the first time that she told her friends and family, "I'm dating a Mexican guy", people were skeptical and shocked, because they expected the stereotype. The idea of Mexican people Canadians have in their minds—you know shorter, darker skin, maybe a little bigger and definitely uneducated and poor. (Ernesto has lived in Canada for ten years)*

These extracts speak to the ongoing constitution of gender subjectivities. As Boehm (2008: 20) asserts, '[t]he negotiations between individuals and within families and communities that create understandings of gender are fluid, often elusive and immensely powerful.'

## GENDERED DIVISIONS OF LABOUR

Upper-middle class Mexican women's narratives of coping with new gender expectations post-migration offers another compelling illustration of how gender intersects with class. Their struggles with the domestic gendered division of labour in Canada are indicative of how relations of gender are changed and navigated through spatial mobility. For these women migration initiated a dramatic reconstruction of their gender identities, as they were now thrust into domestic responsibilities that their privileged class status in Mexico had permitted them to avoid. Accustomed to nannies and housekeepers, migration entailed a type of downward social

mobility as these services are not as readily available or as inexpensive in Canada. The difficulties and challenges of confronting new gender expectations around childcare and domestic labour were recurring themes in women's narrative as exemplified in the following illustrations:

*Everything in Canada was different! All of a sudden I was thrown in a culture where you actually have to cook and clean, and go to the grocery store. In the beginning my husband used to go with me every week. We used to go up and down every single isle and I had no idea what to get. I never cooked in my life; O.K. never! I never touched a pan in my life, I never cleaned. I never did any of it in Mexico!...Oh it was terrible! I had such a feeling of inadequacy, and a sense of helplessness. By that I mean O.K. I can cook but, what am I going to cook? You see, you go to the grocery store and you face these chunks of beef that are huge and I was completely overwhelmed!*

Angelica's remarks are equally revealing:

*Many times when I speak with my sister who lives in Mexico, I joke a lot. I say to her, "I came to Canada to wash toilets!" [Rolling her eyes and laughing]—because I never did that when I was in Mexico, but here I do [Laughing]. In fact many of my taboos or images of myself, as in—I do not do this, I do not do that, which in Mexico relates to the social status that you have, I had to re-evaluate. Because of my class I was free from doing many things, like laundry, like cooking. Where class is different here [in Canada], it is completely blended here. Here you become more part of a society, which in Mexico you live in your bubble, in the specific social level that you belong to and you never leave that comfort zone. Here you relate to all social levels, classes they are not as pronounced, not as obvious. In Mexico class defines the fabric of life. (Angelica has lived in Canada for 10 yrs)*

Irma related an analogous viewpoint:

*You know coming to Canada has made me see Mexico differently. For example, I was raised to think that people are equal and you treat everyone with respect. But once you are here [in Canada], I tell you, you see the difference. Like the doctor's son and the labourer's son are in the same class and they speak to each other and they play. Now I have really seen equality. I really had to break that class difference, to say, "Yeah, I'm friends with the maid." Whereas in Mexico it is like, "Oh my goodness! How come you are friends with the maid?" I mean you can treat the maid nice, but to say my friend is a maid—NO! Not in Mexico, they say, "Oh how come? This is a sin, no you are not friends with a maid, you are nice to her, you can be polite you can even give her donations, give her food, give her whatever, but you are not her friend!" There it is more like an up-down relationship—they see it as if you are lowering yourself to be a maid's friend. Now [after migrating to Canada], I'm like no she is a person, she is the maid, she is the cashier, she is the cleaner—but she is more than that. [pause] And it is not just my views that have changed, it is also my experiences too because I realized all of the ways my life as a woman in Mexico was an advantaged one, something I never truly appreciated before coming to Canada. (Irma has lived in Canada for 11.5 yrs)*

In the case of migrant workers, men's physical separation from their families also necessitates the reorganization of household arrangements and by extension gender roles. In discussions about this process, migrant men often alluded to the transformation of normative gender expectations as a result of their migration to Canada. For example, Juan poignantly stated: "*Cleaning, laundry, cooking, these were never my worries in Mexico, but here, in Canada, here I am a man and a woman.*" Similarly, Gilberto expressed the following:

*I never realized how much my wife did for me, no, not at all. Not until I came to Canada and had to do it for myself—here I cook, I do my own laundry, I buy my own food—I never did this in Mexico—no way! Now I do understand.*

While Jesús told me,

*Now when I'm back home [in Mexico], I'm more aware. I try to give my wife a break. Now I also cook and do laundry, I did none of this before.*

Needless to say men's absence from Mexico is a source of marital conflict. Migrant men reported that their wives feel resentful and overwhelmed at having to manage the household alone. Equally, husbands are frustrated that they are 'not there to help' and/or 'oversee' the daily activities and responsibilities of the household. In one sense this frustration is indicative of the destabilization of rigid gender roles as men referenced the importance of assisting their wives with domestic and childcare duties; on the other hand men also expressed frustration about the loss of authority about household decision-making processes. Additionally, men generally mentioned 'masculine' tasks that underscore a continued gendered division of labour such as disciplining children, fixing things, or managing household finances.

In discussing the experience of initial downward social mobility in the Canadian labour market, immigrant men also referenced the transformative impact of migration.

*Before coming to Canada I had never really worked. Not like the way those who work in the fields and factories in my country [Mexico] work. Here I had to work in the greenhouses—working up to eight hours every day from 7 in the morning till 5 at night—I can now say with pride, for the first time in my life, that I really worked these hands. There, I was protected, spoiled and selfish; I tended to look down on the poor. I took so many things for granted, like going to restaurants. I would be rude to waitresses and*

*waiters—I was demanding without ever considering or realizing how difficult such jobs can be. You know? How one's position in life determines so many things. (Rodrigo)*

*The funny thing about working in the greenhouse—even though it was one of the most difficult things I have ever had to do, the physical labour, it was exhausting! But it woke me up, it made me tougher. I was [shaking his head and laughing] such a snob in Mexico! I never broke a sweat; I never really worked a day in my life. Really! [Laughing] I realize that now. And yet I felt so entitled, so worthy. In many ways coming to Canada showed me what it is to truly be a man, to work and to earn things. So much of what I had in Mexico was given to me by my parents. I just simply took it for granted. (Roberto)*

In advancing the GGP framework Pessar and Mahler (2003: 819) ask, 'does transnational migration provide openings for men and women to question hegemonic notions of gender and entertain competing understandings of gendered lives?' They propose, '[i]f the latter proves, at least sometimes, to be the case, we should inquire whether the changes observed were emergent prior to migration, or if they would not have occurred in the absence of migration' (Pessar & Mahler, 2003: 819). The example explored above are suggestive of the ways migration has incited migrant women and men to reflect differently on Mexican gender norms and class structure.

The inclusion of women and men's embodied narratives of negotiating Canadian immigration reveals the gendering of immigration processes, more specifically how 'social locations' of difference are constituted, negotiated and *embodied* not in the abstract, but through material practices in particular sites (Dyck & McLaren, 2004; Silvey, 2006). My analysis illustrates how gender identities are often altered and reshaped through transnational processes, highlighting the 'co-constructed nature of identities and places' (Silvey, 2006). As other authors have noted (Boehm, 2008; Castellanos & Boehm, 2008; Zontini, 2004), transnationalism reconstitutes gender in diverse and contradictory ways. In contrast to one-dimensional findings from prior studies equating migration with greater equality, my findings underscore the paradoxical and diverse ways in which intersecting geographies of gender and class are constituted, reproduced and resisted in everyday life.

## CONCLUSION

In this article I have taken up Pessar and Mahler's (2003) challenge for scholars to do research that provides a gendered analysis of transnational migration—namely the gender transformations that migration elicits—in order to examine the ways gender identities and relations are negotiated in transnational contexts and also how gender organizes them. In so doing, I have underscored 'embodied transnationalism' (Dunn, 2010)—the emplaced materiality of the everyday lived experience of transnational migration. Exploration of the gendered migration experiences of Mexican migrants in Canada reveals the intersecting relations of gender and class. These 'gendered geographies of power' are accessed through research participants' embodied narratives of migration. Specifically, the analysis elucidates the complexity of women and men's gendered lives by tracing how systems of social inequality are actively negotiated, resisted and reproduced. The research reveals how migration reconfigures gender identities and subjectivities. For example, post-migration both upper-middle class Mexican women and male migrant workers face new domestic burdens, while some upper-middle class immigrant men must participate in manual labour for the first time in their lives. At the same time, research participants' narratives also suggest the transformative potentiality of migration as men and women come to not only question prevailing ideologies of class in Mexico, but also their positionality in relation to these power hierarchies. Thus, findings denote the shifting transnational social location of gender.

This article problematizes scholarship suggestive of the liberating and destabilizing effects of transnational migration. Focusing on gender and not women, my research underscores the importance of a relational, spatially and temporally contextualized gender analysis. Also in attending to transnational embodiment through examining narratives as access points of embodied negotiated gender subjectivities, I emphasize the ongoing, dynamic and contradictory articulations of gender and in turn the agency of transnational subjects. Against overly

structuralist readings of transnational migration, in foregrounding embodiment my approach to gender emphasizes the constitutive relationship between agency and structure. Working from Mahler and Pessar's (2001) GGP transnational theoretical framework the research emphasizes the individual agency of migrants in negotiating and constituting the structure of gender, while also realizing the constraints put upon agency. In demonstrating how gender acts as an axis of power relations that shapes and organizes the materiality of men and women's embodied lived experiences of migration the research contributes to feminist migration scholarship.

## CHAPTER 4 EMOTIONALLY ENGAGED TRANSNATIONAL FATHERHOOD AMONG MALE MEXICAN MIGRANT WORKERS

*“Ojos vemos corazones no sabemos”—Eyes we see hearts we do not know*  
(Diego, migrant worker)

In an effort to avoid the over-valorization of mobility and flows in the transnational literature the concept of ‘embodied transnationalism’ (Dunn, 2010) is being advanced in order to draw attention the everyday lived experience of transnationalism—the materiality and socio-spatial emplacement through which transnational practices, processes and networks are produced. This emergent body of scholarship advocates attending to the emotional dimensions of transnational mobility in order to foreground the affective, banal and everyday characteristics of transnational mobility, providing ‘nuanced insight into the emotional and affective geographies of transnational migration’ (Dunn, 2010: 6). In fact, in their seminal work on transnationalism Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Christina Blanc-Szanton (1994: 5) implicate the importance of embodiment by emphasizing that ‘transnationalism is grounded in the daily lives, activities and social relationships of migrants.’ Given the growing recognition of the importance of emotions within all of these realms (Boehm & Swank, 2011; Svašek, 2008; 2010; Svašek & Skrbiš, 2007; Wise & Chapman, 2005), it is not surprising that interdisciplinary transnational research is increasingly exploring how emotional processes shape human mobility and vice versa (Svašek, 2010).

Certainly, ‘migrants and their relations, through lived, embodied experiences, are actively redefining concepts such as ‘marriage’, ‘parenthood’, and ‘family’ (Waters, 2010: 63). However, because ‘family life tend[s] to be more subjective, involving imagination, invention, and emotions that are deeply felt but not overtly expressed, these aspects of transnational lives are more difficult to capture but, nevertheless, critical for the emergence of transnational identities and landscapes’ (Levitt *et al.*, 2003: 571). The emotional dimensions of migrants’ day-to-day lives

undeniably affect the ways in which migrants create and sustain transnational engagement. Yet, most studies continue to ignore the saliency of these dimensions. My research targets this deficiency in the literature.

The emotional and affective dimensions of transnational mobility are perhaps most prominent in the literature of the intimate realm of transnational families, where considerable attention has been given to the transfer of ‘motherly’ care or ‘mothering from a distance’ (Parreñas, 2001b) by women labour migrants working abroad as domestics or as caregivers and the associated ‘global care chain’—‘personal links between people across the globe based on the paid or unpaid work of caring’ (Hochschild, 2000: 131) or the ‘transnationalization of caring’ (Yeoh *et al.*, 2005). This literature has greatly enhanced our understanding of the ‘lived experience’ of transnational migration for women. However, it has also retained the widely recognized tendency within transnational migration scholarship to conflate gender with women (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Cranford, 2006; Mahler & Pessar, 2006; Mosh, 2005; Nawyn, 2010) as much of this work highlights the gendered realities of care and emotional work, *only* in relation to women (*e.g.*, Aranda, 2003; Escrivá, 2004; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2001; Hochschild, 2000, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas 2001a/b, 2002, 2005a/b; Viruell-Fuentes, 2006). Consequently, even though gender is now considered crucial to understanding transnationalism (Castellanos & Boehm, 2008; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Nawyn, 2010; Silvey, 2006), many gender-related topics remain under-appreciated, under-researched and/or under-theorized (Pessar & Mahler, 2003).

A compelling case in point is research on men’s experiences within transnational families. Geographer Johanna Waters (2010: 63) observes, ‘while there is greater awareness of the female experience of transnational migration (both as the migrant and the person ‘left behind’), we still have little parallel knowledge of men. This is echoed both by Yeoh, Huang and Lam (2005), and Kofman (2004), who point out that the experiences of men within transnational



families are still relatively unknown. Where men are depicted, it is commonly in the context of their mobility, in the absence of their families and eschewing virtually all domestic responsibilities—with masculine and patriarchal ‘disembodied’ images of power dominating these accounts (Asis *et al.*, 2004; Waters, 2010; Yeoh & Willis, 1999, 2004). A handful of studies examining men’s experiences have attempted to remedy this imbalance (*e.g.* Dreby, 2006; Rouse, 1995; Pribilsky, 2004; Schafer, 2000; Waters, 2010; Yeah & Willis, 2004), but there is still much room for additional research (Mahler & Pessar, 2006: 51).

The primary goal of this article, then, is to address this gap in our knowledge. Specifically, the expressed aims of this article are: 1) to explore men’s embodied experiences within transnational families; and 2) to explicitly explore the role of emotion in this context. The first section explores calls for consideration of emotions as an integral component of migration (Anderson & Smith, 2001) and reviews related scholarship bridging work on transnational migration with examinations of affect and emotion, particularly in relation to transnational family life. In the next section, drawing from Baldassar’s (2008) work, I address the negotiation and maintenance of transnational family relationships *vis-à-vis* co-presence, highlighting the ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) contributions of Mexican migrant men as they adjust to life as temporary agricultural workers, in the absence of their wives and children, in Southwestern Ontario Canada. In exploring how emotions shape and organize processes of migration, my work underscores the centrality of embodiment to migration studies and theories of transnationalism.

## METHODOLOGY

The research on which this article is based: draws on in-depth interviews with 10 Mexican men who are temporary migrant workers in Southwestern Ontario—where within the agricultural sector there is a historical and ongoing dependency on male migrant labour (Basok, 2002; Preibisch, 2010). Mexican migrant men represent the majority of Ontario’s seasonal

migrant worker population (Gogia, 2006: 360) under Canada's long-standing temporary migrant worker program (TMWP), the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). Significantly, eligibility in the SAWP is predicated on men's marital and parental status—where men must be married and demonstrate support to families in Mexico (Preibisch, 2007: 101). These stipulations, coupled with the high degree of annual circularity among SAWP participants (Preibisch, 2010; Basok, 2007), make male Mexican migrant workers an excellent case study from which to analyze transnational family dynamics as these men are actively negotiating and contributing to transnational households. For the present article, then, I accordingly opted to limit the scope of my analysis to interviews with male migrant workers. In so doing, I selectively draw from interviews with 10 of the total 30 interviews sourced in my doctoral research, which included an additional 20 interviews with Mexican immigrants (who have permanently settled or are seeking permanent resident status in Canada) for a total of 30 research participants, in order to explicitly explore the transnational family life of Mexican migrant men.

Male migrant workers were recruited for participation in my research with the assistance of an organizer of a local Spanish Catholic ministry for migrant workers by making announcements at church services and also by posting recruitment posters in stores, phone booths, and restaurants Mexican migrants workers patronize. Field research was conducted between August 2008 and March 2009, during which time interviews were complemented by ethnographic/participant observation (i.e. attending Spanish Catholic masses, Mexican community events, and visiting sites such as restaurants and stores frequented by Mexican migrant workers) and also informal discussions with multiple community stakeholders (i.e. persons who volunteer with or are employed in sectors servicing Mexican migrant workers). To protect the anonymity of research participants I have created pseudonyms throughout and omitted identifying details. Interviews were conducted in Spanish with the assistance of a translator. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim in English in order to facilitate in-depth analysis. Throughout my field studies, I regularly wrote journal entries,

especially directly before and after interviews in order to document rich details about each interview and potential insights as they arose. Though all interviews in my doctoral study explored the role of emotions in the transnational migration experience, my primary data for this article draws on specific discussion in the literature of the role of emotions in the negotiation of transnational life. For example, how are emotional dynamics shaped by migration and in turn what influence do these dynamics have on transnational engagement with absent family members? (Svašek, 2008).

## RELEVANT LITERATURE

Mahler and Pessar (2006: 50) argue that many transnational scholars claim to study 'gender', yet examine only women, consequently, 'men are an absent presence in many of these accounts, influential but rarely given a voice' (Waters, 2010: 65). Arguably 'the preoccupation with writing women into migration research' (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999), in this case specifically into transnational migration research, is related to the fact that much scholarly work on transnationalism is implicitly gendered as masculinist (Pratt & Yeoh, 2003: 159), where the idea of the portability of 'home' is construed to fit better with male rather than female pursuits (Lam & Yeoh, 2004: 143). Indeed, there appears to be a continuous male bias in migration research, which portrays men as more mobile than women (Lutz, 2010; Mahler & Pessar, 2006). In this way, 'the hypermobile subject of transnationalism echoes the similarly gendered colonial explorer of the past' (Gilmartin, 2008: 1842). For instance, male transmigrants are often featured as 'entrepreneurs, career-builders, adventurers and breadwinners who navigate transnational circuits with fluidity and ease, while women are alternatively taken to be truants from globalised economic webs, stereotyped as exotic, subservient, victimised, or relegated to playing supporting roles, usually in the domestic sphere' (Lam & Yeoh, 2004:143). As such, Yeoh and Willis (2004: 149) argue that 'the primary concern in the burgeoning [transnational] literature has been to

(re)instate women – their roles and subjectivities – in the multi-stranded relations at “home” or the place of sojourn, or in sustaining diverse networks spanning vast spaces’ .

Significantly, Pessar and Mahler (2003: 818) emphasize both the importance and under-researched contributions of the subjective dimensions of transnationalism—what they call the ‘social imaginary’ or ‘mindwork’. Certainly, there is growing recognition of the importance of the subjective dimensions of transnational practices (Levitt *et al.*, 2003: 571), especially the relevance of emotions to both the study and experience of transnational migration (Baldassar, 2007, 2008; Boehm & Swank, 2011; Davidson & Bondi, 2004; Panellie *et al.*, 2004; Skrbiš, 2008; Svašek, 2008, 2010; Svašek & Skrbiš, 2007; Wise & Velayutham, 2006). Exploration of how emotional dynamics shape migration has been productively applied to the study of transnational families (Baldassar, 2008; Baldassar & Gabaccia, 2010; Baldassar *et al.*, 2007; Ramirez *et al.*, 2007; Ryan, 2008; Velayutam & Wise 2005; Wilding 2006). Skrbiš (2008: 236) proposes that emotions are inseparable from any attempt to understand transnational families given the importance of emotional ties linking families across transnational fields and the fundamental nature of the migration experience itself. This is because, ‘[m]igration is invariably a process that dissociates individuals from their family and friendship networks, as well as from other socially significant referents that have strong emotional connotations’ (Skrbiš, 2008: 236). Indeed, migrants often invest much time and effort in the ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) necessary to maintain mutually beneficial reciprocal exchange relations and sustain a ‘sense of family’ across distance (Baldassar, 2007: 392).

The centrality of emotion to transnational family life is an emerging theme in recent literature (Skrbiš, 2008; Svašek, 2010). Though emotion and theories of emotions are rarely the central focus of analyses of transnational processes, the extent literature of transnational families either explicitly or implicitly assigns emotions an important role (Skrbiš, 2008). Rhacel Salazar Perreñas (2002: 44) underscores how transnationalism and transnational family life may contain

elements of discomfort: distant members of transnational families miss one another and they may have feelings of abandonment, regret and loneliness. For instance, her research of Filipino transnational migrant mothers illustrates how mothers who are physically absent from their children often feel conflicted and guilty, stigmatized as ‘bad mothers’ and suffer emotionally as a result (Parreñas, 2001a). Moving away from discussions of mutual transnational support Ryan’s (2008: 301, 311) study of Irish migrant women in England examines ‘how women navigate the emotional terrain of transnational families’, revealing ‘the difficulties and tensions that may arise between members ‘here’ and ‘there’. Likewise, Loretta Baldassar’s (2007: 385) study explores both the positive experiences as well as the tensions associated with the transnational exchange of moral and emotional support among Italian-Australian transnational families. Baldassar’s (2008) study also explores the emotional contours of transnational family life—specifically the emotions of ‘missing’ and ‘longing’ as integral features in the maintenance of transnational family relationships.

Yet, within the literature examining the familial negotiation of intimate relationships across/within transnational fields, the emotional contributions of migrant fathers is largely absent or ignored (e.g. Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2002; Constable, 2003; Parreñas, 2001b, 2002, 2005a/b). Given this omission, in what follows I explicitly explore the ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) contributions of male Mexican migrant workers as they negotiate ‘long-distance intimacy’ (Parreñas, 2005b) and ‘fathering from a distance.’

## ‘EMOTIONAL LABOUR’ AND FATHERING FROM A DISTANCE

*My wife never wanted me to migrate to Canada, my wife tells me my children need me there more. She says, ‘To be poor is better than to not have their father.’ I come to Canada for my children, but, well...it’s very hard.  
(Lupe, who has migrated to Canada for seasonal employment for 18 years)*

The primary characteristic of transnational families is having members spread out across nation states, but still maintaining a sense of collective welfare and unity (Bryceson & Vorela,

2002, Parreñas, 2001a). Geographic dispersion fundamentally challenges, reconfigures and complicates the negotiation of family and household arrangements—an obvious starting point being that ‘contemporary transnational households have a different temporal and spatial experience from the binational families of the past’ (Parreñas, 2005b: 317). Transnational households are geographically dispersed as one or more family members may be producing income abroad while other family members carry out the functions of the household in the country of origin (Parreñas, 2001a; Zontini, 2004). Consequently, transnationalism ‘forces us to reconsider our understanding of households and families based on the idea of co-residency and physical unity and to take into account the possibility [and realities] of spatial separation (Zontini, 2010: 52).

The literature on transnational families offers insights into the webs of competing obligations that emerge and the associated work-family strains that are experienced by migrants as results of negotiating transnational care-arrangements and familial relations/obligations (e.g. Baldassar *et al.*, 2007; Baldock, 2000; Dreby, 2009; Izuhara & Shibata, 2002; Lan, 2002). Much of this work deals with migrants’ contributions via the interdependent and interrelated spheres of productive and reproductive work to the maintenance of transnational families (Zontini, 2004; 2010). Productive work references labour market participation and reproductive labour refers to such tasks as ‘household chores, the care of elders, adults and youth; the socialization of children and the maintenance of social ties in the family’ (Parreñas, 2001a: 61). Reproductive work, then, encompasses caring for family members and the ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild, 1983) required to maintain transnational family relationships and their implicit reciprocal obligation. Hochschild (1983: 7) suggests emotional labour involves the induction and suppression of feeling in order to sustain an outward appearance that produces in others a sense of being cared for. One of the key ways that transnational family studies have integrated emotions into the field is through the exploration of ‘emotional labour’ as a dimension of transnational family life (Skribiš,

2008, e.g. Baldassar, 2007, 2008; Baldassar *et al.*, 2007; Ramirez *et al.*, 2007; Ryan, 2008; Velayutam & Wise, 2005; Wilding, 2006).

As previously mentioned the vast majority of studies on transnational families explicitly focus on migrant women as 'transnational mothers' (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997), who leave children behind to be cared for by relatives in their countries of origin, a task which is generally delegated to female kin. This literature documents how migrant mothers attempt to achieve 'a semblance of intimate family life across borders' (Parreñas, 2005b: 334), actively struggling to reconceptualise the idea of mothering (Erel, 2002; Parreñas, 2001a; Reynolds, 2005); so that, 'the meanings of motherhood are rearranged to accommodate these spatial and temporal separations' (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997: 548). For instance, Zontini's (2004: 1141) research of the everyday experiences of Moroccan and Filipino women residing in Barcelona, shows how living in different and distant geographical locations leads to new ways of articulating family relationships, especially spousal and maternal ones.

These studies provide important knowledge of the negotiation of transnational family life; nevertheless in examining caring and emotional intimacy almost exclusively in relation to women, the literature runs the risk of naturalizing or re-inscribing gendered conceptualizations of the 'traditional family' (i.e. mother = expressive caregiver/father = instrumental financial provider). Certainly, '[t]he focus has very much been on the role of the woman *as a mother*, underpinned by the assumption that she, ultimately, is the primary and most important caregiver' (Waters, 2010: 65). While this is problematic, it would be remiss not to acknowledge that unpaid domestic and care work is still by and large 'women's work.' As Connell (2009: 3) reminds us 'in all contemporary societies for which we have statistics, women do most of the cleaning, cooking, and sewing, most of the work looking after children, and almost all of the work of caring for babies'. Nevertheless, the privileging of 'transnational mothering' within the transnational family literature marginalizes the contributions of men, as the emotional labour

performed by both migrant fathers and resident fathers (in the case of migrant mothers) tends to be rendered invisible (Waters, 2010; Skrbiš, 2008) and by extension inconsequential. This is particularly problematic given that '[e]motional support and moral support is the foundation of most family relations including transnational ones' (Baldassar, 2007: 391).

In order to examine the transnational experiences of Mexican migrant workers, I will first consider the motivations underlying research participants' temporary migration to Canada. Migration is unequivocally motivated by economic need. Economic disparities between Mexico and Canada encourage migration, where the availability of jobs, higher wages and the SAWP's legal framework provide significant incentive for Mexican men to temporarily migrate to Canada. The following quotes underscore the financial basis of men's migration to Canada.

*I have come here to Canada to work. I am here with my goal to progress because if you do not know, Mexico is getting much worse! I am here to give my family a better life, more than anything for my children. (Pablo, has participated in the SAWP for two seasons).*

*In Mexico there is not much work and if there is work, you get paid very little. It is not enough for your basic needs, especially for example medicine. That is why I decided to come here, for my family, so that they may have a better life. (Lupe, has participated in the SAWP for 8 consecutive yrs).*

These statements also speak to the weight of familial obligations in men's migration rationale. In fact, all ten of the men interviewed identified their families and particularly the long-term well-being of their children as *the primary* motive of their migration. For example, men often spoke of the educational opportunities their migration afforded their children. This is consistent with the migration literature, where '[f]inancial support has long been identified as a key source of support exchanged in families, and particularly in migrant families, where remittances are often the motivation for migration' (Baldassar, 2007: 389).

The men in my sample *always* discussed the financial benefits of their migration in relation to their families, often in appreciably emotionally-laden terms. Significantly, on several occasions participants became visibly emotional when discussing their families. Choking up,



wiping away tears or even openly crying, the men described the pain of being separated from their families. For example, Francisco and Diego shared the following:

*For me coming to Canada was difficult, only for the act of leaving my family, which is the most important to me. Because to work, well one could look for other options, but the family is what weighed the most in my decision to come. I must help them. I must earn more money so that they can have a better life. [Long pause—fighting becoming emotional he continues as his voice begins to crack] But, to leave them there is to break my heart. [Now wiping away tears] Sometimes the pain seems unbearable...forgive me, forgive me [sighs and continues] but, the work here is good. The work is very good. (Francisco, has seasonally migrated to Canada for the past 6 yrs).*

*I decided to come to Canada as an opportunity for something better for my family. And this well [pause] it hurt me to leave my family. For twenty years it has hurt me to leave my family there and me over here. And the day when I was first coming here to Canada, I don't know, my little girl she wanted to come with me. She did not understand and oh, how she cried! That hurt me so much. And, then again when we were leaving each other at the bus terminal, now on my way to Canada, my little girl she cried, my wife cried and I cried the same. [Placing his hand over his heart, he looks at me as tears begin to roll down his face, struggling he continues]. Inside in some ways I have never stopped crying—you see, for me this is a great sorrow right? (Diego, 20 yrs of consecutive participation in the SAWP).*

Like many of the men I interviewed Francisco and Diego related how their migration induced emotions of longing, sadness and loneliness. Gilberto, who has participated in the SAWP for eight years, disclosed the following:

*In my dreams I am still there [Mexico], with them [his family], then I wake up and the loneliness tells me where I really am.*

The emotional salience of interviews and exchanges with male migrant workers elucidates the ways in which emotion play a significant role in their migration.

Men characteristically described their emotional struggles while *simultaneously* stressing the benefits of migration—especially how migration represents the opportunity for them to improve the lives of their wives and children. Dreby (2009: 190) describes the migration of Mexican parents as ‘a gamble: by leaving children behind, migrant parents hope to better provide for their children. Their migration represents a sacrifice of the present for the future.’ This

'gamble' was palpable in migrant men's interviews as exemplified by Lupe and Gilberto's commentaries:

*It has been eighteen years now that I've been coming here. People they say to me, "You shouldn't feel homesick because you have quite some years now that you've been working." But, no, every year I feel that it just gets worse. Seasons go by and I don't get a chance to see my children. For me this is a great loss, like a death [deep sigh]. This year I am here for eight months, but I'm just there for four months. So I am here in Canada longer than in Mexico... [Long pause]. But, please understand it is worth coming here. Making the sacrifice leaving the family over there because you make more money here. You can afford more. Your children have a better life. (Lupe, who has migrated for a total of 18 seasons)*

*It is a life of conflict to be here in Canada. In Mexico you can't work and if you do and someone from the family gets sick and needs medicine? It is very expensive; imagine if your child gets sick. What could I do? To see your child sick and not give the medicine. Oh! I could not and so what are my options? They may not have their father there with them, but I am here for them. I work so that they should not know such pain. But for me, yes, the pain is difficult; I don't even know my baby daughter who was born only a week after I left Mexico last. (Gilberto)*

Migrant men's aspirations to 'create a better life for their families' drives their migration to Canada, but results in pain and suffering—producing emotional ambivalence. This ambivalence is a defining premise of Deborah Boehm's (2011) piece considering emotions within the frame of U.S.-Mexican transnational partnerships. Her work reveals how '[t]he constraints posed by scarce financial resources and undocumented U.S. immigration status require couples and families to structure their lives in ways that result in profound emotional ambivalence' (Boehm, 2011: 100). She describes how the *deseos*—wants, desires—that structure lives transnationally inevitably lead to *dolores*—pain or sorrow, evoking complex and ambivalent emotions among migrants (Boehm, 2011), themes that were unmistakably echoed in my research.

Analogous with Parreñas (2005a) and Dreby (2006, 2010) Boehm (2011: 101-02) demonstrates 'how the emotions of *deseos* and *dolores* are shaped by the gendered politics of parenthood and the distinct expectations of women and men as they provide care for their families in countries of origin and from a distance'. The enactment of transnational motherhood and fatherhood is, of course, gendered. For Mexican men the strain of separation from their

families centers on economic provision for their partners and children (Boehm, 2011; Dreby, 2006; 2010). In Mexico, like elsewhere, mothering is commonly associated with emotional intimacy and daily domestic duties of caring for children, while fathering is associated with the securing of economic resources for the family (Dreby, 2006: 35). The men in my sample clearly identify with the traditional father as breadwinner model. In this sense, men's productive labour is best understood as *the primary* contribution to the maintenance of their transnational families and consistent with dominant conceptions of Mexican masculinity (Boehm, 2008).

Conversely, the majority of men in my study did not conform to Mexican gender ideology, which celebrates the equation of masculinity with macho stoicism (Dreby, 2010; 2006; Gutmann, 2006). In exploring how male Mexican migrant workers navigate and construct masculinity, it is necessary to stress that I do not subscribe to an essentialist, homogenizing or reified conception of masculinity. Instead, my treatment of masculinity is underlined by Connell's extensive theoretical illumination of the diversity of masculinities (e.g. Connell, 1987; 1998, 2000; 2002, 2003; 2005a; 2005b), which emphasizes '[m]asculinity [not as] a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting.' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 836). For example, Gutmann's (1996) ethnography of Mexican masculinity, which Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 836) describe as detailing 'the well-defined public masculine identity—Mexico 'machismo'', they describe Gutmann's (1996) work as revealing how:

the imagery of machismo developed historically and was interwoven with the development of Mexican nationalism, masking enormous complexity in the actual lives of Mexican men. Gutmann teases out four patterns of masculinity in the working-class urban settlement he studies, insisting that even these four are crosscut by other social divisions and are constantly renegotiated in everyday life. (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005: 836)

In exploring Mexican masculinity Gutmann's (1996, 2006) accentuates that gender identities 'are products and manifestation of culture in motion' (Gutmann, 2006: 14). For instance, in relation to the practices of Mexican men as fathers Gutmann (2006: 14) suggests:

many [men] are aware of a social science image of poor urban Mexican men typified by the Macho Progenitor. Yet whereas the beliefs and practices of many ordinary men do not accord neatly with this monochromatic image, ordinary men and women are themselves often acutely aware of and influenced in one way or another by the dominant often 'traditional' stereotypes about men.

It is in this sense that I understand masculinity as differentially constraining, while also contradictory, impermanent and shifting. As Castellanos and Boehm (2008: 8) point out, '[w]ith transnational movement, masculinities...become reconstituted in diverse and paradoxical ways.'

In contrast to widely accepted generalization about stoic Mexican 'machismo' masculinity, the migrant men in my study were quite demonstrative. As noted above, they openly revealed and discussed the emotional costs of migration. In fact, the men frequently described how the strain of migration manifests in actual physical pain. This bodily or corporeal referencing of emotional experience implicates the importance of an embodied approach to the analysis of emotion—an orientation which emphasizes sensory experience (Baldassar, 2008, Nast & Pile, 1998; Svašek, 2008). Strikingly men referenced the intense physiological pain they experienced as a result of being physically absent from their families:

*It was so disturbing to me to have to leave my family. More than a feeling of sadness, it was this whole body pain, it actually hurt. Like the pain in my bones from working, I have grown accustomed to it. (Chuy, has 15 consecutive yrs of participation in the SAWP)*

*The first few months when you are here you miss your kids, you wife, your family more than anything. It is a pain like I have never known. One feels sick, physically sick and depressed. You want to return and be with them [the family], to escape all of the loneliness, but we need the money, without money there is no life for your family. (Pablo)*

*For me the suffering is constant, there is an emptiness, a pain. I feel sad and lonely being far from my family. (Gilberto)*

Emotional suffering and the associated physical pain, was especially emphasized in relation to father's physical absence from their children. Without exception men referenced the emotional costs of being separated from their children, detailing how they cried when leaving them in Mexico, lacked the ability to sleep or eat well, and in some cases became physically ill and/or severely depressed while in Canada. Tellingly, after expressively describing these difficulties on several occasions migrant men rhetorically asked "*Qué dolor, ino?* [What pain, no?]" (Interestingly this sentiment is also expressed by a migrant in Boehm's (2011) piece considering U.S.-Mexican transnational partnerships). In this context, Chuy's remarks are germane:

*When I left Mexico for the first time, I had just celebrated my twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Coming to Canada, leaving my family it just about killed me! I cried and cried, and for the entire first season that I was here working I cried every day!—I couldn't sing a song because right away I would start to cry. Believe me, I would go to mass and I couldn't sing. I was just quiet and when the time came [during mass] to say, "The peace of the lord be with you"—you should see how I cried. The pain, it really, really got to me.*

Men's affective demonstrativity problematizes static and unitary depictions of masculinity and speaks to the active contestation of gender identities.

## CO-PRESENCE & THE EMOTIONAL TOPOGRAPHY OF TRANSNATIONALISM

To begin to explore how the men in my sample manage the physical absence of their families and the related heartache, I will stress the integral role of co-presence in the maintenance of transnational families, underlining how migrant men actively utilize information and communication technologies (ICTs) to achieve a sense of shared presence, which facilitates emotional labour contributions to their families. To do so, I adopt Baldassar's (2008: 251) typology of co-presence or shared 'presence'—virtual, proxy, physical and imagined. Due to major improvements and drastic reduction in the cost of cell phones, computers and international long-distance, migrant workers are now able to achieve co-presence virtually (Strom, 2002; Thomas & Lim, 2011; Vertovec, 2004b)—the first co-presence in Baldassar's (2008) typology. Virtual co-presence is constructed through various ICTs—'commonly through

the sense of hearing; either directly by verbal exchanges on the telephone (or increasingly on webcam, which also provides the sense of sight) or indirectly by reading communication in the form of written words on email or SMS messages) (Baldassar, 2008: 252). The male migrant workers who participated in my research most commonly constructed virtual co-presence directly through weekly and in some cases daily telephone calls (both landline & cellular) and in a few cases Skype (a webcam service) and indirectly through email, frequent cell phone text messaging and snail mail (letters). The value of virtual co-presence to male migrants' productive labour capacities (i.e. caring for their children) cannot be overemphasized; the men repeatedly stressed their 'need' to regularly call home in order to 'stay connected' to and 'support' their families, particularly their children. The following quotes are illustrative:

*I am in contact with Mexico practically every day, by phone. Oh I speak very often to them [family], sometimes as much as one hour or more—say an hour and a half. It all depends, but it is so much less money now. So like four to six times a week I call them. And sometimes, let's say that our little boy gets sick, even though I am not there, I feel it, I know about it and with my words, in speaking to him and my wife, I feel like I am still connected to them and supporting them. (Pablo)*

*I speak to my family one to two times a week by phone. We talk for about an hour, the best hours of my whole week! I like to know about school, their friends. I say to them [his children] tell me everything! Tell me what kind of cereal you ate for breakfast [laughing]. It cheers me up to know. I cannot be too proud. I did a sacrifice in leaving my home so I can work. But I want—I need them to know I love them. That I think of them every moment—that I miss them terribly and that even here, from Canada, I am still their father. (Lupe)*

*The phone is huge for me! For my homesickness, as a father it helps me because I don't get to see my children, but just hearing their voices, knowing what they are up to, that helps so much. Sometimes I can help them with their homework when we talk on the phone. Or they share their problems with me and I try to support them. I also have a schedule about the chores and I call in to make sure they are following it. This way I still feel like I am helping raise them, at least a little, because I don't see them for eight months at a time. (Luis, 5 yrs of participation in the SAWP)*

Thus, a key finding to emerge from my research is the importance of emotional connection and intimacy for Mexican migrant fathers. Although financial support is *the central anchor* of migrant men's contributions to their transnational families, men's emotional labour contributions are also extremely meaningful. As fathers, the men in my study emphasized the importance of

maintaining and fostering emotional intimacy from a distance, ‘supporting’, ‘listening to’, and ‘caring’ for their children. In order to accomplish this, the men stressed ‘staying connected’ to their children, equating emotional intimacy with being ‘good fathers’—demonstrating *paternidad afectiva transnacional*, emotionally engaged transnational fatherhood within the context of temporary labour migration in Canada.

This finding is inconsistent with both Dreby (2006) and Perreñas (2005). Dreby’s (2006) study of Mexican transnational mothers and fathers living in the United States, while children remain in Mexico, found the caregiving activities (i.e. weekly phone calls home) of transnational mothers and fathers to be very similar. However, their caregiving orientations were quite distinct, as father’s emotional responses to separation from their children were tied to Mexican gender ideology, which to reiterate idealizes notions of stoic masculinity and father as breadwinner (Dreby, 2006). These gender expectation were found to be stable within the transnational context, where, ‘mother’s relationships with their children in Mexico are highly dependent on demonstrating emotional intimacy from a distance, whereas father’s relationships lie in their economic success as migrant workers’ (Dreby, 2006: 34). Perreñas (2005) examination of the intergenerational relations between Filipino migrant mothers and their children suggests that migrant fathers tend to maintain only instrumental communication with their families. In contrast migrant mothers sought to foster intimate ties with their children through regular communication via phone calls, texts messages, letters and care-packages. I can only speculate as to why I encountered such high levels of expressivity and demonstrated emotional intimacy among the Mexican fathers in my sample. Perhaps because the men in my study were able to secure steady income through Canada’s SAWP, honourably fulfilling the Mexican cultural ideal of father as economic provider, they were less preoccupied with demonstrating their masculinity through stoicism. In fact, a recent study by Massey and Brown (2011: 139-40) indicate that, ‘[a]lthough American guest workers fare much better in the labor market than those without

documents, they still do not achieve the same level of economic welfare as their counterparts in Canada, earning less money per hour,... earning 28 per cent less income during a season of work.’ Parreñas (2005a) does suggest that fathers (in the case of migrant mothers) whose masculinity is economically affirmed (i.e. hold professional positions with authority) are more comfortable taking on domestic work and childcare responsibilities. Likewise, although Dreby (2006: 53) generally observed the durability of Mexican gender ideals (i.e. female-caregiving/male-providing) within the transnational context, she does cite example of parents contesting gender norms, noting: ‘[w]hen mothers deviate from the model of self sacrifice for their children, and demonstrate self-interest by leaving their husbands post migration, fathers feel more entitled to further nurture relationships with their children in Mexico.’ In other words, when women break from ‘traditional’ or rigid gender roles, it provides men with greater flexibility and freedom to do the same. Most importantly, these examples are indicative of both the superficiality of gender identities and the mutability of transnational gendered roles and practices. My findings complicate the view of instrumental stoic transnational Mexican fatherhood, demonstrating the contestation of masculinity and the practice of multiple masculinities.

While transnational caregiving, particularly the exchange of emotional support, proved to be very important for migrant men, significant tensions were evident around the communication of ‘bad news’ (i.e. children having trouble at school or family health issues). Baldassar’s (2007: 401) work on transnational families indicates that ‘[c]oncern about how much information should be divulged, or is being divulged, is common as [transnational] family members manage ‘truth and distance.’ The management of ‘truth and distance’ played an important role in my study in two ways. First, men commonly engaged in dynamics of emotional labour revealing how they manage their emotions with their families—‘protecting’ them from knowing of their sadness and loneliness in Canada, indicating a limitation of emotional reciprocity in the transnational context. Secondly, men concurrently expressed their need to



'know what is happening in Mexico', stressing that it is essential for their families to keep them informed. Francisco's commentary provides a typical example:

*Sometimes if something is wrong, my family does not want to tell me, but I always know. Always! I hear it in their voices and they tell me, "It's nothing. Don't worry!" But I don't let them. I keep calling until they tell me. Sometimes it is all I think about until the next day after work when I can call them again. I tell them, my imagination will make it worse than what it is, so you must tell me. In this way I can see how things are going, they know now that they must tell me the truth, all of them know this, my children, my brothers, my parents, my wife, I tell them this is the rule, you must tell me!*

The exchange of emotional and moral support, then, is obviously influenced by long distance. My results suggest that although there are numerous obstacles and limitations, migrant men invest a great deal of effort in 'staying in touch' and as such were able to maintain familial relationships that they characterized as essential to their wellbeing and mutually supportive. This finding is coherent with studies demonstrating that emotional and moral support can be effectively exchanged well across distance (Baldassar, 2007; Baldassar *et al.*, 2007).

The second co-presence in Baldassar's (2008: 252) typology is proxy co-presence, which is 'achieved indirectly through objects and people whose physical presence embodies the spirit of the longed for absent person or place. Each of the five senses can be utilised to construct this form of presence (the person or object can be touched, heard, seen, etc.), although, the physical manifestation of this (proxy) presence serves as the abstraction of an imagined presence.' When interviewing migrant men, it became clear that proxy co-presence is an important means by which they manage their struggles with loneliness and separation from their families. For example, Francisco explained his attendance at Catholic masses in the following way: "*I feel like I am in Mexico, close to my family when I go to mass, the readings, the songs, it brings me a sense of peace and calm.*" Likewise, Jesús described the importance of preparing Mexican food in Canada, "*In our house we all make our own meals. The house fills with the smells of Mexico. I didn't really appreciate my wife's cooking until I came here. Now I dream of her cooking, the flavours in my mouth, the smells of the kitchen when I come home. By*

*making Mexican food we are comforted and reminded of our families.*” Gilberto also emphasized the significance of olfactory cues in maintaining a sense of connection ‘home’ (Mexico): *“When I feel really lonely, when I really miss my family I find places where I can feel Mexico. For example, the restaurants and some of the stores, there I find the smells, the tastes of home. Church too, when we sing in Spanish, you feel a bit of Mexico. I feel closer to those I miss, it helps me.”* The tangibility of smells, sights and feelings speaks to the ways in which migrants use these spaces to channel their emotion or ‘feeling by proxy’ (Baldassar, 2008). In this way the activities of smelling, of hearing, of ‘feeling connected’ makes these spaces important expressions of emotion and familial obligation. This is consistent with Diane Wolf’s (2002: 258) use of the concept of ‘emotional transnationalism’ which she defines as the maintenance of cross-border connections ‘at the level of emotions, ideologies, and cultural codes.’

‘Transnational objects’, such as photos, letters, cards, memorabilia and gifts’ (Baldassar, 2008: 257) are also important in relation to proxy co-presence. In Edward Casey’s (1987) terms, ‘transnational objects’ embody the internalised presence of the absent and longed for people and places (Baldassar, 2008: 257). In fact, there is a growing recognition of the small-scale materiality and sociality that comprise negotiations of everyday life (Ho & Hatfield, 2011). These studies call attention to the need to ‘highlight the significant amounts of energy, resources and organisation that go into sustaining transnational lives and communities’ (Conradson & Latham, 2005: 228), including the localized negotiations of everyday activities like shopping (Hindman, 2008), and the role of ordinary objects (Walsh, 2006) in forming and maintaining life in and across different locations (Ho & Hatfield, 2011: 710). In my study the importance of ‘transnational objects’ became pronounced during ethnographic shopping excursions with migrant workers, during which men carefully picked cards and small gifts to mail to Mexico to mark special occasions, such as anniversaries and birthdays. Baldassar (2008: 257) suggests, ‘that special days (birthdays, feast days, anniversaries) can come to embody the presence of absent people and places who

“come to mind” on these days often generating more intense feelings of longing and subsequently inspiring the exchange of phone calls and greeting cards.’ Memorably on one occasion three men compared, *at length*, the ‘*vestidos de fiesta especial*’ [special party dresses] they would bring back to Mexico for their young daughters and granddaughter. Discussing colour options, matching shoes and hair ribbons the scene sharply contradicted stereotypical portraits of ‘masculine’ fatherhood, particularly Mexican machismo. The men meticulously made their selections and spoke with great enthusiasm about their purchases. On another occasion while shopping at a Dollar Store, Gilberto thoroughly debated the merits of one dress-up crown over another. These illustrations deconstruct unitary meanings of masculinity, illustrating the constant transformation and transgression of gender identities plus such careful consideration and thoughtfulness denotes the value of these objects, not only as tokens of affection, but also as symbolic objects of transnational caring. Baldassar (2008; 257) argues that transnational objects ‘are important largely because of their tangibility—they can be touched and held and thus take the physical place of the longed for person or location.’ This sentiment was articulated during interviews:

*You must understand it is very difficult to be so far from my family. I miss them very much. I miss my children. I miss my wife. I miss our home. All of it! Even the food, I miss the food, the smells. The feel of it! I miss it all! But my family and I, we have our letters, pictures, I have my gifts that I send—these things have helped us become strong in our thoughts until the distance passes. (José)*

*I am always sending little things to Mexico. I try to do this, you know inexpensive things such as postcards, stickers, and pins, things that will arrive and let my family know I am thinking of them. And, also that they will think of me, that is my hope. I remember my son he told me how he had his mother sew a patch I sent him on his backpack, a maple leaf patch. This made me smile. I imagine him walking to school with the maple leaf and I feel like in some way I am with him, that he knows I am thinking of him. (Chuy)*

*I call home every single day. I use the farm phone one day and my cell phone the next and I write letters too. I send gifts home and cards, they send me photographs. That is all that I have here [in Canada] when I am not working. (Gilberto)*

Physically absent from their families, the objects men select to bring or mail to Mexico signify love and caring; they represent their presence in the lives of their wives and children by proxy and vice versa. In this way, transnational objects are ‘manifestations of continuing reciprocal

caregiving relationships' (Baldassar, 2008: 257). Moreover, against a discursive and cognitive split of emotions and material resources, the norm in the vast majority of studies of transnational families, transnational objects illustrate how intimate and economic relations are deeply intertwined (Coe, 2011: 8).

Baldassar's (2008: 260) third co-presence is 'physical co-presence' or the importance of 'being there', which within the contexts of transnational families can only be achieved through visits (or repatriation or parent [family] migration). Without doubt, physical co-presence was very important for the men in my study, they would frequently state, 'I live for my time with my family.' The need for physical co-presence, 'to hold', 'to see' and 'to be with' their families, is evident in the following interview passages:

*My wife, she knows, she understand that I am in Canada making money and so she resigned on this, but at the same time we miss each other greatly. And that's why one gets married because of love and not just for the necessity, so it is difficult. Now when I return to Mexico I hug her more. It sounds funny, no? But I look at her more—I hold her more, because when I am here all I wish for is to be there with her and our children. (Luis)*

*When one is here the truth is you are just thinking about all that you miss in Mexico and so you come to appreciate what it is to be with your family, to see them daily, to hear their voices. Now when I return to Mexico all of these things begin to look different. There is a change and you say, "Oh look, look how my children change from day to day." But this is only because you are denied this when you are in Canada. So yes, I do feel sad, a little sad about this. I come here and I see everything differently, that is what I see. (Pablo).*

*My wife she complains sometimes. She tries not to I know, but she is over there with the children and I am here. Our children are very little, just 4 years old and six months old. And, well it is not the same, not like being together. It's hard sometimes for sure. I cannot hug them. I cannot kiss them goodnight. (Jesús)*

Dreby (2006: 46) observed a similar outlook where Mexican migrant fathers in her study reported 'that the experience of migration is what helped them recognize how important children are to them.'

For migrant men, however, the experience of 'being there' is thoroughly reconfigured by migration which manifests in their negotiation of transnational families. For example, men shared how their familial relationships have been altered by their migration. Luis told me:

*My family does treat me differently. As soon as I return [to Mexico] my family, my children see me weird. When I return back they see me in a strange way and they seem more attached to their grandfather than to me. I feel this difference. My wife even tells me so, she says, "It feels weird that you are here again, because I have been alone for eight months." So migration, it is this break, this break from your life. You leave and they keep on. You get use to a daily routine here and there they do their routines without you. So when returning back there is this difference and when it starts to fade it is time to leave once more.*

Jesús shared a similar viewpoint:

*When I return to Mexico I am treated differently. Oh yes! Because we are here for eight months, the people there [in Mexico] they start to say that when we go to Mexico it's like we are on vacation. That we really live here in Canada, so yes they do see us differently. My family too, there is this difference. My children treat me like I'm a visitor. It is hard to know how to be because I will be leaving again so soon. I don't know, it's like I don't know how to be—I don't know where I belong.*

Men expressed feeling emotionally conflicted about their transnational family obligations and roles: on the one hand, they felt guilty, for being apart from their families and on the other, obligated to earn an income in order to secure their families well being. This emotional conflict is evident in Diego's fears of being an inadequate husband and father:

*Sometimes when my wife tells me about disciplining our children or managing our bills, I feel broken. I think what kind of worthless husband am I? It's like I am only a shadow in their lives.*

Luis described being uncomfortable with the ways his migration had induced a renegotiation of parental roles and household responsibilities, asserting:

*The last time when I went back home [to Mexico] my wife she acted differently towards me, she just did everything. Everything! All the work and everything for the children without my help, she seems to be able to do it all. It bothered me to see that she no longer needed me.*

Similarly, Gilberto shared the following when asked, "Was the decision to migrate to Canada a difficult one?"

*It was a very difficult decision to come to Canada, yes very! Because I left my family, yes for leaving them alone. I left the workload for her [his wife]. On the days when I am not working, say when there is not much work, a day like today, it kills me. Me here not working, it is a waste of a day because I am not working and my wife is there with the kids alone. She goes to school, she has to look after the housework, everything, she has to do everything. My wife has to be both a mother and a father and this I find very difficult. To not be with my family, to not father my children is the greatest regret in my life.*

The above statements point to shifting 'gender regimes' (Connell, 2009: 72) as a result of migration as transnational families create and reproduce a set of arrangements about gender. As suggested in the literature, '[w]hen families are separated through migration, women and men must often adopt new cultural practices that upend their previous status and responsibilities in their families' (Nawyn, 2010: 755). While in Canada male Mexican migrant workers must take on domestic responsibilities (i.e. cooking and laundry), as a consequence numerous men in my study began to reconsider the gendered division of labour in their households. At the same time, in their absence their wives must maintain the household and in the process it appears that they may develop more autonomy; a fact that some men in my sample seemed uncomfortable with, conflicted about and in some cases even resentful of. These findings corroborate research which shows how cultural norms regarding gendered practices are challenged and reconstructed as a result of migration (e.g. George, 2005), particularly scholarship that shows international migration to be formative for reshaping gender relations within Mexican families (Boehm, 2008; Hirsch, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). This is however a complicated picture, as Boehm (2011: 102) observes: 'women are indeed in new roles because of migration, but couples often find that gender politics revert or reconfigure to the familiar. For example, when partners are divided, women take on independence even as their husbands maintain a sort of long-distance or transnational male dominance through the authority of male family members, budget management, phone calls, threats, and "chismes [gossip]" (see also Mahler, 2001; Bever, 2002; Dreby, 2009).

For the migrant men in my sample, the renegotiation of gender relations brought about by migration is further complicated by the challenges they face in securing employment during the four months when they return to Mexico, as described by Lupe:

*Having come to Canada and now going back to Mexico to look for a good job, it's not going to be easy. When they [potential employers] know that you have been coming to Canada for years, they think you do not need the work; and then they will not hire you. It's true. They begin to say, "Oh he goes to work over there. He doesn't need the job." They think that you automatically have a lot of money. So they do not give the jobs to those who are migrant workers. I have seen this many times. This makes being home more difficult because your family is busy, my wife she works, my children go to school and often I am left outside of the routine, I am left to make something of my days. It makes me feel useless.*

The challenge of securing employment upon returning to Mexico coupled with the sense that they are 'no longer needed' by their wives and children challenges migrant men's masculinity as it is defined by their ability to financially support their families. As such, migrant men's role within their families is further obscured. Francisco's description of the post-migration experience is telling: "I always feel a little lost, like I don't quite fit. To see and be with my family is wonderful, but my place in their lives no longer feels familiar. It's hard to describe, it's like I'm just a guest." Men also mentioned how their migration has made their extended family relate to them differently, Chuy explained, "My family, my friends they think that I'm a millionaire that is the only thing they think of. The saying goes that you come here to sweep up money. And that is not true, yet it creates this difference, a resentment from my brothers for example. They think my life is so easy and so my wife and I we do not feel the same family support we did before I starting coming to Canada." These examples illustrate some of the ways migrant workers' struggle to make sense of transnational localities, where 'here' and 'there' are fundamentally reconstituted by transnational migration.

The fourth and final co-presence discussed by Baldassar (2008: 252) is imagined co-presence, 'although arguably a dimension of each of the other forms described', this type of co-presence is constructed through ritualistic activities, such as parents praying daily for their migrant children. These activities are another means through which transnational families

maintain a sense of co-presence in one another's lives, affirming their emotional connection to one another. The men in my study did communicate the importance of daily rituals like praying for their families and attending church weekly in honour of their families. More prominent, however, was the ways in which migrant workers organized their lives around ritualistic ICT use, for example, texting their wives and children at certain times each and every day (i.e. morning and bed time) or placing a call from the same phone booth, at the same time every Friday. Interestingly, they also commonly measured time in Canada in relation to specific mundane activities of their family members in Mexico. For example, men would comment: "*Oh look, it's 7:30pm, right now my wife is preparing dinner*", "*When I am taking my first break at work, my children are getting on the bus.*", or "*My wife goes to bed around 9:30pm in Mexico, so I usually stay up till around 11:30pm so we can go to sleep around the same time.*" In this way, migrant men exhibited transnational temporal frames of reference, where they actively construct time in relation to the routine lives of their families in Mexico. I describe this as *transnational temporality*, a powerful example of imagined co-presence where migrant men in my study actively construct connections to their families throughout their everyday lives. Indeed, (Cwerner, 2001: 32) argues '[t]he focus on the temporal experience of migrants can illuminate the nature of migration itself, its twists and turns, meanings and ambivalence, and the way that, in a diversity of ways, it dis-places and re-embeds people and communities around the world.' Certainly, time is an intimate experience, and temporal experiences are always forms of 'embodied time' and 'enmeshed in social relations' (Davies, 1999: 583). Yet, the ways in which temporality demarcates the daily rhythms of transnational lives is often overlooked (Crouch, 2010; Cwerner, 2001).

Taken together these examples suggest that, for the men in my study, the maintenance of transnational family life, especially 'transnational fatherhood', is highly dependent on both productive (financial support) and reproductive (emotional care) contributions; where the demonstration of emotional intimacy with their families via co-presence sustains and structures



men's transnational lives. Yet, just as 'transnational motherhood' (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997) puts strain on mothers' relationships with their children (e.g. Dreby, 2009; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Menjivar & Abrego, 2009; Parreñas 2001a, 2005a/b), 'transnational fatherhood' is not without its problems. Despite the fact that little is known about men's experiences in transnational families, particularly as fathers, given that 'in the extant literature men are often, at best, ignored, and at worst, caricatured (as ambitious, mobile, careerist, and patriarchal)' (Waters, 2010: 72), preliminary studies (e.g. Dreby 2006, 2009; Mahler 1999) suggest 'that fathers also experience difficulties with their identities as good parents when separated from their children. Despite the fact that they feel they are caring for their families by sending home remittances, they frequently feel reproached for their long absences' (Nawyn, 2010: 755). This was evident among the men in my studies as indicated by the following quotes:

*My children they do not want me to come to Canada, they do not like it when I come here. But, they don't understand that I need to come. They don't get why I must come. But, this makes me real sad. I need for them to know that I need to work, so I can send them money. If not, what will we eat? What am I going to do? (Gilberto)*

*In reality my family does not like it when I leave them, but the necessity obligates me to leave. Because my kids they are six and five years old and they do not know much about the necessity. They ask for shoes, food and they don't understand if I have money or not. And right now if I call them, they will say to me, "Daddy, daddy, come back!" They cry for me, but I have to explain that I can't come, that I am working, that I work so that we can have money. They don't understand. They say, "We don't want money, we want our daddy!" (Luis)*

The resentment expressed by their children provokes complex emotions among migrant fathers, such as melancholy and jealousy of their wives as children grow closer to them in their absence.

Nonetheless, by and large, Mexican men's migration is understood as a husband's sacrifice, a demonstration of his commitment to his wife and children (Boehm, 2011). Studies exploring U.S.-Mexican transnational migration, indicate that Mexican men and women will acknowledge the difficulties connected to men's migration, but also explain that migration is necessary to provide for family (Boehm, 2011: Dreby, 2006, 2010; Pribilsky, 2004). Kandel and

Massey (2002: 981) found a culture of migration to the U.S. so deeply rooted in the Mexican communities they studied, that transnational migration became normative. This was especially true for young men, who came to see migration as an expected rite of passage, in addition to being a widely accepted vehicle for economic mobility. Boehm's (2011: 98) research of U.S.-Mexican transnationalism suggests that 'men understand migration as the primary way to fulfill their responsibilities as husband and father, and women, want, even expect men to go north... Both women and men describe male migration as a sincere expression of love and loyalty.' This perception of masculine Mexican migration was clearly evident in my research; serving as *the dominant backdrop* framing male migrants' migration to Canada. Still, Boehm (2011: 96) reminds us, the *deseos*—wants, desires, needs of transnational families for a better life lead to *dolores*—the pain of separation and longing, so that 'the terrain of transnationality may be defined by intertwined *deseos* and *dolores*'. Indeed, the men in my study expressed a sense of resignation and deep emotional ambivalence about the enormous sacrifices inherent to their migration, particularly all of the marital and parental conflicts and 'trade-offs'.

Nevertheless, male migration is widely constructed and understood as indicative of being dedicated to one's family; a 'good man' and a 'good father'. At the Catholic ministry for migrant workers, the Mexican priest regularly discussed men's migration as evidence of their love for their families. He would also remind the migrant men to think of their wives, telling 'the guys' (as they were commonly referred to), "*Yes you are lonely here in Canada, yes it is difficult and you suffer, but your wives they suffer the same. They are also making a huge sacrifice as they fulfill the role of mother and father while you are here.*" As such, devotion to family and migration are typically equated.

I do not, however, want to represent an overly simplistic or romanticized portrait of Mexican migrant men as unwaveringly dutiful, honourable husbands and fathers. Infidelity is a prominent and reoccurring theme in studies addressing U.S.-Mexican transnationalism (Boehm, 2011; Castellanos & Boehm, 2008; Dreby, 2006, 2009). Infidelity is also a key attribute frequently

cited as manifesting machismo on the part of Mexican men (Gutmann, 2006: 15). Infidelity certainly functioned as a subtext in my study. When asked directly during interviews about infidelity men would either deny that it occurs or on more than one occasion tell me, *'I wouldn't know'*, *'I don't like to gossip about others'*, *'it's not my place to say'* or, *'it's not the Mexican way to speak ill of one's countrymen'*—essentially, then, this sensitive topic was gendered and difficult to broach. However, in more informal contexts or during our goodbyes following an interview—'off the record', men would often reinitiate the topic of infidelity. Telling me, *'about your question, yes, yes it does happen, it does go on. There are those that cheat and those that even have Canadian girlfriends.'* Pablo broached the subject in a very round-about way:

*I guess you need to know that, well, when we are here, there are those who like to go out and those that don't. Those that like to go to garage sales on Sundays and those who don't. You know, to see and try to make friends, some do meet Canadian women and they start some sort of relationship. They call them, girlfriends.*

Numerous community stakeholders also corroborated the existence of extramarital relationships between Mexican migrant men and Canadian women. Settlement councilors, for example, told me that it is not uncommon for Canadian women to seek information about sponsoring the immigration of Mexican men—migrant workers who are their boyfriends. Still many of the men I came to know well over the course of my research did little else but work. Most of them live in isolated rural settings and the opportunity to form a relationship, let alone meet a Canadian girlfriend was highly unlikely. The same is not true for men living close to large towns, where there are bars, stores and restaurants, even socials (i.e. dances) where Canadian women actively seek out Mexican migrant men. Referencing such an event Juan shared the following experience:

*One time I went to a dance, with some guys I work with. It was something to do and I wanted to see what goes on. Let me tell you, it was something! Most of the men are very drunk and the women, the Canadian women there are fat! I'm not even kidding. Like really, really fat. It was terrible! Sometimes I am embarrassed by the way Mexican men act when they are here in Canada. At my house they watch porn all the time, that's how they spend their time watching porn. And it's like they don't have the least bit of shame*

*about it. Maybe it's because they miss their women. But, if you miss your wife you are offending her with so much porn.*

In the final analysis, I was not able to access very much information about extramarital relationships. While it was generally acknowledged that infidelity occurs, the topic was taboo and men generally honoured a code of silence about cheating. This brings me to two limitations of my research. First, given that the interview is a highly mediated and interstitial space, it is important to acknowledge how my gender position as a woman, and that of my translator(s) (who were both men and women), undoubtedly shaped how and what was talked about during interviews—the types of information research participants shared. Undoubtedly, '[t]he positionality of the researcher is commonly recognised as crucial to how and what stories get told' (Dyck & McLaren, 2004: 516). Second, the above discussions are derived solely on the perspectives of temporary male migrant workers, who are 'absent' from their native families in Mexico. My insights are taken from migrants' emotions and sentiments about negotiating their families at a distance. As such the perspectives of their wives and children are largely neglected, as are the dynamics of reciprocity among family members in Mexico. Nevertheless, recognizing this limitation, I consider the interpretation of migrant fathers of 'transnational caring' and the emotional dimensions of migration to be an important and too often invisible viewpoint in our understanding of how transnational families achieve intimacy at a distance.

Mexican migrant men's embodied narratives of transnational migration depict their intertwined identities as 'hard working' and 'family men'. Without question the idea that family *is the most important thing in life* was a recurring theme, with men stressing how their migration is representative of their commitment to family. Within the transnational context their masculinity continues to be defined by a sense of familial responsibility satisfied by financial provision. At the same time, their stories point to the role of emotions in the maintenance of transnational family relations. All of the men in my study actively engaged in 'long-distance intimacy' with their families and 'fathering from a distance' vis-à-vis co-presence. These transnational practices

provide a window into migrant men's negotiation of masculine gender roles, revealing the ways migration can induce 'paradoxical gendered practices and experiences: where migration can be both regulating and liberating for males and female and may foster change even as previous practices are reasserted (Castellanos & Boehm, 2008: 7). In this sense, the perspectives of migrant fathers in transnational families give us insight into how gender relations are reconfigured across and within transnational spaces. Unlike the typical stereotype of the Mexican macho, the men in my study were emotionally demonstrative and stressed the importance of active emotional connection and intimacy with their families, principally in relation to their children. Against Mexican gender ideologies that reinforce the traditional value of mothers as nurturing care-providers and fathers as strong financial-providers, the enactment of *paternidad afectiva transnacional*—emotionally engaged transnational fatherhood in my study challenges this cultural archetype. Intriguingly, there is now a movement in Mexico attempting to promote 'paternidad afectiva' [emotionally engaged fatherhood] (Connell, 2009: 3). Against 'disembodied' depictions of migrant men as delinked from their families and associated parental and domestic responsibilities, my findings suggest that familial obligations and relationships permeate and meaningfully ground the lives of Mexican migrant workers in Canada. However, this is not to suggest a singular reading of male migrant worker's experiences of transnational families, as their experiences indicate the ways in which their negotiation of transnational families is plagued by emotional ambivalence, conflict, tensions and complex processes of gender compromise, transgression and reification.

## CONCLUSION

The aims of this paper were twofold. First, to examine the neglected topic of men's experiences within transnational families, and second to contribute to the emerging literature of 'embodied transnationalism'—the emplaced materiality of the everyday lived experience of transnational migration, particularly the emotional dimensions of such emplacement. Drawing

on Baldassar's (2008) study of emotions and the construction of co-presence I trace male temporary migrant worker's embodied experiences of creating and sustaining transnational engagement. Contrary to the Mexican gender ideal of stoic instrumental masculinity, what emerged from the research is a portrait of *paternidad afectiva transnacional*—emotionally engaged transnational fatherhood, in which 'emotional labour' and emotional intimacy are critical to migrant workers' fathering from a distance. In exploring men's embodied experiences of negotiating transnational family lives, findings reveal the complex and paradoxical reconfiguration of gender transnationally, as masculinity is simultaneously contested, reinscribed and reconstituted by and through migration.

CHAPTER 5  
CONCLUSION:  
TRANSNATIONALISM AND THE EMBODIED POLITICS OF BELONGING

It is not overly dramatic to suggest that Canada represent *the quintessential transnational nation*. On a per capita basis, Canada accepts more immigrants annually than any other country in the world (Baeker, 2002). Canada's migration rates even rival those of its southern neighbour, the United States, which has been described as 'the foremost transnational nation' (Munch, 2001: 57). For example, 'Canada's net migration rate was 7.3 arrivals per 1,000 people in 2007, compared with 2.9 in the United States' (Stats Can, 2011). Additionally, 'from 1999 to 2008, Canada's foreign-born population increased from 18 per cent to 20.2 per cent of the total population, compared with an increase from 10.6 per cent to 13.7 per cent in the United States' (Stats Can, 2011). Canadian pluralism is also self-evident in the remarkable diversity of the national immigrant population. For example, of the approximately 250,000 newcomers admitted to Canada annually (Kongnetiman & Eskow, 2005, i), the vast majority are now from non-European nations (e.g. Asia, Africa, and the Middle East), given that these groups have constituted most of Canada's post-war immigration (Troper, 2003; Jansen & Lam, 2003). According to the 2006 Canadian census, 5.3 million people, or 16 per cent of Canadians are visible minorities (Stats Can, 2011). In fact, if current demographic trends continue 29 per cent to 32 per cent of Canada's population—between 11.4 million and 14.4 million people—could belong to a visible minority by 2031 (Stats Can, 2011).

Moreover, Canada has a long-standing commitment to the policy of multiculturalism, a policy under which the state has actively encouraged and protected ethnic and cultural diversity, 'while ideologies of cultural assimilation and Anglo conformity for immigrants and ethnic minorities have officially been rejected' (Wong & Satzewich, 2006: 1). In fact, '[o]ver the past three decades, as the policy on multiculturalism has evolved (Fleras & Elliott, 2002: 62-68), there

had been greater emphasis on encouraging immigrants to engage in transnational social practices and to develop transnational social identities' (Wong & Sitzewich, 2006: 1). Migration scholars now generally acknowledge 'that some migrants (migrant workers, immigrants and to some extent refugees) are organizing their lives transnationally (Goldring *et al.*, 2003: 3) or 'maintain[ing] a variety of ties to their home countries while they become incorporated into the countries where they settle' (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007: 130).

Indeed, '[a]lthough it is widely recognized that immigrants never completely sever ties with their families and homelands, the consensus among academic commentators is that the past twenty years have seen the emergence of quantitatively more and qualitatively different kinds of transnational linkages' (Satzewich & Wong, 2006: xi). For example, major advances in the availability and accessibility of international communication and transportation technologies has enabled migrants to sustain 'increasingly frequent and significant transnational practices' (Wong & Satzewich, 2006: 2) with their home countries, including social, cultural, political, economic, and religious (Goldring *et al.*, 2003). Plus, '[g]overnments of the countries in which migrants originate are engaging with their migrant communities abroad, often through increasingly active consulates in receiving countries that facilitate dual citizenship, remittance and investment flows, and political involvement "back home"' (Goldring, *et al.*, 2003: 3). All of these developments speak to the growing importance of transnationalism as an important dimension in Canadian social life.

Nevertheless, Canadian scholars have been slow to adopt a transnational perspective; [n]ot until the late 1990s and early 2000s was transnationalism incorporated into analyzing ethnicity, international migration and immigrant settlement (Wong & Satzewich, 2006: 3). Recently, however, there has been a shift in Canadian scholarship on transnationalism, as 'scholars in a number of disciplines are taking up the challenge of analyzing newcomers both as immigrants and refugees intent upon settling and as people with varying intensities and kinds of



ties to their homelands and other regions outside of Canada' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 2). The recent publication of two edited collections, *Transnational Identities and Practices in Canada* (2006) and *Organizing the Transnational: Labour, Politics and Social Change* (2007) attests to the growing acknowledgment among Canadian scholars of the importance of examining transnational engagement and practices. Moreover, in the past decade, research funding has increasingly supported studies of transnationalism, and, there has been a flourish of themed special issues on transnationalism in major academic journals (Wong & Satzewich, 2006: 2-3).

Concomitantly, the proliferation and ubiquity of the conceptual employment of transnationalism have made others leery of the perspective (e.g. Kivisto, 2001; Portes *et al.*, 1999; Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004); indeed a general 'lack of conceptual clarity' (Westwood & Phizacklea, 2000: 10) has been a chief concern. At the same time, others worry about imposing artificial conceptual demarcations on the study of transnationalism, limiting its scope and by extension scholarship of transnational migration and its consequences (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Levitt, 2007; Pries 2005, Smith 2005a; Mahler & Pessar, 2006), a concern echoed by those who are also troubled by the lack of spatial theorizing and/or limited attention to the spatial characteristics of population mobility in transnational migration scholarship and accordingly, call for the 'grounding' of transnational scholarship (Collins, 2009; Crang *et al.*, 2004; Featherstone *et al.*, 2007; Jackson *et al.*, 2004). For Lloyd Wong and Vic Satzewich (2006: 2), the 'elasticity' (Portes *et al.*, 1999) of the transnational perspective, combined with the inherently interdisciplinary nature of transnational studies, requires that the conceptual, theoretical and empirical bases for the use of this concept in Canada be established.

## THE EMBODIED FOUNDINGS OF TRANSNATIONALISM

The present study facilitates these goals by providing empirical detail of Canadian-based transnational engagement and advancing spatial theorizing of transnationalism by adopting the

'grounded' approach of *embodied transnationalism* (Dunn, 2010), which attends to the intimate, emotive and affective dimensions of migrants' everyday lives. Locating migrants' bodies as a spatial scale of analysis allows researchers to gain exceptional insights into the desires, needs and experiences of migrants (Dunn, 2010: 7). Embodied transnationalism then, moves migration scholarship towards a more analytically nuanced way in which to think about and understand the transnational practices of Canadian migrants. This approach reminds us that all migrants, even 'transmigrants' are 'situated' or 'placed' in time-space—embedded in historically and geographically specific localities. As such, place and space are central problematics in the formation of transnational identities and the production of transnational social spaces.

Furthermore, in locating migrants' transnational engagements in time-space, we may begin to gain a greater appreciation of the ways in which emplacement and mobility are interrelated. As Michael Peter Smith's (2001: 106) theorization of *transnational urbanism* reminds us, 'transnational networks do not operate in a pure space of flows. They locate on the ground in particular localities at particular times.' Against conceptions of hyper-mobile, disembodied and disembodied transmigrants; *embodied transnationalism* provides an understanding of the ways in which transnationalism is appreciably and concretely anchored in place. Moreover, the embodied scale of analysis moves us from a 'study of macro population movements, [which] is commonly undertaken at super-ordinate scales, but macro analyses struggle to engage with the migration experience, and with the varied nature of those experiences, and how these experiences may feed into population movements' (Dunn, 2010: 1). Indeed, Sarah Lamb (2002: 300) contends the overarching macro orientation of much of transnational studies draws attention away from the ways in which transnational 'forces are produced and played out in the daily lives of actual people.'

In *Transnationalism and the Politics of Belonging* Sallie Westwood and Annie Phizacklea's (2000: 11) point to the importance of exploring 'the politics of belonging' or consideration of the

different and frequently ‘unequal’ ways in which transnationalism is *experienced*—that is, ‘the ways in which both nation and migration form loci of sentiments and emotions crucial to a sense of home.’ I commenced this study wanting to investigate how transnationalism fits into such experiences; seeking ways in which to examine how and why transnationalism is ‘engaged, negotiated, and enacted’ (Collins, 2009: 442) by Mexican migrants in Canada. In other words, I wanted to access the *lived experience of transnationalism*—how transnationalism occurs within, and has impact upon the daily lives of individuals (Voigt-Graf, 2002). In the process of exploring the experience of transnationalism I became particularly interested in the symbolic and affective dimensions of migrants’ transnational practices and engagements and correspondingly adopted an embodied approach.

## KEY RESEARCH THEMES & FUTURE RESEARCH

Luisa Veronis (2002) opposes the use of the transnational framework to analyze Latin Americans in Canada because she found little evidence of contemporary transnational activity (Goldring, 2006: 2000). My research fundamentally challenges this finding by documenting the information and communication technology (ICT) practices of Mexican migrants in Southwestern Ontario. Given the relative ease of access to new and increasingly inexpensive information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Canada, technologies that are commonly understood to be facilitating transnational practices, I assumed that transnational engagement would be probable and moderately discernible among Mexican migrants. Instead, I found *significant* and *frequent* ICT use—revealing the transnational nature of migrants’ lives. Plus, in emphasizing the embodied experience of these practices (subjective and emotive), I came to understand the critical importance of *affective drivers* (Dunn, 2005) in motivating the creation and maintenance of ‘transnational social space’ (Pries, 2001). This is a unique contribution to the Canadian migration literature for two reasons: 1) it addresses both the scarcity of research on

Mexican migrants in Canada and Canadian-based Latin American transnationalism (Goldring, 2006), and 2) in beginning to empirically document the particularities and nuances of Canadian-based Mexican transnationalism, the study facilitates comparative analysis of transnational experiences. In fact, Goldring (2006: 199) states that ‘further research is needed to assess the extent of various configurations of transnational engagement among [Latin Americans immigrants], particularly those with large shares of recent arrivals [i.e. Mexican immigrants].’

Empirically documenting the ICT mediation of transnational engagement is critical because, as previously mentioned, technological innovation is widely referenced in the literature as, facilitating qualitatively new transnational engagements (Vertovec, 2009, 2004b), as crucial to the organization and maintenance of transnational social spaces (Bernal, 2006; Faist 2000a; Pries, 1998) and even new transnational subjectivities (Conradson & McKay, 2007; Dahinden, 2009). Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton’s (1994) foundational definition of transnationalism within migration studies references ‘networks’ and ‘processes’ as profoundly changing the experience of migration. Yet these networks of communication and exchange often receive scant attention in the literature and are often evoked in very vague terms. Plus, whether contemporary transnational practices are in fact *qualitatively* ‘new’ is a question that has plagued the transnational literature since its emergence in the mid-1990s (Vertovec, 2004c). My treatment of ‘ambient intimacy’ among Mexican migrants (Chapter 2) and ‘emotionally engaged transnational fatherhood’ among Mexican migrant workers (Chapter 4) sheds insight on this debate by documenting the novel ways in which contemporary Mexican migrants are utilizing technology to create and maintain transnational social spaces.

My research demonstrates how the proliferation and affordability of a multiplicity of new information and communication technology (ICT) channels or *polymedia* (Madianou & Miller, 2011), such as email, Skype, Facebook, instant messaging and cell phones, in particular cell phones with internet capacities (i.e. texting), are increasing both the frequency and intimacy

of transnational connections. Perhaps most importantly I provide evidence of the ways in which these connections constitute an important element of migrants' affective and intimate everyday lives. Significantly my research elucidates how the simultaneity of audio, visual and text-based contact made possible through contemporary polymedia is facilitating new transnational practices and transnational 'ways of being' (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004).

As such, the research documents both the novelty and significance of transnational practices and engagement among Mexican migrants in Canada. The rich examples of polymedia use provided, speak to the ways in which this technology is significantly affecting the relational lives of Mexican migrants in Canada. In fact, migrant workers' narratives of ICT use are particularly important as research participants readily cited the significant implications of polymedia—discussing the qualitative differences in present vs. previous opportunities for transnational intimacy and connection (as discussed in Chapter 2). Despite the fact that my data are not 'historically comparative' in a strict sense, migrant workers' referencing of transnational communication and exchange 'then' & 'now' speak to the radical implications of polymedia to their everyday lives—particularly in relation to their families. These findings are consistent with the existing literature, which suggests that international communication technology (ICT) use, such as mobile phones, prepaid calling cards, videoconferencing and texting among migrant workers has become integral and indispensable to the everyday lives of transnational migrants, not only for instrumental purposes (i.e. employment networking, arranging remittances and meeting arising financial needs), but in particular for providing social and emotional support and facilitating familial relationships (Benítez, 2006; Horst, 2006; Horst & Miller, 2006; Lam & Peng, 2006; Chu & Yang, 2006; Strom, 2002).

However, in order to fully appreciate the implications of migrants' polymedia use this literature also suggests that the plethora of social relations negotiated by such means, the quality and context of such exchanges, as well as the challenges related to access and use of polymedia

will need to be more fully explored. For example, Madianou and Miller (2011) suggest future research will need to explore the ways in which polymedia mediated transnational practices are gendered. Researchers will also have to consider the specific relational effects of the mediation of social interaction through polymedia (Baym, 2010). Certainly many questions remain about the accessibility of new technologies as well as the emotional and social tradeoffs between various polymedia technologies available to migrants (Miller, 2011). These questions are just some of the questions and issues which warrant further consideration.

For Wong and Satzewich (2006: 8) 'the meanings imparted to transnational practices by these new technologies remain subject to empirical study and interpretation'. In advancing *embodied transnationalism* (Dunn, 2010) my research illuminates both the meaning of transnational practices for Mexican migrants and importantly, what drives them to engage in new form of transnational communication. In exploring the subjective, intimate and emotive dimensions of transnational engagement the research provides detailed knowledge of the affective and emotive forces driving transnational engagement among Mexican migrants in Canada. Accordingly, the research reveals the importance of the undertheorized and understudied area of 'affective transnationalism'. Indeed, 'affective transnationalism' is not well understood in the transnational literature as a whole (Dunn, 2005).

Transnationalism has been perceived as a form of immigrant adaptation, as illustrated in the work of Alejandro Portes. In this context, transnationalism is associated with individual and group resistance to dominant structures (i.e. 'transnationalism from below') (Portes *et al.*, 1999). In fact, empirical research of U.S.-based Latin American transnationalism lends support to the idea that a process of minoritization in the United States structures the transnational practices of Latin American and Caribbean migrants, who have been the focus of American literature on transnationalism (Wong & Satzewich, 2006). The reading of transnationalism as a form of resistance to social marginalization (i.e. racialization), is exemplified by Nicholas De Genova's

(2005; De Genova & Ramos-Zayas, 2003) work on Mexican-American transnationalism. In the Canadian context, transnational social space can arguably be thought of as an extension of ethnic pluralism beyond national borders (Wong & Satzewich, 2006: 4). Yet, whether transnationalism is a form of immigrant adaptation and/or resistance to social marginalization in the context of Canada remains open to empirical investigation (Goldring, 2006; Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007; Satzewich & Wong, 2006).

The picture emerging from current research is mixed. Hiebert and Ley (2003) and Nolin (2004, 2001) suggest that immigrants' transnational practices tend to be associated with 'weak' connections to Canada. Wayland (2003) argues that transnational political participation may in fact facilitate 'local' political participation and social incorporation in Canada. Preston, Kobayashi and Siemiatycki (2006: 108) argue that although Hong Kong immigrants 'engage in numerous transnational activities', they are "rooted" in the Toronto metropolitan area in a variety of significant ways. Uzma Shakir (2007: 67) contends that exclusionary immigration and settlement policies coupled with 'racist and discriminatory structures in Canadian society' precipitate migrants' transnational engagements. Cheng's (2005) analysis of *Ming Pao* (*West Canadian Edition*), a Cantonese newspaper in Vancouver, illustrates how the immigrant newspaper narrates transnationalism, suggesting that Hong Kong immigrants develop a transnational, multilocal sense of belonging. Future research of Canadian-based transnationalism will need to clarify the relationship between incorporation and transnationalism (Goldring, 2006). This requires that researchers consider the 'context of reception' (Portes & Böröcz, 1989) or the wide array of policies and institutions that shape the incorporation of newcomers in Canada (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 3). Indeed, preliminary studies suggest that contexts of reception are fundamental for understanding the quality and institutional arrangement of emerging transnationalism (Goldring, 2006, Landolt, 2000; Nolin, 2001, 2004).

The transnational framework was born out of the failings of the classical theoretical models of migration studies, which emphasized integration and incorporation, and in the Canadian context, 'generally did not include 'home' other than as a site of history, origin of cultural practices and nostalgia' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 2). As such, previously dominant paradigms of assimilation or cultural pluralism could not adequately capture the growing interconnectivity between migrants and their home countries. On the surface the melancholy and psychological malaise experienced by Mexican migrants in Canada, as documented in my research, adds weight to the understanding of transnationalism as a response to weak social integration. Yet, I caution against a too simplistic reading of Mexican transnationalism. First my data do not meaningfully gauge migrants' levels of social integration. Second, casting transnational practices as necessarily fostered by social exclusion in the country of settlement is problematic because it does not capture the rich insights garnered from contemporary theorizing of transnationalism. In fact, recent Canadian research points out that transnationalism and social integration are complementary dynamics rather than mutually exclusive (Satzewich & Wong, 2006; Goldring *et al.*, 2003). Consequently, 'more research is needed on how participation in transnational networks and transnational social fields may facilitate the process of immigrant and ethnic-group incorporation' (Satzewich & Wong, 2006: 298)

My research makes Mexican transnationalism in Canada visible. Yet many questions remain about the scope and quality of such engagement. Hence, I offer a partial picture of Mexican transnationalism, but the research has limitations. For instance, my study does not adequately capture variations in different types, prevalence and levels of transnational activity. How widespread is Mexican transnationalism in Canada? Can this transnationalism be understood as institutionalized? Moreover how durable are such engagements? What is the relationship between immigrant settlement and transnational engagement? For instance, is there



an inverse relationship between numbers of years lived in Canada and the level of transnational engagement? Or more succinctly, '[w]hat is the relationship between immigrant incorporation and transnational engagement?...Are social exclusion, racism, and alienation the main explanations for...transnational engagements, and/or continued nostalgia and desire for 'home'? (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 13). All of these questions necessitate further investigation.

Diversity will grow among the Canadian-born population in coming generations regardless of future immigration, since the children and grandchildren of immigrants will add to Canada's diversity (Stats Can, 2011). Consequently, another important question is whether the discourse of transnationalism meaningfully applies to second-generation migrants in Canada. Wong and Satzewich (2006: 7) identify longitudinal research, which permits the examination of the longevity of transnationalism over time and across generation, as an important area of future development. They argue that '[a] focus on generations and families [will] help to advance the understanding of transnationalism as a socially negotiated process. Analyzing transnationalism through the lens of family dynamics is a fruitful way to unpack the dilemmas, contradictions, and conflicts that surround both real and imagined transnational connections to an ancestral homeland' (Satzewich & Wong, 2006b: 297). My research provides a preliminary sketch of Canadian-based Mexican transnationalism and insights about the ways in which male migrant workers father 'care from a distance' (Chapter 4). However, the above questions and issues will have to be explored in order to get a more fully developed understanding of Mexican transnationalism in Canada.

Importantly, theoretical and analytical development in migration transnational studies have illustrated the success of a social fields perspective in developing a richer more comprehensive understanding of the generational continuity of transnational practices. Levitt and Jaworsky (2007: 133) observe '[c]onceptualizing generation as a linear process, involving clear boundaries between one experience and the other, does not accurately capture the

experience of living in a transnational field because it implies a separation in migrants' and nonmigrants' socialization and social networks that may not exist.' Instead contemporary studies illustrate the ways in which socialization and social reproduction often occur across borders, in response to at least two social and cultural contexts (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007: 133-34, e.g. Espiritu, 2003, Leichtman, 2005, Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, Mazzucato *et al.*, 2004, Purkayastha, 2005, Smith, 2005b). In light of these insights, Canadian researchers exploring transnational families, specifically the existence of transnational ties among subsequent generations will need to consider the effects of transnational social fields on the everyday lives of migrant children (Pries, 2004).

Moreover, contemporary spatial theorizing of transnationalism [i.e. embodied transnationalism (Dunn, 2010)] extends the transnational framework in order to more fully appreciate the ways in which transnationalism is reconstituting 'a whole range of subjects, registers and spatialities of cross-border lives' (Collins, 2009: 435). Interrogating how and why transnationalism is dissimilarly engaged, negotiated and enacted, research is now explicating the ways in which transnational spaces are complex, multidimensional and multiply inhabited (i.e. Collins, 2009; Bunnell, 2007; Featherstone *et al.*, 2007; Jackson *et al.*, 2004). This work widens the scope of transnational studies, allowing greater insight and appreciation of the ways in which transnationalism is fundamentally reconstituting the experience of 'place' and locality, not only for migrants, but, potentially, for everyone.

Recent Canadian research also points to the importance of broadening transnational studies to look beyond nations and migrants, to consider other actors such as communities, media, regulatory regimes, and family networks (Goldring *et al.*, 2003; Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007). Including analysis of the ways in which nonmigrants and nonstate actors shape transnational spaces and engagements 'brings other institutions, policies, regulations, and process into analysis (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 13, 237). For example, several authors in

Goldring and Krishnamurti's (2007) edited text 'examine the role of civil society organizations in host countries, as well as that of institutions such as the media and international law, in shaping transnational engagements' (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 13). Despite the fact that the focus of my research is migrants, I concur with Collins (2009: 450) that '[t]ransnationalism should be viewed as more than just a particular set of practices engaged in by the most mobile migrants...[if not, we risk] missing an important opportunity to broaden our understanding of connections and disconnections between people and places.'

In my research, I have sought to explicate a more expansive understanding of the transnational optic by drawing attention to the embodied contours of migrants' transnational engagement. Embodiment, of course, is just one of the 'subjects, registers and spatialities of cross-border lives' (Collins, 2009) that transnational scholars, particularly geographers, have utilized in order to 'unbind' the study of transnationalism (Collins, 2009) or expand understanding of transnationalism away from an inadequate and restrictive focus on 'regular and sustained' contacts and activities (e.g. Portes, *et al.*, 1999). This is an appreciable shift in transnational migration research because it permits scholars to go beyond dichotomous notions of migrant/non-migrant and to begin to understand the relations between them, as well as shared social fields in which both are embedded and constitute. Furthermore, in highlighting the everyday *lived experience* of transnationalism, my research underscores that transnationalism is not simply about abstract mobilities and flows of people, networks, and processes, but rather, transnational practices and engagement are grounded and emplaced—migrants are thoroughly embodied and embedded in complex and shifting transnational geographies—which can trigger emotions of isolation and sadness, which in turn drive transnational engagements that are affirming and enrich the quality of their lives.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In contrast to the 'longer history of scholarship on transnationalism in Europe and the United States', attention to transnationalism is a comparatively recent shift in Canadian scholarship, as a result 'relatively little is known about migrant transnationalism and cross-border networks in Canada' (Golring *et al.*, 2003: 11). Despite the need for more research, particularly comparative research (Goldring, 2006), Canadian scholars have successfully shown that 'the *transnational* is constituted by a variety of disparate mechanisms and social, political, and cultural issues, and it operates at multiple scales and levels' (original emphasis, Krishnamurti & Goldring, 2007: 256). Notwithstanding differing approaches to transnationalism (i.e. identity, location, or strategy), Canadian scholars have gained an appreciation of transnational activities as complex, contradictory and highly diverse (Krishnamurti & Goldring, 2007: 257-58). The enormous diversity and extent of transnational practices point to the need for more research and exchange among scholars and policy-makers so as to enable more informed policy responses (Goldring *et al.*, 2003: 3). Krishnamurti and Goldring (2007: 258) observe that '[t]ransnational practices affect and are affected by issues of politics, immigration, trade, and security and include cultural, social, religious, and familial practices. Researching these practices and listening to people in communities can be an extremely helpful in building law and policy.'

My research illuminates the role of 'the context of reception' (Portes & Böröcz, 1989) or the wide array of policies and institutions that shape the incorporation of newcomers in Canada (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 3). Canadian policies set parameters for migrant transnationalism and cross-border advocacy by shaping who comes to Canada and their economic and social opportunities while resident here (Goldring, *et al.*, 2003: 6), which consequently shapes social inclusion or exclusion outcomes. Social inclusion refers to the ability of migrants to fully participate in the civic life of host countries, such as through employment rights, political participation, access to social services, rights to form associations, and freedom

from discrimination (Goldring et al., 2003: 7). My work provides insights on the ways in which Canada's 'context of reception' shapes Mexicans migrants' transnational engagements and practices, in part, because the loneliness, isolation and *social exclusion* they experience in the Canada motivates their transnational engagements.

Because migrant workers are denied legal citizenship, they are denied access to a range of services and protections that composes the social citizenship entitlements accorded to Canadians (Preibisch, 2007: 101). As such, social exclusion, is a fitting descriptor and analytical concept from which to consider the lives of Mexican migrant workers given that it highlights the variety of ways in which people may be denied full participation in society (Lister, 2000: 38), and the relations of power and the processes of marginalization experienced by the excluded. My study provides an intimate portrait of the ways in which social exclusion, in the form of labour vulnerability, discrimination, and social isolation, circumscribes the daily lives of Mexican migrant workers in Canada. This is an important contribution given that '[c]urrent discussions concerning social exclusion and transnationalism that include attention to legal status rarely consider the case of temporary workers (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 3).

The Canadian government has actively expanded, modified and intensified its dependency on temporary labour migration programs (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007; Preibisch, 2010, 2007). In fact, 'Canada's use of low-waged migrant workers with temporary immigration status has more than tripled in the last decade' (Faraday, 2012: 10). The Canadian literature documenting the systematic marginalization and disempowerment of migrant workers, their labour vulnerabilities, and the discrimination and social exclusion faced by migrant workers in Canada is now substantial (Basok, 2002; 2003; Baines & Sharma, 2002; Faraday, 2012; Gogia, 2005; Preibisch, 2010, 2007; Preibisch & Hennebry, 2011; Pysklywec *et al.*, 2011; Sharma 2006, 2001, 2000). Sharma (2006) argues that temporary migrant worker programs 'are not so much about keeping people—predominantly negatively racialized migrant[s] from the global South—out of a national space, but rather circumscribing the conditions of their

differential inclusion; about allowing the state to institute and legitimize different regimes of rights and benefits within the same national space' (Preibisch, 2010: 432). Similarly, lawyer Fay Faraday (2012: 107-108) observes, '[t]o the extent that [Canadian] laws construct workers as "temporary,"...they likewise devalue the real contributions of these workers to the functioning of our economy and communities and construct the workers as "other," as "not us," as persons outside the community to whom we need not be accountable.' Migrant workers' reports of feeling '*invisible*' and '*like ghosts*' in Canada attests to these dynamics.

Yet, Canada Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program is still held up as a 'success' and a 'model' of temporary migrant worker programs (e.g. Massey & Brown, 2011). Embodiment may be a fruitful entry point into the contradictions of Canada's transnational SAWP, in attending to the subjective experiences and emotional geographies and everyday texture of migrant workers' lives. My research captures the experiential dimensions of transnational migration, humanizing the struggles of migrant workers in Canada. In portraying migrants' everyday transnational struggles of exploitation, loneliness, sadness and isolation, I hope to 'give voice' (Kasper, 1986) to the injustices faced by Mexican migrant workers and in so doing access 'subjugated knowledge' (Foucault, 1980), that aims at 'disrupting social systems of oppression by utilizing the complex standpoints cultivated by such systems' (Hesse-Biber *et al*, 2004: 22). These standpoints direct us to the importance of implementing meaningful commitments to protecting the social and employment rights of migrant workers and mechanisms for enforcement (Faraday, 2012).

Also in examining migrants' embodied *lived experiences* my research adds to our understanding of the affective motivations or 'affective drivers' (Dunn, 2005) of migrant workers' transnational practices. That is, Mexican migrant workers actively try to overcome their physical and social marginality in Canada through affective transnational practices such as routine ICT contact with family. Given the importance of ICT practices to migrant workers' emotional wellbeing, policies aimed at ensuring access to and knowledge of ICT are critical.

My research also notes how Mexican immigrants' settlement experiences, particularly their early experiences, were marked by social exclusion through a lack of credential recognition and underemployment and/or precarious employment. Immigrants' 'context of reception', then was mediated by Canadian immigration policy and federal and provincial employment regulations and institutions which contain contradictory elements—highly educated immigrants [in this case from Mexico] are selected to immigrate to Canada, but are often unable to find adequate employment (Goldring *et al.*, 2003: 9). Consistent with Shakir's (2007) discussion of the factors producing transnationalism among immigrants in Canada, my research highlights how Canada's 'context of reception' induces downward social mobility and associated depression and feelings of inadequacy for Mexican immigrants. Echoing Shakir's (2007: 80) assertion that Canada's 'nation-building ethos continues to construct non-Europeans as cheap labour but not as nation builders,' many participants revealed that their image of Canada pre-migration was a stark contrast from the realities they experienced post-migration. In other words there is a clear gap between 'the promise of Canada' or 'the Canadian dream' and the realities of life in Canada 'on the ground' for Mexican immigrants. This is consistent with recent literature which notes the growing evidence that the economic performance of newcomers is declining. For instance, '[c]ompared to earlier cohorts, immigrants today are taking longer to catch up to native-born Canadians in their earnings, and are at higher risk of poverty' (Kymlicka, 2010: 21).

The factors contributing to this decline are still debated, however, evidence suggest that the issue is related to issues such as professional accreditation, the evaluation of foreign job experience, language training, and mismatches between immigrant selection and actual labour market needs (Kymlicka, 2010: 21). My research is consistent with these suggestions. Accordingly, the declining economic performance of newcomers needs to be addressed through policy coherence in the area of credential recognition and promotion (Shakir, 2007). The implication of such efforts are especially timely given that demographic projections indicated the continuing and increasing flux of immigrants and refugees to Canada (Noh & Kaspar, 2003: 351).

Accordingly Noh and Kaspar (2003: 351) stress the critical importance of immigration and immigration policy for the country's economic performance. Yet, '[t]o date, immigration policy has focused almost exclusively on the selection of 'ideal' or 'fit' immigrants; little attention has been directed to the post-migration settlement process' (Noh & Kaspar, 2003: 351). In fact, Shakir (2007: 81) observes, 'though immigrants are supposed to maintain the Canadian standard of living, immigrant doctors, engineers, and teachers cannot even maintain their "own" standard of living, which was their rationale for migrating in the first place.' Thus, I agree with Noh and Kaspar (2003: 351) that there is 'an urgent need for strategic support for more rigorous and systematic research on post-migration settlement processes.'

Mexican immigrants' 'context of reception' was also meaningfully mediated by evidence of a 'gendered divisions of labour', for example women reporting limited employment opportunities and underemployment given that they were unable to find employment in their fields of expertise while simultaneously discussing the significant challenges of balancing or negotiating the demands of paid and unpaid work, particularly the demands of caring for young children. The economic, social, political and personal costs to women of the gender imbalance in the 'cost of caring' is well established in the Canadian literature (Baker, 2010; Doucet, 2010; Luxton and Corman, 2011). Indeed, Canada's approach to child care has been criticized as being fundamentally inadequate (Doherty et al., 2003; OECD, 2004). For instance, Canada invests less than half of what other developed nations devote to early-childhood education and has enough child-care spaces for less than 20 per cent of children under six with working parents' (Doucet, 2010: 140). The gendered dimensions of immigration settlement and access to the labour market must therefore also be an important focus of future research and policy consideration. Canada *desperately* needs quality, widely available and accessible childcare.

Lastly, "host" states tend to react [to transnational engagements] with great suspicion, branding people who retain active ties to homelands as disloyal, un-patriotic (to their country of adoption), or worse—as terrorists or criminals' (Goldring *et al.*, 2003: 16). However, 'immigrant



incorporation is not a uniform or linear process' (Goldring *et al.*, 2003: 7). In fact, studies suggest that settlement occurs in tandem with transnational activity. For instance, Abdelhady (2006: 430) stresses the need to 'escape the ethnic pluralism and assimilation binary that dominates the immigration literature' and Cheng (2005: 141) 'challenges traditional immigrant scholarship that treats the home country and the host society as an either-or dichotomy for winning immigrants' affection and loyalty.' Moreover, when we consider the long-term impact of transnationalism on the social and emotional well-being of migrants, it is clear that transnationalism engagements challenge us to reconsider what fosters successful settlement and integration. A holistic, determinants of health approach to migrant health recognize the importance of migrants' emotional wellbeing (Health Canada, 2010). Over time a lack of social support combined with delayed employment and underemployment can lead to poorer health status for Canadian newcomers (Health Canada, 2010). In fact, many studies have shown that immigrants do best, both in terms of psychological well-being and socio-cultural outcomes, when they are able to combine their ethnic identity with a new national identity (Kymlicka, 2010: 10), transnationalism clearly has a role to play in facilitating this outcome. Thus, I corroborate 'the need to move away from nearly automatic suspicion of migrant transnationalism towards a more informed and nuanced understanding of its complexity and diversity, grounded in Canada-specific research' (Goldring *et al.*, 2003: 17). My research suggest that transnational practices and engagements form critical and meaningful lifelines to migrants' families in Mexico—enabling transnational intimacy, facilitating transnational caring and emotionally anchoring Mexican migrants' lives in Canada.

## CONCLUSION

The conditions supporting migration between Mexico and Canada (i.e. the expansion of temporary migrant labour programs, changes in U.S. immigration and related border enforcement, escalating violence, and increased economic pressures in Mexico) show no sign of

dwindling, making it likely that the flow of Mexican migrants to Canada will continue and perhaps even increase. The Mexican 'community' in Canada is not uniform and their experiences ought not be generalized. Still, the nature, trajectory and implications of Mexican migration routes to Canada are not clear (Goldring, 2006). Since the mid-1990s the number of Mexicans in Canada has been growing rapidly (Mueller, 2005). Despite 'the growing importance of Mexico as a [migrant] source country' (Goldring, 2006: 198), research of Mexican migration to Canada remains limited—this represents a serious gap in our knowledge. The present study seeks to address this gap by examining if and how the lives of contemporary Mexican migrants in Canada are being lived transnationally. Findings demonstrate both the existence and significance of transnational engagement for Mexican migrants in Southwestern Ontario.

Though the advancement of transnational scholarship is not without its conceptual challenges, Canadian researchers in a number of disciplines are beginning to analyze a wide array of institutions, institutional actors and forms of mobilization that contribute to shaping transnational engagements and spaces, [going] beyond the literature's focus on migrants and states as key actors and institutions shaping transnational spaces (Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007: 3). This represents an important conceptual advancement in the field of transnational studies in Canada, in advancing an *embodied transnational* approach I hope to have contributed to these efforts. As previously mentioned the field of transnational studies is intrinsically diverse. This inevitably leads to debate concerning not only the conceptual definition and significance of transnationalism, but also how the concept ought to be operationalized and applied. By no means does the present research resolve these debates. However, I hope my research adds to and enriches these discussions.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A:

#### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS AND/OR NEWCOMERS

##### A. GENERAL INFORMATION

First, I would like to ask you some basic questions about yourself.

1. How many years have you been living in Canada?
2. Was it a difficult decision for you to migrate to Canada? What brought you to Canada?
  - 2-1 Why did you choose to migrate to Canada and not the United States?
3. With whom did you migrate?
4. Are you married?
5. Do you have children? Are they in school?
6. How is school going for them in Canada? For example, are they having any difficulty with the language? How are they doing in school in terms of their grades?
7. What language(s) do you speak?
8. Have you ever struggled with or had language problems in Canada?
9. Have you found it difficult to make friends in Canada?
10. And for your children, have they had any difficulty making friends?
11. What language(s) do you speak in your home?
12. Do you have any Mayan or other indigenous heritage?

##### B. ON BEING A MEXICAN IMMIGRANT IN CANADA

Now, I'd like to learn a bit more about being Mexican in Canada.

1. How did you imagine Canada to be before you came here?
  - 1-2 Did you have a particular image in mind? And if so, could you describe that to me?
  - 1-3 Has life in Canada been what you expected?

2. What have your experiences been like when entering Canada?
  - 2-1 How are you treated at the border?
  - 2-2 For example, do you ever feel uncomfortable or nervous entering Canada?
  - 2-3 How are you treated by Canadian immigration officials?
3. Economically what is life like for you in Canada?
  - 3-1 For example, what types of jobs or employment opportunities are available?
4. How do you think Canadians view you?
  - 4-1 For instance do you feel welcome?
5. How do Canadians treat you, for example when: At the grocery store? In town? At the doctor's office or hospital? At work?
6. Do you ever have to speak English? When? Why?
7. Have you ever experienced discrimination because you speak Spanish?
  - 7-1 Can you tell me about this?
8. Do you think it is important for Mexican immigrants and/or newcomers to learn English?
  - 8-1 Why?/Why not?
9. Overall, what is the most important thing I should know about being a Mexican immigrant and/or newcomer to Canada?

### C. MEXICAN IDENTITY

1. Why do you think there are so many economic difficulties in Mexico?
  - 1-1 For example, do you think the Mexican government is doing a good job of managing the Mexican economy?
  - 1-2 If yes, why?
  - 1-3 If now, why not?
2. Do you think a dark-skinned person experiences more economic problems than a light skinned person in Mexico?

3. Do you think a dark-skinned person experiences more economic problems than a light skinned person in Canada?
4. Do you ever feel marginalized or discriminated against in Mexico?  
4-1 If so, how? Can you tell me about this?
5. Do you ever feel marginalized or discriminated against in Canada?  
5-1 If so, how? Can you tell me about this?
6. Is being Mexican an important part of your identity?

D. ON BELONGING AND THE PRODUCTION OF LOCALITY

1. While in Canada, what is your main form of entertainment?  
1-1 Is this an important part of your daily life?
2. Where is home for you?
3. Do you feel like Canada is home to you in any way?
4. Do you intend to live in Canada for the rest of your life?  
4-1 If yes, why?  
4-2 If no, why not?
5. Do you think there is a Mexican community here in Canada?  
5-1 If yes, why?  
5-2 If no, why not?
6. Do you think Mexicans are transforming Canada in any way?  
6-1 For example, is there anywhere in Canada that makes you feel like you are in Mexico?  
6-2 If so, how; in what ways?  
6-3 If not, why?
7. Do you have friends and family members that have migrated to the United States?  
7-1 Do you think that Mexicans are perceived differently in Canada than they are in the United States?

## E. SOCIAL NETWORKS

1. What sorts of things do you do when you are not working? (*i.e.* hobbies, activities, and entertainment)
2. Do you party in Canada? If so, who do you party with?
3. Who do you rely on?
4. How do you relax?
  - 4-1 Who do you relax with?
5. Can you tell me about the relationship among Mexicans living in Canada?
  - 5-1 Do Mexicans look out for one another?
  - 5-2 Are there certain cliques or designations among Mexicans? For example, the province or village where people are from? Or perhaps, whether they live in rural or urban areas in Mexico?
  - 5-3 Are Mexicans who are in Canada temporarily (*i.e.* migrant farm workers) treated differently than those who are seeking permanent residence or citizenship in Canada?
6. Have you formed relationships with Canadians?
  - 6-1 If so, what kinds of relationships?
  - 6-2 For instance, is it common for Mexicans to form romantic relationships with Canadians?

## F. ON LIFE IN MEXICO

1. Do you think that your migration to Canada represents a break away from your country?
  - 1-1 For example, do people in Mexico treat you differently? Are you seen as less 'Mexican'?
  - 1-2 Do you ever feel conflicted between your life in Mexico and your life in Canada?
  - 1-3 If so, how do you cope with this?
2. How do you think coming to Canada has affected your life as a Mexican?
  - 2-1 For example, your family life?

2-2 Your status?

2-3 Your sense of belonging?

3. Do you have much contact with Mexico? For example, friends and family?

3-1 How do you communicate with them? How frequently do you communicate with them?

3-2 If no, why not?

4. Have you returned to Mexico since coming to Canada?

4-1 If yes, what was that like? Why did you return? How long did you stay?

4-2 If not, why not?

4-3 Do your friends and family visit you in Canada? If yes, how often and when?

5. How has the experience of migration affected you personally?

5-1 Do you feel less connected to Mexico?

5-2 Do you see Mexico differently?

5-3 Do you think of yourself differently?

5-4 Do you see life differently?

6. It is quite common for people to migrate within Mexico for work or economic opportunity. Do you think your migration to Canada is an extension of this type of migration?

6-1 If yes, how so?

6-2 If no, in your mind, how is it different?

## CONCLUSION

We've talked a lot about both your life in Canada and in Mexico; is there anything else you would like to add?

## APPENDIX B:

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEXICAN MIGRANT WORKERS

#### A. GENERAL INFORMATION

First, I would like to ask you some basic questions about yourself.

1. How many years have you been coming to Canada to work?
2. Was it a difficult decision for you to become a migrant worker? What brought you to Canada?
3. Why did you choose to migrate to Canada and not the United States?
4. With whom did you migrate to Canada?
5. Are you married?
6. Do you have children? Are they in school?
7. If so, what do they think about you coming to Canada to work?
8. What language(s) do you speak?
9. Do you have any Mayan or other indigenous heritage?

9-1 What language(s) do you speak in your home?

#### B. ON BEING A MEXICAN MIGRANT WORKER IN CANADA

Now, I'd like to learn a bit more about being Mexican in Canada.

1. How did you imagine Canada to be before you came here?
  - 1-3 Did you have a particular image in mind? And if so, could you describe that to me?
  - 1-4 Has life in Canada been what you expected?
2. What have your experiences been like when entering Canada?
  - 2-1 How are you treated at the border?
  - 2-2 For example, do you ever feel uncomfortable or nervous entering Canada?
  - 2-3 How are you treated by Canadian immigration officials?
3. How do you think Canadians view you?

- 3-1 For instance do you feel welcome?
4. How do Canadians treat you, for example when: At the grocery store? In town? At the doctor's office or hospital? At work?
  5. Do you ever have to speak English? When? Why?
  6. Have you ever experienced discrimination because you speak Spanish?
- 6-1 Can you tell me about this?
7. Do you think it is important for Mexican migrant workers to learn English?
- 7-1 Why? /Why not?
8. While in Canada what is your main form of transportation?
- 8-1 What is that like for you?
9. Overall, what is the most important thing I should know about being a Mexican migrant worker in Canada?

### C. MEXICAN IDENTITY

1. Why do you think there are so many economic difficulties in Mexico?
  - 1-1 For example, do you think the Mexican government is doing a good job of managing the Mexican economy?
  - 1-2 If yes, why?
  - 1-3 If now, why not?
2. Do you think a dark-skinned person experiences more economic problems than a light skinned person in Mexico?
3. Do you think a dark-skinned person experiences more economic problems than a light skinned person in Canada?
4. Do you ever feel marginalized or discriminated against in Mexico?
  - 4-1 If so, how? Can you tell me about this?
5. Do you ever feel marginalized or discriminated against in Canada?
  - 5-1 If so, how? Can you tell me about this?
6. Is being Mexican an important part of your identity?

#### D. ON BELONGING AND THE PRODUCTION OF LOCALITY

1. While in Canada, what is your main form of entertainment?
  - 1-1 Is this an important part of your daily life?
2. Where is home for you?
3. Do you feel like Canada is home to you in any way?
4. Do you intend to work in Canada for the rest of your life?
  - 4-1 If yes, why?
  - 4-3 If no, why not?
5. Do you think there is a Mexican community here in Canada?
  - 5-1 If yes, why?
  - 5-2 If no, why not?
6. Do you think Mexicans are transforming Canada in any way?
  - 6-1 For example, is there anywhere in Canada that makes you feel like you are in Mexico?
  - 6-2 If so, how; in what ways?
  - 6-3 If not, why?
7. Do you have friends and family members that have migrated to the United States?
  - 7-1 Have you ever migrated to the United States? If yes, what was that like for you?
  - 7-1 Do you think that Mexicans are perceived differently in Canada than they are in the United States?

#### E. SOCIAL NETWORKS

1. What sorts of things do you do when you are not working? (*i.e.* hobbies, activities, entertainment)
2. Do you party in Canada? If so, who do you party with?
3. Who do you rely on?



4. How do you relax?
  - 4-1 Who do you relax with?
5. Can you tell me about the relationship among Mexicans living in Canada?
  - 5-1 Do Mexicans look out for one another?
  - 5-2 Are there certain cliques or designations among Mexicans? For example, the province or village where people are from? Or perhaps, whether they live in rural or urban areas in Mexico?
  - 5-3 Are Mexicans who are in Canada temporarily (i.e. Migrant farm workers) treated differently than those who are seeking permanent residence or citizenship in Canada?
6. Have you formed relationships with Canadians?
  - 6-2 If so, what kinds of relationships?
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  - 1-1 For example, do people in Mexico treat you differently? Are you seen as less 'Mexican'?
  - 1-2 Do you ever feel conflicted between your life in Mexico and your life in Canada?
  - 1-3 How do you cope with this?
2. How do you think coming to Canada has affected your life as a Mexican?
  - 2-1 For example, your family life?
  - 2-2 Your status?
  - 2-3 Your sense of belonging?
3. Do you have much contact with Mexico? For example, friends and family?
  - 3-1 How do you communicate with them? How frequently do you communicate with them?

3-2 If no, why not?

4. What is it like for you when you return to Mexico?

4-1 For example, do your family and friends treat you differently?

5. How has the experience of migration affected you personally?

5-1 Do you feel less connected to Mexico?

5-2 Do you see Mexico differently?

5-3 Do you think of yourself differently?

5-4 Do you see life differently?

6. It is quite common for people to migrate within Mexico for work or economic opportunity. Do you think your migration to Canada is an extension of this type of migration?

6-1 If yes, how so?

6-2 If no, in your mind, how is it different?

## CONCLUSION

We've talked a lot about both your life in Canada and in Mexico; is there anything else you would like to add?

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