

SUEÑOS DULCES AND THE BRIDGE OVER BRAVO:
INTRODUCING NATALIA CAUDILLO GUARDADO

By

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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Natalia Caudillo Guardado is a 93-year-old Mexican national who has lived in the United States since 1920. Her story is told through a series of interviews, to describe the hardships faced by immigrants in the early 20th Century. Migration theory, ideology of motherhood, and immigration policy are evaluation in conjunction with Natalia's testimony.

The purpose of my study was to personify theory and ideas. Natalia's identity and roles as mother and Latina are evaluated by analyzing her stories. The main sources for my study were anthropological journals, U.S. Census data, data obtained from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, and interviews with Natalia Caudillo.

The findings of my study include changes in Natalia's ideas of family structure, the importance of traveling with an informant, and the discovery of multi-ethnic identity obtained by a Mexican migrant who openly embraces several cultures.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

There is a story to tell. It is one of movement, risk, and change. It is a story that has thousands of endings. It is told in several languages. It knows no color, sex, nor age. It is the story of the immigrant, the exile, the pilgrim. It is the account of every man, woman, and child who leaves one life in exchange for another. The very spirit of the United States is based on the idea of opportunity and growth. Since the birth of the United States, hundreds of thousands of people have crossed miles of land and water in hopes of something better. The result is a nation of variety.

This is the story of a woman: Natalia Guardado Caudillo. She celebrates her ninety-fourth birthday on July 27th, 2004. At 10 years of age, Natalia left her home in Aguascalientes, Mexico. As a child, she saw her mother and two brothers die of illness. She was raised by three different families. She crossed the border between the U.S. and Mexico, without legal documents, at 10 years of age. She has given birth to twelve children, and spent literally years of her life picking Texas cotton. She gained national attention at age 88, when she was threatened with deportation by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Natalia, who does not consider her life extraordinary, is a walking history book. She can recall the day her father decided to break out of the vicious economic cycle of the Mexican hacienda system. She remembers the day she arrived in the United States in 1920. She speaks openly about the social, political, and economic changes she has witnessed nationally and internationally. It is crucial that people like Natalia have a

voice, an opportunity to talk about struggles and survival. The purpose my study was to give her a voice. My study was designed to discuss Natalia's story in conjunction with the ever-changing culture of the U.S./Mexico border, the idea of motherhood, and U.S. immigration policy.

Methodology and Data

This project began as an attempt to better understand the Mexican immigrant. I was a graduate student with dreams of practicing immigration law. I wanted to fully understand character and culture, before learning legal policy. I was searching for an informant who had migrated to the United States from Mexico without documents. I was also interested in an informant who had spent a considerable amount of time in the U.S. Also, I wanted an informant who was willing to spend hours in interviewing sessions with a tape-recorder logging his or her every word.

I realized, early in the planning stages of my project, that my grandmother, Natalia Caudillo matched all of my criteria. I knew that she was more than willing to share her life stories with me; she had been doing this unofficially for years. I also knew that Natalia would not mind being recorded. Most importantly, I knew that she had an extraordinary story to tell. I solved many problems by choosing Natalia, my mother's mother, as an informant.

Yet, choosing Natalia also created internal battles. I was determined not to let the relationship between my informant and me skew the findings of this project. To preserve the integrity of this project, I recognized the importance of taking an objective position as an interviewer and as an anthropologist. I was very careful to ask Natalia questions regarding the three main themes of my study: border crossing, motherhood, and immigration law. She was encouraged to elaborate on any interview questions. She was

also encouraged to ask me questions. I wanted our interview sessions to be an open forum of ideas concerning migration and family structure.

To foster open interviewing sessions, I decided to travel with Natalia to areas that she mentioned in our interviews. The relationship between Natalia and me helped this method. We were able to spend late nights with family in Temple, Texas discussing stories told by *tios* and *primos*. By traveling throughout cotton regions of Texas, Natalia was able to pinpoint locations of events. She was able to see areas that she had not seen since her adolescence. She was also able to see and explain changes in regions, people, and culture.

I used the ethnographic method of collecting oral history to gather information from Natalia. Oral history, in this case, was the collection of life stories, in order to better understand the culture of an era. Life histories are used in anthropology to make inferences about a cultural group. The process of collecting oral history from Natalia was more than a series of interview questions. A topic was addressed. Natalia was able to elaborate and add additional facts. This structure allowed Natalia the opportunity to elaborate, and add details that might be left out with a more direct line of questioning. Each interview was tape-recorded with Natalia's permission. Before any interviewing was conducted with Natalia, a report was submitted and approved by the University of Florida Institutional Review Board. The tapes used to record Natalia will be archived and stored in a collection of oral histories.

I also used the method of collecting *testimonio*. This form of life history is common in Latin America, specifically in Mexico. The *testimonio* is used to tell event-specific history. An example of *testimonio* is Sydney Mintz's (1974) *Worker in the*

Cane, A Puerto Rican Life History. This particular form of life history is event-specific in that the study outlines the life of a Puerto Rican sugar-cane worker. Although Natalia's story does include specific hardships (border crossing, threat of deportation), my study is not meant to be event-specific.

As mentioned before, Natalia and I traveled throughout southern regions of Texas, to different towns where Natalia resided as a child and young adult. Natalia visited areas that she had not seen in more than 50 years. Natalia was able to recall vivid details from her adolescence and childhood after visiting these areas. This method proved to be successful in gathering details of her testimony and oral history. My study attempts to discuss major issues facing Mexican migrants, including border crossing, immigration policy, border culture, and immigrant identity, all in relation to Natalia's life stories.

Oral history and life stories play a significant role in Latin America because of the region's history of military rule and oppression (Jaksic 1992). To better understand the history of Latin American countries and peoples, oral histories are needed. Ivan Jaksic defined oral history as a "method that illuminates and enriches the historical field, particularly by revealing the views and actions of social sectors traditionally shut out of the historical record (1992:591)." The purpose of my study was to document Natalia's story in conjunction with current issues of migration and immigrant identity. My aim in using this method should be to work with the informant to develop and contextualize her testimony (Jaksic 1992).

Oral history is particularly important in distinguishing migrant workers and their perspectives, because of the lack of written records about them (Jaksic 1992). The accounts of migrant workers (such as Natalia) expose social, economic, and political

conditions that otherwise would not be known. Migrant testimony also provides new information on the process of immigration. According to Jaksic, oral history can transcend geographical boundaries and unite nations, while providing a rich supply of comparative data (1992).

Although my study does use elements of oral history and testimonio, it became a fusion of methods, resulting in a chronology of extended in-depth questions. Rather than concentrating on specific events (in the fashion of a *testimonio*), or focusing on the cultural aspect (in the manner of oral history), my study encompasses elements of each method to illustrate Natalia's identity.

Further Implications

To produce a more thorough analysis, further research would be necessary. I have several goals for further research, which include interviewing and collecting oral history from other members of Natalia's family, focusing on Latina/o identity. I would interview neighbors and friends who have seen Natalia and her community change. Because Natalia was able to recall more history when seeing certain landmarks, I would also like to travel to Aguascalientes with her. I would like to travel the route that Natalia and her family traveled in 1920, beginning in Mexico, and ending in Rogers, Texas. I would like to visit the immigrant labor camp in Southern Texas where Natalia and her family worked as indentured servants. Financial and time restrictions prevented these events during the time designated for field work. I plan on continuing this project and research, if allowed by the University of Florida, during the summer of 2005. I also plan on bringing elements of visual anthropology into the project.

Fay Ginsburg's (1991) "Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract of Global Village?" is an article of advocacy, stressing the importance of representing of under-represented

groups through forms of media (1991). Ginsburg writes that multicultural artistic expression is crucial to the development and understanding of identity. She compares “indigenous media” to ethnic autobiographies. Therefore, Natalia would be a part of the production team in a video outlining her life.

Major Themes as Chapters

Chapter 2 analyzes migration from Mexico into the United States. Human smuggling has become a major concern in the U.S. and Mexico. Every year, there are reported incidents of deaths and injuries as a result of human trafficking. Chapter 2 discusses the controversy behind migrant-trafficking, and the dangers that accompany this issue. Traveling from Mexico to the U.S. has changed drastically since 1920, when Natalia’s family migrated. Chapter 2 discusses these changes. Literature focusing on law and identity was used in this section. Chapter 2 extends the ideas of agency in immigration, free will, and choices made by migrants. Finally, Natalia’s testimony was used to illustrate the process of movement in the 1920s.

Chapter 3 describes the circumstances that kept Natalia mothering children, many of whom were not her own. Natalia was 5 years old when her mother, Clea Ramirez, died days after giving birth to twin boys. On the day of Clea’s death, Natalia began assuming a maternal role. She no longer enjoyed the carelessness of being a child. She would forever be a mother. With this said, I turn to the literature regarding the maternal role of Mexican women. Rina Alcalay’s article, “Hispanic Women in the United States: Family and Work Relations,” (1984) discusses the role of Latina, or Hispanic, women. This article outlines the affects of migration on different groups of Latin American women. Family structure and domestic roles are especially important to Mexican women. Alcalay claims that these maternal and domestic roles can be found in the homes

of Mexicans living in the U.S. I will evaluate Natalia's testimonio and oral history in conjunction with Alcalay's claims.

The U.S./Mexican border is a pressing issue among anthropologists and sociologists. This ever changing area has taken on an identity of its own that is neither "American" nor Mexican. In many ways, migrants like Natalia personify the border. Chapter 4 will discuss the U.S./Mexico border and what the *frontera* symbolizes.

Chapter 4 will also outline immigration to the United States from a historical perspective. It will profile the statistical identity of the Mexican immigrant. Finally this chapter will discuss allegations that Natalia broke a U.S. law resulting in threats of deportation.

Chapter 5 concludes this study with final notes and thoughts. In chapter 5, I compile conclusions from the other chapters to demonstrate how the life history of one woman can contribute to the study of identity and culture.

Limitations

This project is a case study. My work is not an attempt to generalize immigrants, Mexicans, or women. The case of Natalia Caudillo is meant to serve as a glimpse into the life of one woman, and how variables such as migration, family structure, and multi-ethnic identity have affected her character. Travel was limited due to Natalia's age and legal status.

Practical limitations include lack of time and funding. Travel was limited to southern and central regions of Texas. It was my original plan to travel to Aguascalientes, Mexico and U.S./Mexican border regions with Natalia. As stated before, this is a project that I would like to continue. It is my goal to tell Natalia's story as

thoroughly and accurately as possible. This can only be achieved by spending more time researching and interviewing Natalia.

CHAPTER 2 CROSSING THE BORDER

The people-smuggling industry is as old as the border itself. For years, migrant-trafficking has been a profitable business. Estimates of illegal Mexican immigration into the United States have ranged as high as one million persons per year. According to Mexico's National Council on Populations, approximately three million undocumented Mexicans reside in the United States (2002). This number steadily increases annually.

Several methods are used to traffic Mexicans into the U.S., many of which are inhumane and dangerous. Headlines reporting deaths and injuries of immigrants attempting to enter the U.S. top the pages of national newspapers. Today, migrant-traffickers, who are commonly known as *coyotes*, charge Mexican migrants thousands of dollars to cross into the U.S. without documents. And, thousands of dollars are paid without any type of assurance or guarantee that the migrant's attempt will be successful. Often, these attempts are not successful, sometimes deadly.

This chapter tells Natalia's border-crossing story. This chapter also outlines the dangerous methods of present day human-trafficking compared with border-crossing tactics practiced in the 1920s. Ruben Martinez's *Crossing Over* (2001) and Ted Conover's *Coyotes* were used as primary examples for analyzing border-crossing testimonio. David Lorey's *The U.S. Mexican Border in the Twentieth Century* (1999) and Pablo Villa's *Crossing Borders, Reinforcing Borders* (2000) were used for theoretical framework and historical background. *Latino Employment, Labor*

Organizations and Immigration (1995), edited by Antoinette Sedillo López, was the primary source of literature used to evaluate current legal migration issues.

In the comprehensive analysis, *A Century of Chicano History: Empire, Nations, and Migration*, Gilbert Gonzalez and Raul Fernandez discuss the ideas of agency in relation to the “macro” structures that frame the movement of Mexicans into the U.S. (Gonzalez 2003). The idea is that these structures, which include policy, enforcement, and law, are subjective to policy makers and enforcement agencies, such as Border Patrol. With this said, I will turn to events highlighted in the news media concerning immigration and human-trafficking.

Call to Coyotes

On Wednesday, May 14, 2003, authorities responded to a 911 call in Victoria, Texas. Seventeen people were found dead when authorities opened a sweltering airless trailer that had been abandoned at a South Texas truck stop with more than 100 undocumented immigrants locked inside (Badger 2003). Two additional immigrants died less than 24 hours later, raising the death toll to 19. The victims (including a 5-year-old Mexican boy) suffered from dehydration, hyperthermia, and suffocation. This was the deadliest immigrant-smuggling attempt since 1987, when U.S. Border Patrol discovered 18 Mexican immigrants dead in a train boxcar. The car had been on a rail in Sierra Blanca, Texas.

“In 2003, 205 undocumented immigrants, mostly from Mexico, died crossing the Arizona desert areas, including at least three under age 12” (Gonzalez 2004). Death and injury of undocumented Mexicans attempting to enter the U.S. is a rising epidemic. Mexicans, desperate to cross the border, are using any means possible to get past Border Patrol agents, including hiring coyotes.

The Immigration Naturalization Service (INS) is having a difficult time prosecuting coyotes, due to the dual roles of coyotes: hero and enemy. “The coyote system operates like the mafia and trying to stop it, or the flow of those hungry for a better life, is impossible” (Fergus 2003). To many Mexicans, coyotes are the only way to enter the U.S. To others, coyotes are simply agents in the people-smuggling business. Mexicans are often hesitant to share names and information regarding coyotes with immigration agents. “Besides being mistrustful of authorities, illegal immigrants sometimes worry that relatives back in Mexico may suffer retaliation from smuggler” (Hegstrom 2003).

What’s more troubling is that coyotes are rarely prosecuted. “Officials have never arrested the smuggling bosses believed responsible for the 1987 deaths of 18 immigrants in a West Texas railcar, the 199 deaths of 8 immigrants in a California snowstorm, the 2001 death of 14 immigrants in the Arizona desert, and the 2002 deaths of 11 immigrants found in an Iowa railcar” (Hegstrom 2003). The average person convicted of trafficking immigrants serves just 15 months in federal prison, far less than the average drug smuggler (Hegstrom 2003). Many human smugglers are never caught and convicted. Several smugglers, including many who are responsible for multiple deaths, remain at large.

An INS intelligence report issued in 1999 stated lower to middle level drug trafficking rings who operate along the Southwest Border were making the transition to human trafficking. The INS Report gave two reasons for these transitions: one was that larger, more powerful Mexican cartels were forcing smaller groups out of the business. The second reason was that the smaller rings found that sentences were less severe for smuggling humans than narcotics (Hegstrom 2003).

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington D.C. submits an annual report outlining major human-rights concerns in the Americas. Human trafficking continually tops the list of problems in the U.S. and Mexico. Based on several testimonies received by the commission, evidence has been collected concerning the manner in which coyotes operate. According to the report, coyotes repeatedly lead migrants on physically difficult routes. When the group of migrants and the coyote cross the river, the desert, or the mountains, the migrants who physically do not have the strength to cross are abandoned by the traffickers. This places the physical integrity and lives of the migrants at risk. In many cases, migrants were offered false citizenship documentation in exchange for money.

Undocumented immigrants, if detained, rarely make accusations against the coyote. Often the coyote is the only contact that the immigrant has. Immigrants also fear the consequences of reporting information about the coyote. In addition, when immigrants are detained for crossing the border without documentation, evidence gathered against smugglers is generally ineffective.

Currently, the Mexican government is working to improve migrant policies with concrete measures that articulate Mexico's humanitarian interest. Therefore, reforms and additions were made to the General Population Law (*Ley General de Población*). These reforms give the highest level of protection to the human rights of migrants. Also, these changes give the highest level juridical security within the process of immigration proceedings. These reforms also support family integration and strongly oppose and contest crimes tied to human trafficking.

Though both the U.S. and Mexico are revising policy to halt human trafficking, these acts will continue as long as the border remains closed.

Sueños Dulces and the Bridge over Bravo

Natalia's father, Refugio Guardado, took a risk, leaving his three small children in Mexico with their grandparents in order to seek work in the United States. "Often immigrants left their families at the border on the Mexican side while the father found suitable and stable employment which would enable him to return for his family" (Romo 1995). Therefore, this was not an uncommon practice of Mexican families who wished to migrate north.

The year was 1918, and Mexico was experiencing the effects of the Revolution. The overthrow of Porfirio Diaz did not halt the feelings of unrest, which persisted until the completion of a new federal constitution in 1924. Many Mexican laborers felt uncertain about social and economic conditions in their homeland. This uncertainty, along with attractive wages in the United States, gave many Mexicans reasons to migrate. "In unskilled occupations, southwestern industries often paid common laborers five to ten times more than similar industries paid in Mexico" (Romo 1995:25). The U.S. government instituted a special Mexican labor program which allowed and encouraged the entry of temporary workers in 1917.

"Mexican emigration between 1910 and 1929 totaled almost 700,000 as peasants fled the fighting and economic devastation that stalked the country in these years" (Dublin 1993).

Natalia described the economic instability that thousands of poor Mexican families endured. Ultimately, the Hacienda system and the Mexican Revolution were precursors

to Natalia's voyage to the United States. Here, she described the events leading to her family's migration:

Natalia Caudillo: You know, in Mexico in those days, the farmers hire all these people and they are mean to them. They tried to do the same thing with my daddy. And, my daddy said he wasn't going to let them do nothing. "If I stay here, I'm going to whip him!" But, he's the farmer. You can't do nothing. And, he said, "I don't want to be in trouble. I'd rather go to the United States and see what I can find." It was como una hacienda que tiene un hombre que es the bigshot and he can do anything with the workers. He can whip them. So, my daddy said, "He's not going to do that to me. He's not going to do that to me. So, I'd rather leave than to get in trouble." So that is why he left.

"Once the immigrants crossed the border, labor agents or *enganchadores* competed vigorously to recruit them. These agents often made extravagant promises to induce immigrants to sign labor contracts with the *componieas* they represented" (Romo 1995:29). Refugio spent 2 years in the U.S., primarily in Texas and California working in cotton and fruit fields. He also made money as a carpenter, carving and building furniture, acoustic musical instruments, and even dolls, as he followed seasonal work. Refugio found opportunity and freedom in the United States. He began sending money back to his children in Mexico, along with promises of his return.

In the summer of 1920, Refugio had accumulated enough money to bring Natalia and her brothers to the U.S. Though immigration policy was far more lax in the 1920s than today, Refugio, who had obtained legal documents to work in the U.S., had to form a plan to move his family across the border. Refugio's work permit had expired, leaving him with few choices: one of which was to cross the border with the help of smugglers.

Natalia's border-crossing story was different than the stories that make headlines today. There was no violence, nor cruelty. There was no complicated plan to cross. In fact, the border itself was an invisible line floating somewhere in the currents of the Rio

Grande. For Refugio and his family, crossing this line was symbolic, like stepping out of hunger and into opportunity.

There were, however, coyotes. These smugglers were farmers from the Southern region of Texas. They would journey south into Mexico looking for seasonal work. They met Refugio Guardado, Natalia's father, at a time when life in Mexico was changing rapidly. Class divisions were great, and Mexicans were migrating to the U.S. by the hundreds. "The first bracero program remained in effect until 1921, having lasted some four years. More than seventy-thousand Mexican workers entered the United States under its provisions. The vast majority of them were certified for farm work, but some were approved for other jobs as well." (Kiser 1979).

Natalia recalled the day that she, her father, and two brothers left their home for a new life in the United States. The four traveled from their rural community of El Rayo, Mexico to San Francisco, Mexico. From this city, they took a train ride to the northern border city of Nuevo Laredo. Natalia described the experience of crossing:

Natalia Caudillo: It was my first train ride. I was scared. I didn't know where we were going. My daddy had a passport. But, we didn't have passports. And, we didn't have a mother. So they said, 'come back when you have a mother for the kids.' And they wouldn't let us across.

It was then that Refugio called upon the services of smugglers. Yet, Natalia explained that these smugglers were much different than today's coyotes:

Natalia Caudillo: The coyotes weren't *compañeros* with *mi papá*. They were just a bunch of guys who hired workers to come to Texas... It wasn't bad like it is now. The coyotes weren't so bad...When we came here, it was about 6 pm. It was getting dark. We took a boat across the Rio. After we crossed the river, we got in a truck with other Mexicanos. My daddy had to work for a month for *el coyote*.

Veronica Sparks: What do you think about Mexicanos today who hire coyotes to help them enter the U.S.?

Natalia Caudillo: The coyotes are awful. They cheat these poor guys. They squeeze all the money out of these Mexicanos. I read that some coyotes take a thousand dollars. But, lots of Mexicanos die trying to come here.

Natalia recalled the truck-ride to the labor camp that had recruited Refugio when he lived in Mexico. She remembered recall that several other Mexican immigrants crowded into the back of a Ford Model T pickup truck. She described the ride from the river to Floresville, Texas:

Natalia Caudillo: If we saw other lights coming, we would jump out the back and hide in the pastures. Somebody would yell, '*Aye vienen las rinches!*' (Laughing) We would hide from the other ranchers. But it wasn't dangerous.

For one month, Refugio and the children worked at a large ranch with several other Mexican immigrants. This labor was considered payment to the Texan farmer who helped them cross into the United States. Natalia was put in housing with other female migrants. She spent her days with other women making tortillas and meals for the men. Refugio and the two boys spent days pulling cotton.

One of Natalia's most vivid memories was of that of a mysterious woman who became fond of her:

Natalia Caudillo: She wanted to be my mother. She said, 'let's go to California, nobody will know.' I said, 'my daddy will know.' She said that he wouldn't care. I was so scared that I ran and told my daddy.

Natalia's life could have been drastically different had she decided to accompany this woman. This was one of the many ways that Natalia would practice her own agency to make choices and construct her life against the backdrop of "macro" forces which include laws, institutions, and other large structures (Gonzalez 2003).

Cotton Fields of Dreams

After working on the ranch for a month, Natalia and her family took a train into San Antonio, Texas. The purpose of this journey was to purchase supplies and goods

before moving to the small community of Rogers, Texas, which is where Natalia would spend most of her young adulthood. The primary purchase in San Antonio was a sewing machine. Natalia beamed when describing that machine. She had no way of knowing at age ten that her sewing machine would become so dear to her, and so important to her future. The purchase of the sewing machine was symbolic of the domestic torch that was passed to Natalia. It was this purchase that allowed Natalia to assume the responsibility of clothing her family. Natalia sewed her first dress the next year.

Rogers, Texas was a booming town in 1920. Cotton and cattle were the main products, and in 1918, Rogers shipped more cotton than any other city in Texas (Peeples 2003). Today, the population in Rogers barely exceeds 1,000. What was once a booming cotton town is now a few paved streets and a couple of gas stations.

Yet, Natalia can recall a different time when Rogers was a bustling agriculture town that attracted hard-working immigrants from all over the globe. Natalia's family lived near a Czech immigrant family. Natalia recalled moving past language barriers:

Natalia Caudillo: I would play with Lorene Haisler. She was a little Czech girl. She only spoke Czech and I only spoke Spanish.

Veronica Sparks: How did you communicate?

Natalia Caudillo: Well, I started to learn Czech and she learned Spanish. I remember her voice. She would yell over to me, "Natalia! Venga, vamos a jugar!" (Laughing) We still write each other letters.

After fifty-three years, Lorene Haisler and Natalia still write each other letters. In July of 2003, Natalia and Lorene were reunited. It had been thirty years since the two had spoken face to face. Natalia was ninety-three, Lorene was eighty-seven. Yet the two women giggled like school girls as they reminisced about days in the cotton fields near Rogers.

It was not rare for immigrants of different national backgrounds to work together. Allen Burns's study of Guatemalans in Florida discusses this phenomenon. "In Indiantown, the Maya have had to adapt to a multiethnic, migrant worker community" (Burns 1999:141). This was also the case for Mexicans in Rogers, Texas. Natalia recalled working with Czechs, Germans, Blacks, Whites, and other Mexicans. "The cotton culture of the is fertile region of central Texas was not racially static or bipartite but a site of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different languages, experiences, histories, and voices intermingled amid diverse relation of power and privilege" (Foley 1997:7). Natalia's experience with immigrants from different national backgrounds would preface her life in the United States, especially concerning issues of transnational identity.

Like so many other immigrants, Natalia spent many years stooped over fields of cotton, picking and pulling. Though her role as migrant worker would stay with her for several years, the role that dominated her identity was that of mother.



Figure 2-1. Czech immigrants that played with Natalia (1925). Photo by Refugio Guardado.



Figure 2-2. Natalia's friends celebrate at a parade(1932). Photo by Refugio Guardado.



Figure 2-3. Natalia shows Veronica Sparks a doll that Refugio carved and a ribbon that Refugio purchased in 1920 (June 2003). Photo by John Sparks.



Figure 2-4. June 2003 – Lorene Haisler (left) and Natalia at a reunion meeting (June 2003). Photo by John Sparks.

CHAPTER 3 SIEMPRE MADRE

Natalia's mother, Cleta Guardado Ramirez, died in 1915—just days after giving birth to twin sons, who also died within days. Natalia was only 5 years old. The death of Natalia's mother signified the birth of a new phase in Natalia's life. That phase is one that continues today. The death of Cleta not only marked the loss of family member, it marked the loss of a worker, a cook, a seamstress. Natalia would assume these roles, especially the role of mother, at a very young age. Natalia, at age ninety-three, recalled the death of her mother and the events that followed:

Veronica Sparks: How old were you when your mother died?

Natalia Caudillo: I was five years old.

Veronica Sparks: Do you remember anything about her?

Natalia Caudillo: Nada. No... The only thing I remember about her was that she pierced my ears. That's all I remember. I remember there was a dark room with no windows. And she told me, "Lay down." So I lay on her lap. She pierced my ears. I don't remember if it hurt.

Veronica Sparks: Did she die giving birth to your twin brothers?

Natalia Caudillo: No. I think she died the same day that she gave birth to the babies. I don't know how she died. After the babies were born, my mother had a pain. So, my father went to the little town where he used to trade to get medicine for her. By the time my father got home, my mother was dead. And, my father blamed my grandmother, her mother, because she gave my mother laxatives. So my father said, "you shouldn't do that." My mother was just starting to gain her strength. So, my father and grandmother had a big fight. My father ran her off; he didn't want to see her anymore. He was so mad. I didn't know until years later.

Natalia would never know how the death of her mother would significantly change her life. In fact, to this day, Natalia plays the part of mother. Currently, Natalia resides in

a modest house in Lamesa, Texas. It is the house where she raised seven children. She now lives with her 26-year-old grandson, Arturo. He is the youngest of the many children Natalia raised. The oldest of Natalia's children is Aurora who was born in 1929. Therefore, Natalia has actively assumed the role of mother, or mother figure, for 61 one years.

This chapter will analyze Natalia's life as a mother. By using Natalia's *testimonio*, this section will highlight the constant element of motherhood that has been evident in Natalia's life since her mother died in 1915. *Gendered Transition* by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo focuses on Mexican experiences of immigration in conjunction with women and gender roles; this study will provide a theoretical framework for Chapter Three. "Agency, Gender, and Migration" by Gilbert Gonzalez and Raul Fernandez will also serve as a key piece of literature in this section. This chapter will also turn to the article "Hispanic Women in the United States: Family and Work Relations" by Rina Alcalay. This article used demographic data to analyze gender roles within Mexican communities.

The theory integrated in this chapter is the concept that "Marianismo" ideology exists beyond borders, and that this idealization of the woman has a long history in Mexico. Marianismo includes the restriction of woman from the private domain, the domestic roles of women, and household structure.

Marianismo is characterized by hyperfeminine behavior. "The roots of Marianismo are both deep and widespread, springing apparently from the primitive awe at woman's ability to produce a living human creature from inside her own body". The Mariana is pure, submissive to her father, brothers and spouse, and lacks sexual desires. The ideal Mariana is often thought of as someone like the Virgin Mary. Marianismo is not a religious practice although the word "Marianism" is sometimes used to describe a movement within the Roman Catholic church which

has as its object the special veneration of the figure of the Virgin Mary, (Stevens 1994).

Natalia's story refutes and exemplifies this ideology. According to Joan Acker, "The relevant question becomes not why are women excluded but to what extent have the overall institutional structure, and the character of particular institutional areas, been formed by and through gender" (1992). Gender is a dynamic phenomenon. It is exercised through a series of relationships. This chapter will evaluate the social relations that Natalia experienced through migration and settlement in Texas.

Pass it On

Two years after Cleto's death, Refugio married Sylvestra Fuentes. Sylvestra later gave birth to Chano, Refugio's third child. Natalia and Pedro quickly adapted to life with a new mother and sibling. After four years, Refugio and Sylvestra began to face marital problems. Though the two remained married, Refugio found a new companion and joined the U.S. Bracero program. He promised his children that he would return for them.

While Refugio was working in Texas, the three children were abandoned by Sylvestra, who left for California with another man. Natalia and Pedro (and now Chano) were once again without a mother. Fortunately, Sylvestra's mother rescued the children, caring for them until their father returned. Natalia described the situation in her own words:

Natalia Caudillo: My father, Pedro, Chano, and I moved to the United States. Sylvestra didn't come to Tejas because she left with another man. She left Chano with us. Chano was four and I was ten. She went to California with the other man.

Veronica Sparks: Were Sylvestra and Refugio married?

Natalia Caudillo: Yes. They were married. But, my father left to work in the United States. He said he would come back. But, after a month, Sylvestra left with another man.

Veronica Sparks: Was she raising you, Pedro, and Chano in Mexico?

Natalia Caudillo: Yes. She was supposed to be raising us. But, she left us with her mother and father. Their names were Maria and Brijido. They were sweet people. They liked me. They didn't want us to leave with my father. But, I wanted to go with my father so bad. When my father left, he left a big room full of corn and beans for us to eat. She (Sylvestra) sold every bit of it. She sold it all!

Veronica Sparks: Was it corn that he grew?

Natalia Caudillo: Yeah. We would grow our own beans and corn for the winter.

Veronica Sparks: And she sold it all?

Natalia Caudillo: Sold it all for money to leave for California. She left us with her mother. She knew that her mother wouldn't let us starve. Besides, we didn't eat too much.

Veronica Sparks: How long did you live with Maria before your dad came back?

Natalia Caudillo: Two years.

Veronica Sparks: Did you see your dad in that time?

Natalia Caudillo: No. Not in two years. I wasn't scared though. I think he wrote letters. But, I didn't get them. But, I didn't know how to read.

Natalia changed homes three times in five years. There was no parental stability.

By the time Natalia turned ten, she dealt with the death of her mother, abandonment by her stepmother, the questioning of her father's return, life with new guardians, and the return of her father. Natalia quickly learned to fend for herself. Pedro and Natalia cared for Chano, who was four years old when Sylvestra left. The three children began working at very young ages.

Natalia Caudillo: I used to walk to work, when I was about seven or eight. It was far. It wasn't close. And, I went by myself. I remember, I would (como se dice?) sow the seeds...plant the seeds for my uncle. We grew corn and peppers and watermelon. My daddy had bee hives too. We always had fresh honey. We had about 40 hives.

Currently, Natalia tends a large garden of tomatoes, peppers, and melons at her home. She continues to practice the skills that she learned as a girl, including mothering. Today, she supports several grandchildren financially, as well as emotionally. She pays medical bills and purchases back-to-school clothes, and often acts a mother to these grandchildren. Why, after so many years, does Natalia continue to assume that maternal role? And, how did she adapt so quickly to the responsibilities of being the female of the house, at such a young age?

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo describes patriarchy as “a fluid and shifting set of social relations where men oppress women, in which different men exercise varying degrees of power and control, and in which women collaborate and resist in diverse ways” (1994:3). Though patriarchal gender relations are concurrently structured and practiced in labor and state sectors, Hondagneu-Sotelo suggests that important aspects of patriarchal power and consequence are structured through family relationships.

Maternal Programming

Although common to a certain degree to all Latin cultures, Mexican American male-female relations have a more acute dominant-dominated pattern than most other Latin cultures. This stems from the original Spanish conquest of Mexico and southwestern United States. The first marriages between the Spanish patrones and the Indian women were patriarchal. The Spanish man was not only dominant because of his status as conqueror, but was also institutionalized in this role by the traditions of the Catholic Church. Women were socialized to the “Marianismo” concept which idealized a submissive role for women. This concept involved the veneration of the Virgin Mary. The beliefs and values associated with Marianismo identified women as virgins, mothers and martyrs. Women were supposed to be submissive, altruistic and self-denying. This veneration of the Virgin Mary led to the downgrading of women who did not fulfill the ideal. (Alcalay 1984:126)

Natalia fulfilled this ideal. She was hard working, but soft-spoken. After moving to the Rogers, Texas in 1920, Natalia worked, with her family, alongside other Mexican migrants. She sometimes picked cotton, but mostly cooked for all of the workers. She

recalled cooking stacks of tortillas that were several feet tall. Often, other Mexican migrants would pass through Rogers, on their way to Arizona or California. Refugio's house was known to be a safe-haven for Mexicans passing through. Sometimes, *primos*, or cousins from Mexico, would visit Refugio's home. It was known that Natalia and Chanita, Refugio's third wife, would cook lavish meals of beans, rice, squash and chicken for friends and family of Refugio.

"Patriarchal kinship obligation ensured that women did the domestic chores, and in residences not organized by kin ties, patriarchal arrangement still prevailed although men's privileges were somewhat attenuated" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994:107).

Veronica Sparks: Do you ever remember other Mexicanos in your town?

Natalia Caudillo: Oh yes! Sometimes, these men would stay at our house. Other Mexicanos going to California or Arizona. My daddy would let them stay with us. I would cook for everyone. I didn't know them! But, I would make *arroz con pollo*, *frijoles*, and *tortillas*...lots of *tortillas*.

Veronica Sparks: How long would these men stay?

Natalia Caudillo: Not very long. They would eat, sleep, then go on their way. My father loved to help people.

Natalia demonstrated heart-felt sentiment when describing situations where she would spend hours cooking for strangers. She acted as though it were her duty to guarantee a full-stomach and a feeling of comfort for these men. Natalia's devotion to domestic service is an example of the patriarchal arrangement described by Hondagneu-Sotelo above.

One of the men Natalia met through her father's network of migrant Mexicans was Juan Ramirez. Juan was the teenage son from another family of workers. Natalia and Juan married in 1916, and had their first child, Aurora in 1917. Throughout Natalia's

life, she would give birth to twelve children, most of whom she raised without Juan's assistance.

“Birth rates and family size for Hispanic women are substantially higher than for Anglo women even when socioeconomic differences between the two groups are controlled. The greater family size results from traditional Hispanic emphasis on the extended family, in which children are highly valued and marital roles are validated by the presence of children.” (Alcalay 1985:126).

Natalia explained that for years she was uninformed on the cause of pregnancy. She can recall a three year time span when her body failed to menstruate due to frequent pregnancy. Natalia gave birth to a child each consecutive year from 1938 to 1942 (Table 1). In 1942, Natalia and Juan moved to Lamesa, a small West Texas town that relied on oil and cotton. Natalia, Juan, and their four children were joined by four more children.

Juan's sister, Isabel, died in 1941, leaving behind her four children, Faye, Jesus, Maria, and Jose. The children ranged from ages eight to twelve. Abandoning the four children was not a consideration for Natalia. Within days, the size of Natalia's family doubled. Natalia was faced with the difficulty of feeding four more children. Natalia used humor when discussing her grim living conditions at the time. Yet, she was very clear that those were times that she would rather forget:

Natalia Caudillo: I didn't take care of them. It was more like they took care of themselves. Faye, Jose, Maria, and Chuy... Their mom was Juan's sister, Isabel. Fay was twelve or so...

Veronica Sparks: How many children did you have when you moved to Lamesa?

Natalia Caudillo: Aurora, Miguel, Carmen, y Audelia. Jesus, Maria, Jose, y Fella.

Veronica Sparks: Where did you live in Lamesa?

Natalia Caudillo: In a doghouse! (Laughing) No, it was in an underground cellar. I don't like to think about those things anymore. I had no stove. There were no beds. There was no bathtub. We only washed on Fridays.

Table One also lists Natalia's children who died at young ages. Natalia had five children who died before age five. According to Natalia, Juan was strongly opposed to using medical doctors. In fact, he relied solely on the advice and care of the neighborhood *curandero*, or medicine man. Juan's *curandero* warned that if Juan took his children to a medical doctor, Juan would mysteriously die soon thereafter. Juan was deeply afraid of this warning and refused to risk his own life for the sake of the children.

Although Natalia and Juan had several children, their marriage was hardly validated. Juan was open about adulterous affairs. He was also addicted to gambling and alcohol, and was often physically abusive to Natalia. She recalled several occasions when she and her children would have to forfeit weekly earnings from working in the cotton fields to pay Juan's gambling debts. Natalia described the gambling situation:

Veronica Sparks: Tell me about Juan's gambling.

Natalia Caudillo: He was a gambler before we got married, but I didn't know that.

Veronica Sparks: Did he owe people money?

Natalia Caudillo: No. No one ever had money. They just gambled whatever they had. I remember, I had credit at Montgomery Ward. I bought him a jacket. I think he wore it once before he gambled it away. There was a place near the river where the gamblers would get together and drink or whatever. On Fridays, he would pack a lunch and go... He would stay all night. Sometimes, he wouldn't be back until Monday.

Veronica Sparks: Were there women out there?

Natalia Caudillo: I think so. I don't know what they did. They gambled too. I was dumb, like I said. I didn't care much. I didn't even want to leave him. Later, I was ready to leave him.

Veronica Sparks: What made you want to leave him?

Natalia Caudillo: Well, he made his money and would leave. He never helped me. Sometimes he would leave for days. He would leave me without a car or money. Just the babies. We wouldn't even have milk. We had an old car. He went away for the weekend. And, he came back without it. And, I had a radio.

That was the only music I had. One time, he said that he was taking the radio to town to be fixed. It wasn't even broken. He gambled it away.

Veronica Sparks: Did he ever win anything?

Natalia Caudillo: No, I don't think so.

Veronica Sparks: Did you ever talk to him about his gambling?

Natalia Caudillo: (laughing) He wasn't that kind of man. I couldn't talk to him. He blamed everything on me. He said everything was my fault.

Natalia declined discussing the physical abuse she endured during her marriage to Juan. It was briefly mentioned. And, Natalia quickly changed the subject. Juan died of liver failure resulting from alcoholism in 1953. He left behind seven children, ranging in age from one year to twenty-four years old.

“For each family size there is a higher percentage of female-headed households among Hispanics than among any other ethnic group in the United States” (Alcalay 1985:124). Though, Natalia spent years as a single parent, she never received financial assistance. In fact, she was often the source of financial and emotional assistance within her family community. Within the extended family setting, Mexican women obtain culturally sanctioned power and authority from the roles of wife and mother (Alcalay 1985:126). The Mexican woman gains self respect as well as validation and self worth through the role of motherhood. This is largely to do with the way that Latin American culture views the mother's role in the family. “For this reason, the attachment of Hispanic women to the home in the United States still supercedes their attachment to whatever work role they may assume.” (Alcalay 1985:124).

Natalia's stories and memories are prime examples of points made in the cited literature. Natalia's life has included a sixty-one year pilgrimage of motherhood. Not only was the role that Natalia accepted an unconscious validation of womanhood, it was a

means of survival. Natalia's attitude toward family structure and motherhood has changed drastically over the years. She described herself as passive and uninterested in changing her role. She admitted that she dreamt of a career in the military. She also warned her younger grand-daughters of the hardships that accompany motherhood:

Veronica Sparks: Have you ever thought about what your life would have been without your children?

Natalia Caudillo: I wanted to go to war. I had Mike. He was a little boy. I just wanted to go to the army. That was during World War II.

Veronica Sparks: What made you want to join the army?

Natalia Caudillo: I just really wanted to go join the army. I wanted to go away.

Veronica Sparks: Did you ever want to stop having babies?

Natalia Caudillo: I never thought about it. I didn't know what was causing me to get pregnant. I would get mad at myself. But, it never did me any good. I always ended up pregnant.

Veronica Sparks: What do you think of Latinos and Latinas today? What do you think of big families versus small families?

Natalia Caudillo: I think it's alright to have a small family. I don't like big families. I love my family. But, it's so hard to take care of a big family, because of money. Today, people don't take care of their kids. These days, women just leave their children. I never thought of leaving my kids. It's so hard for women.

Natalia's change in attitude is symbolic of the changes in the Latino/a community.

While Natalia is proud of her family, she openly expressed her concern for the Latino/a community. Natalia's case is an example of identity in the diaspora. Her opinions and views, though their roots are old and traditional, are fluid and dynamic. In her 93 years, Natalia continues to alter her philosophies on life and existence. Yet, Natalia continues to nurture and protect her family. She currently celebrates the opportunity to witness five generations. Presently, Natalia has six living children, 25 grandchildren, 45 great-

grandchildren, and 22 great-great grandchildren. For Natalia, she will be known as *madre por siempre*.

Table 3.1 Chronology of birth years of Natalia Caudillo's children

Year	Child
1929	Aurora
1930	Audelia, died at age 5 of unknown illness
1932	Jose, died hours after birth
1934	Miguel
1938	Carmen
1939	Armando, died as infant of pneumonia
1940	Estelita, died as infant, cause unknown
1941	Evanjelina, died at age 4 of meningitis
1942	Audelia II
1948	Olga
1950	Armando II
1952	Sylvia



Figure 3-1. Pola (Natalia's sister-in-law) and Natalia (right) with her first child, Aurora (June 1929). Photo by Refugio Guardado.



Figure 3-2 Jesusa Ramirez (left) was the sister-in-law of Juan Ramirez. Natalia later cared for Faye (right) and her sister Maria (center) (1942). Photo by Natalia Caudillo.



Figure 3-3. (Clockwise) Natalia, Friend of Family, Olga, Sylvia, and Armandito (July 1955). Photographer unknown.



Figure 3-4 Natalia poses while her children play (April 1954). Photographer unknown.



Figure 3-5 (left to right) Armando, Olga, Carmen, Natalia, Aurora, Audelia, and Sylvia (1978). Photo by Sabino Caudillo.



Figure 3-6 Natalia poses with five generations worth of family photos (Associated Press 1998)



Figure 3-7 Natalia and family at a Christmas party (December 2002). Photo by John Sparks.

CHAPTER 4 IMMIGRATION

Natalia, though she has faced hardships, has had a successful, healthy life in the U.S. She has been fortunate. Several serious issues face immigrants in the U.S., including discrimination, mistreatment, and abuse. This chapter will evaluate immigration as social, economic, and political phenomena. Theory and concepts based on Douglas Massey's work, *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration* is used to analyze U.S./Mexican immigration (2002).

Massey's study draws on modern theory and research to illustrate modern international migration systems. Natalia's story, along with Massey's work, accompanied with statistics based on United States Immigration and Naturalization Service research will be used in this section to paint a picture of the current U.S./Mexican immigration situation and how it has evolved since Natalia entered Texas.

The greatest import in the history of the United States has indisputably been people. At times by choice, sometimes unwillingly, people have come to the United States to boost *someone's* economy (either the importer or the imported). Mexico is undoubtedly the most significant source for immigration to the United States in the past half century.

Between 1998 and 2001, around 659,493 Mexican immigrants entered the United States legally, averaging at 21% of the total immigrants legally admitted into the United States (U.S. INS 2002). This does not count the estimated 5 million undocumented immigrants (1998-2001) living in the United States, a number which is estimated to grow

at about 276,000 persons per year. According to the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Mexico is the leading source country of undocumented immigration to the United States (U.S. INS 2000). An estimated 2,700,000 undocumented Mexicans were residing in the United States in 1996; the majority of these undocumented citizens were located in California and Texas. These astounding numbers lead us to ask many questions. Why are Mexicans moving to the United States? Who are these Mexicans? And, what effect do these Mexicans have on the United States economy?

Though no amount of research could fully answer these questions, this section will provide a beginning to these answers through four sections: a history of immigration to the United States, the Mexican immigration movement, Mexican men as migrant workers, and immigrants in the economy.

In this chapter, I will briefly list key points in the history of United States immigration. This chapter will also discuss the U.S./Texas border and how it has become a fusion of two identities. Finally, this chapter will describe a frightening moment in Natalia's life that could have easily lead to her deportation after 78 years in the U.S.

The Four Waves

For years, social scientist have used models to explain and clarify the phenomena of international migration. Immigration is often the result of one of three situations. The first is the structural explanation of migration. This includes economic hardship. Migration occurs in order to break out of economic cycles of poverty. The second explanation of migration is the personal reason. Persons migrate to meet family or to prepare for family migration. The third reason is the automatic explanation. In certain

nations of Latin American, migration is expected. It is automatic and is part of family and social culture.

Immigration flows to the United States have often been described as waves. I will use Thomas Muller's model to describe and explain the history of migration waves (1985). Although Muller's model states that Mexican migration falls into the fourth wave, Mexicans have been migrating to the United States throughout each of the waves in this model. The first mass movement of people to the United States took place between the 1840s and 1870s and came predominantly from the British Isles and the nation-states that were later combined to form Germany (Muller 1985).

Today's Mexican immigrants hold a striking resemblance to the Irish who played a major role in the First Wave. The Irish were different from the other immigrants of the period in several respects: they were poorer, more rural and less educated they were also Catholic in a Protestant America (Muller 1985). Though they suffered from widespread prejudice, the Irish were able to make significant advancements. The election of two United States presidents of Irish decent, John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan, are illustrations of that progress. Though many Mexican-Americans are progressing socially and politically, today, Mexican immigrants, as well as Mexican-Americans suffer from many of the prejudices faced by the Irish. I will later discuss the low education level of today's Mexican immigrants, and the high poverty levels among Mexican immigrants.

The Second Wave of immigrants came from eastern and southern Europe; this group spoke neither English nor a Germanic language. They were predominantly Catholic (with substantial numbers of Jews from Eastern Europe) and came from rural areas and small towns in industrially undeveloped parts of the Continent (Muller 1985).

Again, these second-wave immigrants can be compared to Mexican immigrants in that the majority of Mexican immigrants speak little to no English, and are predominantly Catholic.

The Third Wave was a wave of migration, not limited to immigration. This wave focuses on movement of peoples within the United States rather than outside of the United States. The movement of southern rural Black Americans to northern cities was analogous to the immigrant waves (Muller 1985: 11). In both cases, people from disfavored areas were seeking opportunity in industrialized areas. The northern migration of southern rural Blacks prefaces the northern movement of Mexicans.

The Fourth Wave, which is the wave that will be discussed throughout this chapter, is the migration of Latinos and Hispanics. The end of black migration from the South created a need for new sources of low-wage labor in urban centers (Muller 1985).

Mexican Immigration Movement

Until disparities in wealth and income between the United States and Latin America disappear, the United States probably will continue to act as an economic magnet for Mexicans and other Latin Americans in search of employment and income opportunities (Bean 1986). The United States simply holds hegemonic power which leads poor nations, such as Mexico, into states of dependence. Whether it is in the form of foreign aid or in the waves of migration, poor nations have no choice but to rely on the all-powerful United States.

The annual number of Mexican entries grew from just 10,000 in 1913 on the eve of World War I, to 68,000 in 1920, and peaked at 106,000 in 1924 (Durand 2001). According to official U.S. statistics, some 621,000 Mexicans entered the United States between 1920 and 1929 (Cardoso 1980), a figure not reached again for decades. During

1926-1932, which corresponds with Mexico's "flood tide" of emigration, some 44 percent of all Mexicans migrating to the United States came from one of nine western states that comprise the historic heartland for migration from Mexico to the United States (Durand 2001).

The Bracero Accord of 1942 amplified the Fourth Wave. This program permitted United States companies to employ workers from Mexico provisionally to minimize the deficiency of agriculture workers during World War II. Under the treaty, Mexicans were granted renewable six-month visas to work for approved agricultural growers, located mostly in southwestern United States (Durand 2001). Over the course of this program's twenty-two years, more than 4.6 million Mexican workers were "imported" into the United States (Cornelius 1978). This supposed temporary solution was prolonged until 1964. These Bracero workers were mostly from western Mexico.

During the 1960s, potential job opportunities, growing overpopulation in sender nations, lower travel costs, and timely changes in immigration laws caused immigration to the United States to swell to 3.3 million, the highest level since the 1920s. Without realizing it, the United States government had started a trend among Mexican immigrants—a trend that included millions of Mexicans migrating north to find job opportunities in agriculture. This trend would soon lead to national debates concerning immigration reform, human rights, and international relations.

In 1965 Congress enacted a new immigration law that for the first time put numerical limits on immigration to the United States from countries in the Western Hemisphere, effective in 1968 (Muller 1985). In 1986, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was passed. This major event greatly affected the migration of all

persons into the United States. The legislation greatly expanded the resources, personnel, and power of the United States Border Patrol, criminalized the hiring of undocumented migrants, and generally militarized the Mexico-United States border (Durand 2001).

The Male Mexican Migrant Worker

Immigrants are portrayed as desperate people fleeing endemic violence and poverty in the Third World, where stagnant economies, growing populations, and decaying infrastructures leave inhabitants little choice but to seek refuge abroad” (Massey 2002). Research shows a different side to immigrants. Risk, ambition, and desire are not words typically associated with the U.S. perception of the Mexican immigrant. Yet, these words describe so many of the men and women who risk everything to cross the border. This also leads to a very important question.

Who is the Male Mexican Migrant Worker? He is *the* typical migrant into the United States. A recent study of Mexican migration patterns and demographics stated that the typical migrant is a working-age male from western Mexico, most likely from Guanajuato, Jalisco, or Michoacan (Durand 2001). Though many Mexican women migrate to the U.S. for work, the dominance of men appears to be increasing (Durand 2001). In fact the percentage of Mexican men moving to the U.S. is increasing, while the number of Mexican women is decreasing. The percentage of children (up to age eleven) and of teenagers (twelve to eighteen) has also fallen, while the percentage of older workers has increased (Durand 2001). Data also shows that the migrant worker is getting older. Throughout the early 1990s, the age of the incoming Mexican immigrant increased. But, the average worker’s age remains between eighteen and fifty-four.

The typical Mexican immigrant household was evaluated in Thomas Muller’s *The Fourth Wave* (1985). In Los Angeles County in 1980, one in every twelve households

was headed by Mexican immigrants (Muller 1985). The average household headed by Mexican immigrants contained 4.25 persons compared to the 2.54 persons who lived in households not headed by Mexican immigrants (Muller 1985). The average income in 1980 for Mexican immigrant households in Los Angeles County was \$15,256, which was two-thirds the average income for all households in Los Angeles (\$22,480) (Muller 1985).

Wayne Cornelius (1992) conducted a survey to find that Mexican immigrants were changing from homogeneous uneducated to socially heterogeneous. This was due to the fact that well-educated urban workers joined the outflow in response to a deteriorating economy (Durand 2001). An earlier study by Cornelius (1978) and by North Houston (1976) found that the average duration of a Mexican immigrant's stay in the United States was approximately six to eight months (Bean 1986). Yet, there has been a shift in duration of stay for Mexican immigrants. Cornelius (1993) uncovered evidence that migrants were becoming more attached to the United States and were shifting from a sojourner to a settler mentality (Durand 2001).

Unfortunately, the average Mexican immigrant is not achieving monetary success in the United States. The 2001 annual report released by the United States Center for Immigration Studies (2001) stated that because of their much lower education levels, Mexican immigrants earn significantly less than natives on average (Camarota 2001). This results in lower average tax payments and heavier use of means-tested programs (Camarota 2001). Based on estimates developed by the National Academy of Sciences for immigrants by age and education at arrival, the lifetime fiscal impact (taxes paid

minus services used) for the average adult Mexican immigrant is a negative \$55,200 (Camarota 2001).

Another issue faced by Mexican immigrants living in the United States is poverty. The Center for Immigration Studies (2001) also reported that Mexican immigrants, and their children, who are born United States citizens, comprise 10.2 percent of all persons living below or at poverty levels. These immigrants also comprise 12.5 percent of all persons living without health insurance.

Mexican Immigrants and the United States Economy

The affects on the economy can arguably be considered the most heated political topic surrounding Mexican immigration to the United States. While thousands of immigrants cross the United States borders to secure jobs, thousands of United States citizens question the stability of *their* jobs. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, though most native United States citizens are more skilled and thus do not face significant job competition from Mexican immigrants, the 2001 annual report (consistent with previous research by the Center) indicates that the more than 10 million native United States citizens who lack a high school degree do face significant job competition from Mexican immigrants (Camarota 2001). This competition is among the workers with the least amount of skills. Still, Mexicans earn less than non-Mexicans working in similar occupations (Muller 1985). On a lighter note, employment has increased, creating additional higher-paying jobs because of the economic expansion resulting from Mexican migration. Jobs, such as bilingual teachers, would not be necessary without the Mexican immigration movement.

While there is some competition among Mexican immigrants and native United States workers, the “they take our jobs” mentality is not supported statistically. The first

economic data refuting this mentality was written in the 1920s. Isaac Hourwich (1922) concluded that immigration in the 1920s had, in fact, not displaced native wage workers or earlier immigrants. The second fact involves the immigration boom up to World War II. These data show that immigrants entering the United States during this period were responding to economic opportunity. Third, a comparison between cities with large numbers of undocumented workers and other cities suggested a possible linkage between immigration and unemployment (North 1979). Fourth, between 1935 and 1940, California's population grew by 10%—more than any other state (Muller 1985). The majority of this growth was immigrants. These immigrants stimulated California's economy, bringing the demand for goods, services, and housing. In fact, California's per capita income remained the fourth highest in the nation (actually improving relative to other states at the time) (Muller 1985).

The abundance of Mexican immigrants has also added a profusion of cheap labor. By increasing the supply of unskilled labor, Mexican immigration in the 1990s has reduced the wages of workers without a high school education by an estimated 5% (Camarota 2001). The workers affected are already the lowest-paid, comprising a large share of the working poor and those trying to move from welfare to work (Camarota 2001). In discussing the wage effects of immigration, it is important to remember that immigrants are being paid less than the average wage; this is how the average wage among workers in the United States decreases.

Amexica

The cover of the June 2001 issue Time magazine has the image of a little girl with dark hair and brown skin. She is smiling a toothy grin as a little boy looks at her curiously. The cover says, "Welcome to Amexica." This particular issue analyzes the

border from several different perspectives. “The 2,000-mile-long international boundary between that United States gives shape to a unique economic, social, and cultural entity” (Lorey 1999:1) The borderlands signify a space where a developed country and a developing country meet and blend.

Two of Mexico’s six largest cities are located within a one-hundred-mile-wide strip. “Although one cannot say with precision exactly when the border became something more than a mental construction, its reification as a socially, economically, and politically meaningful dividing line is mostly a product of the twentieth century” (Massey 2002:26).

A common trait of borderland area is the phenomenon of sister cities. A city in Mexico will spill into the U.S., and vice versa. These vast cities populate hundreds of Mexican and U.S. citizens. The only separation of the two cities is the international boundary line. Otherwise, these cities are mirrored economically and culturally. Fusions of Spanish and English are spoken. San Diego/Tijuana is the busiest border crossing point. El Paso/Ciudad Juarez is the largest border city, boasting 2 million people. Laredo/Nuevo Laredo is the busiest commercial crossing point. And, McAllen/Reynosa is the fourth fastest growing metro area in the U.S.

Popular music and movies, such as *Selena* and *Born in East L.A.* depict border life. And, border life is often illustrated in popular Chicano literature and art. Many suspect that the cities on the U.S./Mexico border are insights to the future of the U.S.

Natalia, though she does not reside in a major border city, personifies border culture. She is fluent in both English and Spanish. And, she is a symbol of the fusion of

the two countries. She discusses the issue of transnational identity and what it means to be a Mexican-American:

Natalia Caudillo: I love it here. Maybe it is because I've been here all my life. But, I don't want to live in Mexico again. I like everything here. (Laughing) I like tortillas and hamburgers and Chinese food. I know some Mexicanos who move here and don't try to learn English. It's not right. If you want to stay, you have to try.

Veronica Sparks: I know one of your favorite things to do is watch Sunday football. Tell me about that.

Natalia Caudillo: I like the Dallas Cowboys when they play good. (Laughing)

Natalia's love for tortillas and egg rolls is one of the many ways that she has become an active part of cultural fusion. Though she commits to a diet of beans, rice, and tortillas, Natalia delights in international cuisine. She keeps her collection of *Cantiflas* movies in her living room, near her television. Yet her kitchen is filled with Elvis memorabilia. Natalia's Spanish is spliced with Chicano words such as "troka" for truck and "cook-iando" for cooking.

"In ethnic terms, border culture reflects a social milieu that was both a melting pot and a salad bowl" (Lorey 1999:139). In U.S. border cities, such as El Paso and Los Angeles culture is a combination of Mexican and "American" influence ranging from high art, to popular tradition, to language. The border is also the birth place for new types of music and art. An example of border music is the *corrido*, or ballad.

"For a long time, it was assumed that corridos were brought north from Mexico to the border and South Texas," said Miguel Leatham, an anthropology professor at Texas A&M University-Kingsville researching the songs... "Now we believe they started along the border and only later became popular in Mexico" (Grant 1999). No matter the region

of origin, the corrido commonly uses the United States / Mexico border as a setting for the song.

The United States will always be tied to Mexico by geography, history, demography, and economics. “Given a sixty-year history of continuous movement back and forth across the border, the flowering of binational trade and investment, the continent-wide expansions of transportation and communication networks, and the blending of cultures and peoples in both directions, the two nations are already substantially integrated (Massey 2002:6).

United States / Mexico borderlands are more than a cultural and political novelty. One cannot help but wonder if the border is a preview of what life in the greater United States will be like as the Latino population rises.

Face to Face with La Migra

Though Natalia has worked for above average wages, for many years she worked for below-average wages. And, though she lives comfortably now, for many years she lived far below the national poverty line. Though Natalia has lived in the U.S. for 84 years, she is not immune to immigration policy.

Years of anxiety and fear of failure prevented Natalia from applying for U.S. citizenship, though the idea had always been a dream of hers. Natalia was insecure about her literacy level due to lack of formal education. After a year of intense studying, Natalia applied for U.S. citizenship in Dallas, Texas in 1998.

Upon reviewing Natalia’s application, the INS discovered that Natalia had voted in the 1996 presidential election. Persons not holding citizenship status in the U.S. are not allowed to vote in governmental elections. Natalia was notified in 1999 that she had committed a crime, and was being deported.

Natalia's family immediately hired an immigration attorney, but more effectively contacted the local news media to inform them of her case. Within days of contacting the press, Natalia's story had made local and national headlines. The story of the 88-year-old woman who was being deported touched the hearts of Texans everywhere.

Natalia became the topic on internet message boards. She also became a heroic mascot for her city's local Tejano radio station. When Texas congressmen and state representative Charles Stenholm (D), began receiving floods of mail pleading for a pardon for Natalia, the INS canceled her deportation.

Though Natalia was allowed to stay in the U.S., she is forbidden to reapply for citizenship. The irony of her situation is chilling. She was punished for voting. Natalia said that she was told by a voter's registration recruiter that she was allowed to register since she had lived in the U.S. for more than 50 years. Again, Natalia used humor when thinking back to her immigration scare:

Veronica Sparks: What did you think about your immigration problems in 1998?

Natalia Caudillo: I wasn't scared. But, I was a little worried. There are a lot of places I could go in Mexico, but I don't know if they would let me stay for a long time. (Laughing)

Veronica Sparks: Do you think you were treated unfairly?

Natalia Caudillo: Yes. I didn't know I was doing anything wrong. People at the courthouse encouraged me to register to vote. At the courthouse! And, I was punished for somebody else's mistake.

Veronica Sparks: What did you think of all the attention you received?

Natalia Caudillo: I was kinda happy. (Laughing) I don't think I did anything wrong. It was kinda funny to see my picture everywhere. People knew me everywhere. I was kinda famous.

Conclusion

Mexican immigrants have largely affected the United States population, work force, and economy. The current wave of Mexican immigrants is similar, in many ways, to the European immigrants in the first and second waves of immigration. Currently, the average Mexican immigrant is as working-age male from one of three distinct regions. He earns lower wages than the average United States worker.

The principal reasons why immigrants received lower wages are that they are less likely to be unionized and they have less experience and education than other workers (Durand 1985). The average household income for the Mexican migrant will be significantly lower than the average non-Mexican-immigrant-lead household. Though some Mexican immigrants compete for jobs with native U.S. workers, these jobs are typically reserved for the least-skilled. Data has shown that Mexican migration has actually boosted the U.S. economy. Demands for housing, goods, and services have increased. This increase, in turn, causes another demand for jobs.

Though this wave of immigration leads to minor problems, it is important to weigh the pros and cons of the situation. And, while U.S. immigration reform is necessary, Mexican immigrants contribute greatly to the U.S. economy. The real threat is on the Mexicans themselves. Low wages, low education levels, and insufficient health care are dangerous factors which are greatly affecting these immigrants. The real solution seems to be in policy reform. The “big picture” must be evaluated. Individual cases, such as Natalia’s, explain the results of migration far more than models and multi-tiered charts. Without studying individual cases, migration is nothing more than a cycle of metaphors.

A series of hydraulic tropes depicts immigration as a “rising tide” that pounds against U.S. shores in endless “waves,” threatening to wash away a shaky “dike” as it sprouts numerous “leas” that threaten the country with massive “flooding” by and

immense “sea” of foreigners...A second set of metaphors is martial in nature. Immigration is visualized as a “war” in which outgunned Border Patrol officers heroically “hold the line,” “defending” America against “hordes” of alien “invaders” who “attack” the “fortress,” occasionally resorting to “banzai charges.” Foreigners already inside the United States are seen as a “fifth column” of potential spies and terrorists. (Massey 2002:3)

Immigration is an issue that influences Mexico and the United States near the borders and inside the borders. True resolution to any problems is to focus less on statistics and national averages, and more on individual cases.



Figure 4-1. Natalia receives pardon to stay in U.S. from her immigration attorney Enrique Martinez (March 1998). Photo by John Sparks.



Figure 4-2. Natalia is the guest of honor at her 93rd birthday celebration in Levelland, Texas (July 2003). Photo by Olga Sparks.



Figure 4-3. Natalia dances with grandson Michael at her 93rd birthday celebration (July 2003). Photo by John Sparks.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

There are hundreds of stories that could have been included in this analysis. The story of Natalia Caudillo not only contributes to traditional views of Mexican migration, it challenges these views as well. Natalia's story also gives insight to Tejano life in general, and the struggles of Mexican women in the cotton-industry.

Harvard political scientist, Samuel Huntington, warns in *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity* that America's Latino immigration flood is so little like any earlier wave, so resistant to sharing the common American language, civic rites and virtues that it constitutes "a major potential threat to the cultural and possibly political integrity of the United States" (Huntington 2004).

Natalia's case is a direct contradiction to Huntington's claim. Natalia is an example of an undocumented Mexican immigrant who has lived in the United States for 84 years. She has worked in the U.S., paid taxes, and voted! She embraces "American" popular culture and fluently speaks English. She is living proof that even older generations of immigrations can adapt to life in the U.S. without threatening English-speaking "American" culture.

Natalia's testimonio tied into gender theory, more than I expected. Considering Natalia's bold character, I was surprised to find that she never questioned her husband's apathy. Yet, I was even more surprised to hear that Natalia would have loved a career in the military. Also, Natalia's views on family structure have changed considerably over the years.

Natalia is a 93-year-old Catholic woman from Mexico who is an advocate for birth control and family planning. Natalia's identity and ideology is influenced by assimilation and multi-ethnic experiences. Though she loves her family dearly, she openly addressed the difficulty associated with parenting.

Natalia's opinions on marriage and relationships have changed as well. By analyzing Natalia's testimonio, we can see that Natalia was ready to leave her husband and end her marriage. This was something that the younger Natalia never considered.

Challenges

This study also presented challenges. First, how does one trace the steps of a subject who relocated so frequently? Natalia settled in Lamesa in 1940. Until then, she lived in various regions of Aguascalientes, Mexico and South Texas. Natalia's first Texas town is reminiscent of frontier ghost town. The general store, the school house, and other landmarks of Natalia's past are no longer evident. "Migration studies have a long history in anthropology, but they have been focused more on sending or receiving communities and not on the processes of moving between several sending and receiving communities" (Burns 1999:148).

A second challenge was Natalia's identity. Though she has lived in the U.S. for eighty-four years, she tightly grasps her Mexican heritage. She is a prime example of assimilation and integration without loss of culture and identity. I would have liked study Natalia's hobbies such as traveling and watching football more extensively.

The third challenge is the question of applied anthropology. What caused Natalia to make the decisions that she made? And, in order to truly be effective, I would like to apply my knowledge and skills to assist women like Natalia. She could have been spared nights of stress and anxiety had she known her rights in her immigration case. Also, she

could have avoided years of physical distress and abuse from an oppressive husband had she known her rights as a woman.

Contributions

The purpose of this study was to put a face and a name to theory and ideas of anthropology. “Migration, to Mexicans, is about taking a chance” (Conover 1987:262). Natalia has taken many chances throughout her life. Her stories are examples of chance, of survival, and of adventure. Natalia’s devotion to her family as a mother and a guardian has subconsciously validated her status as a woman and an adult. Her story illustrates motherhood beyond national borders. Her undying loyalty, commitment, and self-sacrifice are not limited to Mexico. These traits are part of who Natalia is as an individual. They are pieces of her identity.

What began as a case study on my grandmother resulted in an assortment of ideas that will contribute to those learning more about Latino/a life and immigration studies. This study is important in that it adds to the understanding of migration. Rather than focusing on the process of border-crossing, this study describes a lifetime study following migration.

Second, this project brings innovation to the field of ethnography. Traveling with Natalia proved to be an invaluable method of gaining information. I would encourage all anthropologists to travel in the field with the informant. This method resulted in the rekindling of memories and the birth of new interview questions, which otherwise would have been overlooked.

Third, this study contributes a portrayal of immigrant life that refutes claims that Mexicans and Latin American immigrants refuse to assimilate to U.S. culture. Natalia spent her childhood in multi-ethnic communities, playing with immigrant children from

various countries. Natalia speaks English and Spanish fluently. She also has a wide Czech and Italian vocabulary, which she learned from other immigrant children. Natalia has a love for multi-ethnic foods, sports, and popular culture events. She is currently planning a weekend vacation for the German holiday Oktoberfest. This case study contributes an example and an illustration of a migrant worker who serves as a metaphor for border culture.

She is Latina, Chicana, and Tejana. She is a border character. The aim of Natalia's story is to contribute a sincere take on a tale that can be told by many immigrants. The contribution of this analysis is meant to be one that is truthful and fresh, giving a voice and a sense of power to a true survivor.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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